

Towards inclusive education

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Most challenging of all is fostering a working relationship with families of children with disabilities many of whom are barely able to feed and clothe themselves. As primary caregivers and providers their awareness must be raised and negative attitudes transformed. Respect, love and patience that consequentially develop are the essential building blocks for creating an environment conducive to learning for the overall success of inclusion.

Given the ground realities as they exist today, the leapfrog

towards inclusive education is as ambitious as it is gigantic. It is also dependent on our financial resources, the availability of expertise and the removal of the barrier of discrimination, an unfortunate part of the human condition.

Advocates for the rights of persons with disabilities would be grateful for small moves instead of gigantic ones as long as these are forthcoming in the right direction and not unworthily sidelined in the future.

The writer is a lecturer for the University of London's external LLB programme.

Women disempowered

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While government and non-government actors clamour to associate women's empowerment with the crumbs of education, healthcare and skills-training they dish out, women's disempowerment persists. The negligence of state and non-state actors to integrate women's security in all sectors legitimises the disempowerment

of women.

Verbal acclamations, whether in policy documents or project proposals, are meaningless unless they are backed by action for women's empowerment (ikhtiar). Unless this begins to happen on a large scale, the state and non-state actors of Pakistan stand guilty of failing the women of Pakistan.

Pakistanis are one of the most hospitable people: Wild Life Artist John Banovich

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and South American countries and what I found about the people of Pakistan is that they are one of the most genuinely hospitable people. I did not find any Anti-West feelings among people. They were all very friendly. I met some with lesser of means and resources, but whatever they had, they opened their doors to serve us, which I have rarely seen," informed the famous Wildlife Artist John Banovich, as he spoke to our Special Correspondent on phone.

"I have this passion that I want to put on my canvass, various aspects of creatures that are big and have big teeth. That was the reason I went to Pakistan in pursuit for Snow Leopards, as big things with big teeth, is what I love to explore and present in my artwork. I stayed in Islamabad for four days and then for a few days at the Palace on the River of Prince of Kalabagh. Both the experiences of Islamabad and Kalabagh were simply magnificent. Then I was off to Chitral, Gilgat, Hunza and other parts of Northern Pakistan. I have stood at the bottom of Rocky Mountains in USA. But to stand at the base of more than two times higher mountains of Nangaparbat in Pakistan was simply breathtaking. I am an artist and will continue to do artwork. However if there is someone good in writing, I need him or her to visit these areas, as there are many things to be reported and many amazing stories to be told from these wilderness," said John Banovich.

"The authorities in Pakistan have developed a well-managed hunting program in the wilds. People of the area are aware of the importance of the natural habitat and wild life for their well-being and that makes the preservation easy and beyond merely sustainability. I was impressed by the outdoor skills of three of our guides as we established our base camp and tried to locate Snow Leopards. We had goats, which we used as prey for the leopards to come out and eat, so that I can do my artwork. They did come out and eat the goats, but they somehow came when we were not aware. We found their footprints; one male, one female and one baby leopard. I could feel their presence in the area, and felt they are watching us, but we were unable to find them. I will soon be going back to continue my pursuit," added John Banovich.

John Banovich received "Society of Animal Artists 2007-2008 "Presidential Award" - A Giant Among Giants". Describing his work, Keith Hansen, Publisher of Wildlife Art wrote: "John Banovich: the wildlife artist, the philosopher, and the world traveler. His name stands out among wildlife artists worldwide. His artistic skills bring nature's creatures into the homes and lives of individuals around the world. His 'big as life' approach to capturing on canvas what he sees in the wilds of Africa, North America and around the world makes John Banovich himself bigger than life."

For more information, please visit <http://www.johnbanovich.com>.

Let's recognise and celebrate the real thing

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The other thing the same party did not take notice of was the award of Honorary Fellow to Aitzaz Ahsan by Downing College, Cambridge. It is a huge honour and the Honorary Fellow is treated to all the pomp and ceremony that Cambridge, one of the finest universities in the

world, can put on. It's all very grand, it is not something they give out to everyone, it's not something you can buy, and it is not everyone who qualifies for this honour. According to the University of Cambridge "The Master and Fellows of Downing College, in honouring the achievements of

Back to the future

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When I wrote about Dr Abdus Salam's towering achievements on these pages, a person who identified himself as a senior, award-winning journalist wrote to me that the scientist was a Zionist spy and that is why he was ordered out of the country by Prime Minister Bhutto.

It is sad that while the headlines in the world press dealing with Pakistan are about the kidnapping or killing of foreign journalists, the beheadings of 'American spies' and the honour killings of women, those about India deal with the successes of its space programme (which has now landed a probe on the moon) and about the transformation of its agrarian economy into a high-tech wonder that will soon be one of the world's strongest.

An attitude of going forward to the past needs to be replaced with one of going back to the future, a bright future as envisioned by the Quaid, not the dark and conspiratorial future envisioned by Al Qaeda.

