Speech among pilgrims and residents of Mashhad - 23 /Mar/ 2015

On the first day of the new Iranian calendar year on March 21, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addressed tens of thousands of pilgrims and residents in the holy city of Mashhad in northeastern Khorassan Razavi Province. In his speech to the huge crowd at the holy shrine of Imam Reza, the eighth Imam of the Prophet Mohammad's Infallible Household, Ayatollah Khamenei outlined the motto for the current year – Government and Nation; Empathy and Rapport.

He underscored the mutual obligations of people and the government, saying people should fully support the legal and legitimate government, and officials should, in turn, exercise patience vis-à-vis logical criticism.

Referring to the four main pillars of the structure of the Islamic establishment as well as the opportunities and challenges lying ahead, Ayatollah Khamenei said: "It is a major and collective duty for officials to set targets and make plans to contribute to economic prosperity and progress, and for people, particularly economic activists and media, to help promote national economy. Today, the economic sector is a specific arena which requires strenuous efforts based on the mobilization of potentialities and internal initiatives as well as the use of tools, methods and policies applicable to this arena."

Regarding the ongoing nuclear talks, the supreme Leader said: "In Iran, nobody is opposed to a diplomatic settlement of the nuclear issue, but in the meantime, the Iranian nation and officials and the negotiating team will not back down in the face of the US' coercion and bullying, and that they will pass this big test successfully through perseverance."

Citing a verse from the holy Quran, Ayatollah Khamenei said "daily prayers, zakat (Islamic excise), promotion of virtue and prevention of vice" are the four indicators of the structure of the Islamic Republic's establishment. "Almighty God has promised to help any nation which has the above-mentioned features and to save them from the yoke of cruel powers," he said.

He added: "Each of these indicators has its own individual and social aspects which are instrumental in shaping the structure of an Islamic establishment."

The supreme leader referred to the individual aspect of daily prayers, that is happiness and salvation of believers, saying: "Meanwhile, daily prayers [also] have social aspects which pave the way for establishing connections between Muslims' hearts and [leading them] towards the same direction at a specific time."

Ayatollah Khamenei said the zakat tradition boosts the spirit of forgiveness in mankind. Regarding the social aspect of zakat, he said: "From a social standpoint, zakat shows that a Muslim person does not remain indifferent vis-à-vis the Islamic society, the poor, the weak and the needy."

Ayatollah Khamenei said "promotion of virtue and prevention of vice" are the cornerstone of all Islamic teachings. Noting that all pious people, wherever in the world they might be, are obligated to encourage the society to move toward virtue and dissuade it from straying towards vice, the Leader said: "What should be focused upon is promotion of the biggest virtue which is the establishment and safeguarding of the Islamic system."

He said among other major issues are saving the Iranian nation's face, cultural progress, moral health, family health, reproduction and training the younger generation ready for contribution to national progress, giving fresh impetus to economy and production, promoting Islamic moralities, developing science and technology, establishing judicial and economic justice, struggling for Islamic unity and empowering the Muslim community. He said everyone has a duty to work toward promoting those virtues.

Ayatollah Khamenei then referred to cultural depravity, helping enemies, undercutting the Islamic establishment and culture, and undermining the economy, science and technology as major examples of vices. He said that Almighty God, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and the infallible Imams are among the leading promoters of virtue and preventers of vice. "It is necessary for all pious people, anywhere in the Muslim world, to fulfill this divine obligation."

Ayatollah Khamenei said the motto for the current year – Government and Nation; Empathy and Rapport – is based on the four aforesaid indicators and in line with national and social solidarity among people in the Islamic establishment. "Islam requires [individuals with] different tastes to work toward solidarity, synergy and mutual assistance. Therefore, any government in the Islamic establishment should be supported by all people, even those who have not voted for it," he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei said government-people unity is a must, particularly when the country faces important challenges. "Today, the entire nation is obliged to help and support state officials."

He said cooperation with and helping governments is an unchanging principle, adding: "All governments are mainly concerned with resolving the people and country's problems as much as they can. Therefore, everyone has to help governments resolve these problems."

Ayatollah Khamenei said the majority of votes lay the groundwork for "legal legitimacy". "It's not important what percentage of people votes for a president. Any administration elected by people with whatsoever number of votes is constitutionally legitimate and people should help the legal administration as much as they can."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei said mutual rights shouldn't be forgotten in such an ambiance of mutual cooperation.

He then elaborated on how criticism and critics should be dealt with.

