

Open Letter to the Honourable Chief Justice of Pakistan

Professor Dr Shahida Wizarat

Honourable Sir,

I am very encouraged by your statements on the pathetic economic condition of the people of Pakistan. I would like to take the opportunity to bring the following facts that may be contributing to their plight and the inability of the country to move beyond the takeoff stage and enter the comity of nations as a respectable developed country:

It has now been almost thirty years since the world embraced the free market model. Thirty years is a long enough time to gauge the impact of the model on our economies, environment, social and political systems. We find that with the advent of the neo liberal model, there is endemic failure in many countries and a moving away from the core model and towards protectionism. This can be discerned from market interventions and nationalisation of banks and financial institutions by countries considered bastions of the free market model in the aftermath of the Great Recession in 2008-9. BREXIT and the trade wars between the US and China and US and Europe are manifestations of moving away from conservatism.

But the policies being thrust on Pakistan by the IMF and Pakistan's Economic Hitmen since early 1990s are as pure and fundamental as they were more than 30 years ago. Successive Governments' only preoccupation is that Pakistan does not default. The outflow of massive revenues to service debts and interest payments, along with the very harsh conditionalities on account of depreciation of the rupee, and the hike in the lending rate, have had severe consequences on growth of investment, output and employment, with very adverse impact on income distribution and poverty. Since Pakistan continued to sacrifice its economic interests we are facing serious and protracted economic problems that are worrying conscientious Pakistanis like yourself!

We are dragged to the IMF not because there is no other alternative. I formulated an alternative many years back and have been improving upon it. Although my alternative is superior to the IMF strategy, there is no appetite in the government for an out of the box solution. Successive Pakistani governments are not interested in a superior strategy, they want the one that has Washington's blessings and stamp of approval!

Our governments have been exporting our natural resources free or at nominal rates to

friends and foes. Our air and land routes are being used for free by NATO for the Afghan War, whose combined expenditure with the Iraq war during 2001 to 2008 according to Stiglitz and Bilmes was to the tune of \$ 3 trillion. Even such wealthy nations are using our strategic assets and routes for free. Very fine quality clay in Nagar Parker has been alleged to have been given to a friendly country at zero royalty for 100 years. A western company selling drinking water has been provided free water to the tune of 43.4 bn liters over the last few years and land leased free of cost in Karachi as revealed by the findings of a committee constituted by a former Chief Justice of Pakistan. We are exporting our gold, copper, precious stones, rock salt, rare earths, apricot kernels, indigo plants, etc in raw form at nominal rates. Countries which do not have these precious resources, import them from Pakistan and establish industries converting our natural resources into finished products, creating wealth for themselves, while we are selling them for peanuts and suffer from the "resource curse".

Hardly any sophistication is required for crushing rock salt, but we are selling rock salt to India in raw form at nominal rates. India is crushing it, packaging and exporting it, earning billions of \$s and buying pellet guns and other ammunition to kill and blind the Kashmiris. India is also re exporting Pakistani rock salt to Israel, where it is crushed and packaged. Israel also earns billions of \$s through export of our rock salt, and buying ammunition to kill the Palestinians. When this is pointed out, we are told that GOP has stopped the export of rock salt to India. But a visit to the Amazon website negates GOP stance, where Pakistani rock salt is selling as "Pride of India". But the most hilarious information one gets from the Amazon website is that this salt is available for export to all the countries except Pakistan - being India's enemy country! Giving away our strategic routes and natural resources for free or at nominal rates and then borrowing money from the IMF to run the affairs of the country reflects not just financial mismanagement, but financial madness.

Many countries such as Russia, Japan, Australia and several EU and African countries have banned consumption of GMO seeds and crops, on account of concerns for their impact on human health and long term consequences on the environment. Countries like the US, Canada and Brazil which are the largest producers of GM seeds and crops, are exporting them to developing countries while

their populations are consuming organic foods grown in Pakistan. If GM seeds and crops are harmful for human health and the environment in the developed countries, these are equally unfit for human consumption in Pakistan. And their promotion by countries, international and aid agencies to consumers, earthquake, flood victims and the most vulnerable populations raises serious ethical questions. All the Pakistani politicians unanimously voted to amend the Seed Act in the National Assembly in March 2015 and in the Senate in June 2015. All have pursued the interests of GM seed companies blatantly and unashamedly at the expense of the Pakistani people. In this day and age when governments in countries are knowledgeable, use "Smart" techniques and ways to protect their strategic interests and populations, will the people of Pakistan led by "insane" leaders (according to Einstein's terminology) be able to meet the challenges emanating from the fifth generation war? Our governments and leadership positions are "Made in Washington". Last elections raised the slogan of a "selected prime minister". But the fact is that our prime ministers, ministers, army chiefs, bureaucrats, technocrats, SBP officials, heads of institutions, etc, are said to get the nod from the US government and its agencies. But no serious effort has been made to change this political order, my lonely voice in wilderness notwithstanding! In fact, most people instead of trying to bring a merit based system, try to become a beneficiary of the present system. An honest and independent judiciary can rid the country of this decadent system. A national government which is patriotic, competent and honest can change our political order and bring growth and prosperity way beyond the wildest dreams of the people of Pakistan.

Honourable Sir, your statements on the economic plight of the people of Pakistan are encouraging and convince me that there is light at the end of the tunnel. I hope with your interventions we can get rid of the colonial order imposed when the British took over the sub continent. An order in which our resources were used with impunity to finance the British war effort and the Industrial Revolution, when Viceroy's were appointed who helped in the loot and plunder of the sub continent. Nothing has changed since 1947, except that the US and others have also joined in the loot and plunder of Pakistan! I look forward to your interventions to promote socially beneficial outcomes for the people of Pakistan!