UN to confer award posthumously on Benazir

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The award will be announced on December 10, the UN Human Rights Day. The occasion also marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The sources said the President of the U.N. General Assembly, Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, would officially communicate the decision to President Asif Ali Zardari in the next few days.

The United Nations human rights awards are intended to "honour and commend people and organizations which have made an outstanding contribution to the promotion and protection of the human rights embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in other United Nations human rights instruments".

UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon will present the award—a metal plaque bearing the UN seal and an artistic design, and engraved with an appropriate citation - at a headquarter ceremony in New York on December 10.

The recipients are selected by a special committee comprising the presidents of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and the chairs of the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

Unlike the Nobel prizes - and the list of awardees shares much common ground with the Nobel Peace Prize in particular - the UN's awards are non-monetary in nature.

Zardari expresses resolve to steer Pakistan out of hot waters

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The President said despite the fact that the whole world was facing economic recession, he was confident that the future of Pakistan and its people was bright.

He said Pakistan with its best geostrategic location, a strong human capital as well as the trade and economic potential was poised to develop and grow.

Advisor to Prime Minister on Interior Rehman Malik, Pakistan's Ambassador to UAE Khurshid Ahmed Junejo, Ambassador at Large Javed Malik and local PPP representatives were also present on the occa-

sion.

President Asif Ali Zardari assured the Overseas Pakistanis that the government would soon announce a programme to promote their welfare and provide them better incentives for home remittances.

The President directed Advisors on Finance and Interior to prepare the programme and said steps would be taken for liberalization of transactions for home remittances.

He urged expatriate Pakistanis to work hard and send their remittances through legal and banking channels for their own benefit and as well as for the country. —Agencies

Venezuela's Chavez welcomes Russian warships

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Venezuela, the first ever by a Russian president.

Russian sailors dressed in black-and-white uniforms lined up along the bow of the destroyer Admiral Chabanenko as it docked in La Guaira, near Caracas, and Venezuelan troops greeted them with cannons in a 21-gun salute. Two support vessels also docked, and the nuclear-powered cruiser Peter the Great, Russia's largest navy ship, anchored offshore.

Chavez, basking in the support

of a powerful ally and traditional U.S. rival, wants Russian help to build a nuclear reactor, invest in oil and natural gas projects and bolster his leftist opposition to U.S. influence in the region.

He also wants weapons — Venezuela has bought more than \$4 billion in Russian arms, including Sukhoi fighter jets, helicopters and 100,000 Kalashnikov rifles, and more deals for Russian tanks or other weaponry may be discussed after Medvedev arrives Wednesday. —Agencies

Obama pledges to shake the economy

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Mr. Obama also named his top economic advisers, confirming Timothy Geithner as the next Treasury Secretary. Mr. Obama said that having served in senior roles at Treasury, the IMF and the New York Federal Reserve, Mr. Geithner would offer "an unparalleled understanding of our current economic crisis, in all of its depth, complexity and urgency".

Lawrence Summers, a former treasury secretary, will be the new head of the White House's National Economic Council, tasked with coordinating the president's economic plans.

Christina Romer, a co-director at the National Bureau of Economic Research, will chair Mr. Obama's Council of Economic Advisers. Mr. Obama said his team would begin work straight away as there was not "a minute to waste".

At a press conference in Chicago, the president-elect said it was necessary not only to have a thriving Wall Street but a thriving Main Street too. "We are going to do what is required to jolt this economy back into shape," he said, although he refused to put a figure on the cost of the stimulus package.

Correspondents say there has been much speculation about the price tag, with some US politicians saying it could be as much as \$700bn. Speaking of the challenges ahead, Mr. Obama said: "We are facing an economic crisis of historic proportions. Our financial markets are under stress. While we can't underestimate the challenges we face, we also can't underestimate our capacity to overcome them."

He said the problem was "no longer just an American crisis, it is a global crisis - and we will need to reach out to countries around the world to craft a global response".

Mr. Obama said he would honor the public commitments made by President George W Bush - who leaves office on January 20, 2009 - to support the US economy. Earlier, Mr. Bush assured the American people that the US economy would recover from the crisis, saying the first step was to "safeguard our financial system".

Mr. Obama is scheduled to announce further stimulus details on Tuesday November 25, 2008 - dealing in part with the issue of how to pay for the package (More details next week).

Karzai demands 'timeline' for foreign troop pull out

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Afghanistan or it would have to seek a political solution to a Taliban-led insurgency. US President-elect Barack Obama has said that Afghanistan and the "war on terror" would be a priority for his government and campaigned on a pledge to shift US forces from Iraq to Afghanistan.

"The international community should give us a timeline of how long

or how far the 'war on terrorism' will go," Karzai's chief spokesman Homayun Hamidzada cited the president as telling the delegation.

The delegation - which includes the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Afghan-born Zalmay Khalilzad - are on a fact-finding mission with security in the country at its weakest since the ouster of the Taliban. —Agencies