He said any administration naturally has its critics. "The current administration, like its predecessors, has critics. That's ok and some people who are opposed to the method, behavior, words and policy of this administration are free to crtiticize. However, criticism should be expressed within a logical framework," he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei added: "I personally have been critical of different administrations and I have not hesitated to give notices wherever necessary, but I have expressed my notices in a proper manner."

Explaining the requirements of "logical criticism", Ayatollah Khamenei said: "Criticism should not be such that it would cause public mistrust of officials. Nor should it be insulting and violent."

He said behavior based on friendship, empathy and rapport is a criterion for criticism. "Of course, these pieces of advice are for both sides. Officials in all three branches [of government] should respect these limits and treat their

critics without any insult and humiliation because humiliating detractors by officials runs counter to prudence and wisdom."

"I don't invite our dear people to indifference and no-supervision, but rather, I call upon all of them to be involved in the country's affairs and I insist that both people and officials should not behave in an insulting and humiliating manner," the supreme Leader said.

"It would be no wrong that some individuals be concerned over certain issues in the country and there are no restrictions to that effect, but it should not lead to finger-pointing and disregard for efforts and services. Meanwhile, the administration and its supporters should not insult those who express their misgivings," he added.

Ayatollah Khamenei said he has constantly supported all administrations, adding: "I support this administration too, but I give nobody a blank check and I will judge and act based on performances."

The Leader referred to opportunities in the country as well as challenges lying ahead, saying: "By planning and proper use of opportunities and potentialities, these challenges could be overcome with God's help."

Ayatollah Khamenei said efficient, innovative and mostly young manpower and people's sympathy with the Islamic establishment are among the major opportunities in the country, saying: "Despite a massive foreign media campaign against the country's youth in a bid to disappoint them in the future or pit them against the establishment or make them irresponsible, tens of millions of these youths take to the streets across the country on Bahman 22 (February 11) and show their profound loyalty to the Islamic establishment and the late Imam (Rest in Peace)."

Ayatollah Khamenei said scientific advancements under sanctions are another major opportunity for the country, adding: "Scientific progress in recent years, including the startup of industrially sophisticated projects like Phase 12 of South Pars [gas field] and the unveiling of new equipment during the Armed Forces' maneuvers, which was stunning to the enemies, all happened at a time when all ill-wishers imagined that Iran was under crippling sanctions."

The supreme leader said the existing sanctions are an opportunity despite their difficulties and then elaborated on some of the challenges facing the Islamic establishment. He said: "One of the main challenges currently facing the country is the issue of national economy and solving people's economic and livelihood problems, which requires serious action."

Ayatollah Khamenei reminded officials of his earlier predictions that the enemy is targeting the economy and that officials should be ready. He said: "The ill-wishers of the Iranian nation have said openly that their objective behind economic pressure is a political one, and that is to cause discontent among people and disrupt national security by pitting people against the government and the establishment."

He said facing this challenge needs cooperation and rapport among all authorities and requires the issue of economy to be taken seriously. He went on to highlight four major points in that regard.

The first point mentioned by Ayatollah Khamenei was insistence upon the necessity of an untiring campaign to counter Washington's hostile policies in the economic arena. To that effect, the Leader said, there are two views on how to deal with economic problems.

“According to one viewpoint, economic development and prosperity should be achieved by using local potential which has so far been ignored or received little attention,” he said.

“The second viewpoint is the exact opposite. It maintains that economic prosperity and development is possible through an outward look and that we should reconsider our foreign policy and compromise with arrogant powers and accept their bullying, so that the economic problems could be solved,” he added.

“This second viewpoint is totally erroneous, ineffective and useless,” said Ayatollah Khamenei.

As to why the second viewpoint is wrong, Ayatollah Khamenei said: “The existing Western sanctions against the Iranian nation are a clear reason why the viewpoint which says economic prosperity should be sought beyond national borders is wrong. The reason is that foreign powers are never content with any level of imposition and bullying while they also give rise to some abrupt and unexpected issues like plotting to reduce global oil prices to harm the country’s economy.”

“Today, the ill-wishers of the Iranian nation are making efforts to promote the second viewpoint and that is why the US president, in his New Year message to the Iranian people, says economic prosperity, jobs and business will be created in the country if you accept our demands in the nuclear talks,” he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei said: “Looking outside to solve economic problems will never pay off. Therefore, we should always seek to tap the country’s domestic potentialities and the ‘resistance economy,’ which was welcomed by all economists, is evidence of the domestic capabilities and potentialities of the country and the nation.”

The third point mentioned by Ayatollah Khamenei with regard to economic issues was the necessity for officials to set goals and make policies while not getting preoccupied with routine affairs.

