

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



January 18, 2017

Misuse of Archaeological Sites

The archaeological sites within a country are basically the traditional wealth of a country and belong to the whole nation. These sites should be guarded properly and should be used as a national treasure depicting rich historical facts and at the same time attracting national and international audience who are interested in studying them. Their worth should not be gauged in monetary terms alone as they have intrinsic value and in certain cases they may be worthless in their importance within a cultural and historical heritage of a nation. Unfortunately, many of historical sites and artifacts are being gauged as per their monetary value and there are people who take advantage of the phenomenon and use their power and wealth to possess them or buy them to satiate their thirst for social status or to use them for business.

The countries where there is a worth for such artifacts and where there is stability and rule of law, the chances that the people use their power and wealth to possess them for their personal prestige and business is very low. However, the nations that do not have proper understanding of the worth of such artifacts and do not have rule of law and security, mostly suffer because of the dominance of the powerful individuals who are difficult to stop to use the national and historical heritage for their self-centered motives.

Unfortunately, Afghanistan is one of the same type of nations. Though it possesses a rich wealth of historical heritage and archaeological site, some individuals, blinded by power and wealth, utilize them with wrong intentions. A recent news report disclosed that powerful individuals and government departments have usurped lands containing important archaeological sites in northeastern Badakhshan province. Residential plots have been constructed on the land, part of which has been converted into a graveyard, according to a statement by the director of Information and Culture, Syed Hussain Naheeb, who has called the grabbing of historical sites a violation of the law.

He has also said that efforts are underway to take the sites back and start useful work on them.

It is really unfortunate to note that the government authorities and organizations themselves have not been very much careful about the rich traditional remains and artifacts. This clearly shows that there are culprits within Afghan authorities who have been involved in the filthy business of selling their traditional treasures. It is impossible to imagine that the artifacts could reach to the Black Market without the support of the responsible authorities. Moreover, the instability and the absence of a particular system to take care of such treasure also help in their smuggling.

After the downfall of Taliban who did not have any intention to safeguard historical sites; rather played a heinous role in destroying such sites (like, they did in Bamyan by destroying the historical Buddha statue), there were expectations that there would be some efforts to value such sites and items appropriately; however, the expectations could not be fulfilled and now we have reached to a situation where in the government authorities and organizations are themselves involved in misusing the sites.

The insensitive attitude of the Afghan authorities themselves in this regard is unfortunate and the government needs to play a tremendous role to make sure that they themselves start guarding their tradition and culture. Definitely, there have been many other problems, more basic in nature, for Afghans to ponder upon and spend time on but now when they are in a better position they must play their role. The cultural heritage and historical treasure can play a tremendous role in uplifting the feelings of national splendor in the members of Afghan society. However, many years of civil wars and clashes have had severe impacts on Afghanistan's socio-political scenario.

These wars and clashes have influenced the country in so many different ways. There have not been losses only in life and blood but in culture, tradition and values, as well. It is believed that for a civilization to flourish, it is necessary that there should be peace, tranquility and stability. Unfortunately Afghanistan has suffered in this regard. Though there has been relative peace and stability and there have been efforts to reestablish the Afghan society in the last decade, a lot more has to be achieved to make a real difference in Afghan society.

It is necessary, at the present scenario, that Afghanistan must have a sense of national integration and harmony.

It must be reiterated for the people of Afghanistan that they once had a rich culture and civilization and they had times in their history that knew nothing of violence and terrorism and a relatively peaceful and rich civilization flourished on their land.

Moreover, this should be insisted for them that they have to preserve the traces and remains of their rich history that should help the new generations realize the worth of their history and tradition. Unfortunately such insistence is very rare to see in the society where most of the discussions are centered on clashes and terrorism.

The Agricultural Challenges

By Muhammad Zahir Akbari

Agriculture and agriculture-related industries are fundamental means of livelihood in Afghanistan, generating 50% of the country's GDP and supporting 85% of its people. The climate of Afghanistan is well suited for the cultivation of horticultural crops and Afghanistan is the geographic origin of many high-end crops like raisins, pomegranates, pistachios and almonds. There are approximately one million farms in Afghanistan and more than 2,000 wholesalers for horticulture products. According to figures from the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Afghanistan yearly exports value more than \$700 million, with fruits forming a majority of this value but Afghanistan's yearly import stands at more than \$6 billion. Intensive commercial farming increases sustainable economic growth in rural areas, encourages competition, contributes to regional development and helps sustain the growth of private businesses related to it. Investment in agro-business and agro-processing will make a positive impact on the economic development of Afghanistan and will feed millions more people if the agricultural industry gets rid of current challenges. It should be the goal of a modern agricultural sector for Afghanistan to become self-sufficient again and subsequently be able to expand into an export industry.

The first issue related to the agricultural sector is packaging which is entirely outdated and damage fresh goods en route to markets and prevents an effective export business for many crops. It said that some 20-40% of post-harvest horticulture products are wasted because of poor packaging. Lack of modern machinery, such as grain cleaning and sieving equipment for flour, and tractor trolleys, is another barrier to the production of agricultural goods. In the long term, the manufacture of local machinery is important to the agricultural industry and also can be a good opportunity to the investors for this gap.

The next pressing issue is lack of cold rooms for storage of local agricultural products. Fruits and vegetables are perishable products and it is estimated that in Afghanistan 30 percent of the fresh fruit and 20 percent of the fresh vegetables are lost because of rapid quality deterioration after harvest, mainly due to poor product handling and improper storage; further, about 40 percent of fresh fruit and 40 percent of fresh vegetables reduce their value before they are bought by the final consumers. Thus, only 30 and 40 percent of the fresh fruits and vegetables, respectively, are sold without price reduction.

Thus the biological cycles of crops and weather conditions, produce production is seasonal and their market value is determined by supply and demand. At harvest, supply is at its peak and prices are low, as market supply weakens prices start to climb, reaching a peak when supply is lowest. The strategy for cold room storage management is to buy

cheap, to process and store the produce and sell it when the difference between the selling and purchasing price is largest after subtracting the storage cost. Implementation of this strategy requires knowledge of how the markets work. However, market price intelligence is poor. Rapidly changing prices constitute a challenge to organize a cold storage strategy that takes advantage of produce price seasonality. Traders of neighboring countries buy Afghan agricultural products at low cost during the harvest season and take the production to their country for processing and cold storage close to the Afghan border. Eventually, when demand for the production is high and the supply is low in Afghanistan, the traders bring the same production back to the country of origin and sell it at premium prices. Almost One month ago, the retail price for a bag of 7kg apple in Kabul market was around 80af but now it is risen up to 400af. Recently, I bought a kg of 20kg onion at 80af but a few months later it will increase up to 400 or 500af. Same is the case with many other products.

Although, a number cold rooms have been initiated within last 15 years but due to power irregularities and its high cost they do not satisfy the needs of Afghan farmers. The annual production of fruits and vegetables in Afghanistan is one and four million metric tons, respectively. The prospect for cold room development for fruits and vegetables exceeds 5000 cold rooms, each with 25 metric tons capacity. These cold rooms could store about 400,000 to 450,000 metric tons of produce year around. Currently, the operating cost of cold rooms is as high as the majority of consumers are unwilling to pay a premium prices for fresh produce out of season.

Overall, the process of purchasing, processing, storing and selling produce at a particular time and in a particular market involves an organized supply chain of goods, services and investment. Consumers can benefit from the cold room units because the produce is kept fresh longer (out of season). Producers benefit because farm gate prices tend to be higher and less volatile. Managers of the cold room storage facilities sell fresh produce at premium prices when seasonal supply has declined and have the option for exporting produce if linkages are established with markets.

Bottom of Form on the other hand, agricultural products are the essential part of Afghan economy but the cold storage systems (CSS) is still in an embryonic stage. So, It is highly important to draw the attention of government or private investors the establishing new colds rooms and improve handling practices inside Afghanistan. Off season produce can be offered to consumers fresh at premium prices; thus, cold rooms can be used as instruments to link consumers' demand and organized supply.

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In Defense of Globalization

By Jim O'Neill

I was recently in beautiful Chile for a Futures Congress, and I had a chance to travel south to the very tip of Latin America. I also recently made a BBC radio documentary called "Fixing Globalization," in which I crisscrossed the United Kingdom in search of ideas for improving certain aspects of it and discussed topical issues with well-known experts. In both cases, I saw things that convinced me that it is past time for someone to come to globalization's defense.

Chile today is Latin America's richest country, with per capita GDP of around \$23,000 - similar to that of Central European countries. This is quite an achievement for a country that depends so heavily on copper production, and it sets Chile apart from many of its neighbors. Like many other countries, Chile is facing economic challenges, and its growth rate leaves something to be desired; but it also has many promising opportunities beyond its borders.

For example, when I led a review on antimicrobial resistance, I learned that copper has powerful antibacterial properties and is an ideal material for use in health-care facilities where bacteria often spread. This means that copper producers such as Chile, Australia, and Canada can improve global health - and boost exports - by introducing affordable copper infrastructure into hospitals and other clinical settings around the world. Chile is also a storehouse of knowledge for managing earthquakes and tsunamis. While I was there, I visited La Serena, which in 2015 experienced the sixth-strongest earthquake ever recorded. But the ensuing tsunami killed only 11 people, though it surely would have killed far more in many other places. Chilean officials' advanced preparation and rapid response seems to have made the difference. With so much institutional experience, Chile can be a valuable resource for other countries threatened by seismic events.

La Serena is also near one of the world's best stargazing sites, which attracts leading astronomers from around the globe. In fact, Chile hosts much remarkable collaboration among the world's scientists, in part because it is just north of the Antarctic - long a site for scientific and environmental cooperation.

Beyond Chile, it is interesting that Chinese President Xi Jinping is attending the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos this year. Now that Donald Trump has been elected President of the United States, and the United Kingdom is withdrawing from the European Union, I had assumed that such an elitist event's glory days were behind it.

Xi's presence suggests that China is exploring where it can position itself on the world stage, and which elements of globalization it can harness to its advantage, now that Western powers are turning inward.

Indeed, as the Chinese ambassador to the UK pointed out on my radio program, China is already the largest importer - yes, importer - for at least 70 countries, and accounts for about 10-11% of all imports globally. Despite its supposed economic challenges, China will likely be a bigger importer than the EU

before this decade is over, and it will probably surpass the US soon thereafter.

Moreover, economic inequality among countries has declined sharply in the past 20 years, owing partly to China's rise, as well as to economic development across Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere. In fact, by 2010, the United Nations had already achieved its Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015, and recent projections suggest that, by 2050, poverty will be eradicated everywhere except Africa.

This will not happen without globalization. African countries, in particular, will need to trade more with one another, and there is talk of creating an African free-trade area. But this could prove difficult now that anti-trade sentiment is on the rise. Are globalization's critics - those who wrongly consider it a zero-sum game - against eradicating global poverty?

Policymakers can take action to alleviate anxieties about globalization. For starters, the seemingly endless growth of profits as a share of global GDP must stop. Anyone who thinks this sounds radical needs to brush up on economics. Higher profits should attract new market entrants, which would then erode incumbents' profits through competition.

The fact that this isn't happening suggests that some markets have been rigged, or have simply failed. Policymakers need to address this with stronger regulation in some areas. For example, as I have previously argued, the current climate is far too permissive of share-repurchase programs.

At the same time, policymakers need to pursue measures to increase wages for the lowest earners, which could actually help boost productivity as capital becomes less expensive relative to labor. And, as World Bank President Jim Yong Kim recently pointed out to me, we need to strengthen enforcement of laws governing trade deals, and do more to help challenged domestic sectors that lose out as a result of those deals.

This reminds me of a sad story I heard from some laid-off Goodyear Tire workers in Wolverhampton, in England's West Midlands. They told me that job listings for their lost positions were posted on a notice board, and they could re-apply for them if they wanted to move to Mexico.

The workers surmised that it was easier for the company to close its factory in the UK than to close even less productive factories in France or Germany. Surely changes like this can be handled better. Lastly, policymakers need to prioritize development projects such as the UK's "northern powerhouse" and "Midlands engine." And more such initiatives should be launched elsewhere. Despite the many challenges it has created, globalization has made the world a better place than it otherwise would have been. And we still need it to eradicate poverty and generate higher living standards for all. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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