Ayatollah Khamenei said: “The most important objective officials and people should focus upon this year is to make efforts to boost domestic production.”

As for how local production can be boosted, he said: “Supporting medium-sized and small-sized enterprises, bolstering knowledge-based enterprises, campaigning for lower sales of raw materials, facilitating investment, reducing imports of consumer goods and fighting smuggling are options for supporting domestic production. Of course, banks can be both supportive and destructive. Therefore, senior banking officials should pay due attention to this issue.”

Ayatollah Khamenei said it would be a difficult task to adopt these measures in practice, adding: “The officials should carry out these difficult tasks because the issue of economy and economic prosperity is important.”

Ayatollah Khamenei described as very effective the role of investors and people in supporting domestic production, saying: “Shifting investment funds towards production and consumption of domestically manufactured products and avoiding extravagance are among approaches to boost domestic production.”

Regarding the fourth and the last point about national economy, the Leader said: “Sanctions are the only tool for the enemy to confront the Iranian nation. Therefore, if plans are made with insight and by relying on domestic manpower, the impact of sanctions will be reduced and sanctions will be useless at last.”

“If government officials, people and economic activists make endeavors and public media help them, we will see that the sanctions will not be able to keep the Iranian nation from progress,” he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei also referred to several points regarding the nuclear talks.

He said Iran’s negotiating parties, mainly the US, has made precise planning and policies. “The Americans desperately need these negotiations and their internal disputes are because the rival faction of the incumbent US administration is making efforts so that the advantage gained through these negotiations will not be registered in the track record of its rival party,” he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei referred to the US president’s dishonest remarks in his New Year message to the Iranian nation, saying: “In his message, the US president says there are people in Iran who oppose a diplomatic settlement of the nuclear issue. That’s false because in Iran, nobody is opposed to the resolution of the nuclear issue through negotiations.”

What the Iranian nation is opposed to is the bullying and imposition of demands by the US government, but the nation is standing up to them.”

Ayatollah Khamenei said: “Neither officials, nor negotiators nor the Iranian nation will ever accept the US bullying.”

He insisted that the ongoing negotiations between Iran and the US are limited to the nuclear issue. “We will by no means negotiate with the US about domestic and regional issues and the issue of arms because the US policy in the region is aimed at creating insecurity and confronting regional nations and Islamic Awakening. That is contrary to the pivotal policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

The supreme leader dismissed as “trickery” the US officials’ frequently expressed remarks that the sanctions against Iran would be lifted after an agreement is reached, adding: “That is unacceptable because the lifting of the sanctions is part of the negotiations and not the result of the talks. Therefore, as the esteemed president made clear, the sanctions should be lifted immediately after an agreement is reached.”

Referring to the US officials’ remarks that Iran’s decisions in any possible agreement should be irreversible, Ayatollah Khamenei said: “That is also unacceptable because if they reserve the right to reinstate the sanctions under any pretext after a possible agreement, there would be no reason for us to accept irreversible measures.”

“Iran’s nuclear industry is a domestic and popular industry which has to move ahead as progress is an inherent part of every industry and technology,” said the Leader.

Pointing to the US allegations that Iran is seeking to acquire nuclear weapons, Ayatollah Khamenei noted: “They know quite well that we have honored all our international commitments and political obligations in these negotiations and we never reneged on our promises and we did not show any fickleness, but the Americans broke their promises and they were fraudulent and showed fickleness and double-standards in their deeds and words.”

Ayatollah Khamenei said the behavior of the Americans in the nuclear talks has served as a lesson for people, adding: “The behavior of the US also serves as a lesson for intellectuals in the country (Iran), so that they would realize who we are negotiating with and how the US is behaving.”

He touched upon the US threats to ratchet up the sanctions or resort to military action if no deal is clinched in the nuclear talks, and highlighted: “These threats do not scare the Iranian nation because the nation is resisting and it will emerge the winner from this big test.”

The supreme leader said divine blessings and assistance are key to the success of the Iranian nation on this path, adding: “The government and the nation shoulder heavy responsibilities. Among them are the issue of Islamic unity, helping oppressed nations and expanding the spiritual influence of Islam in the region, of which the Iranian nation is a standard-bearer today.”

Ayatollah Khamenei also referred to the history of the Norouz tradition, saying the current Norouz ritual is a “shrewd Islamic initiative. “The ancient Norouz belonged to monarchs and it was a chance for autocratic rulers and sultans to show off their ostensible glory and grandeur to the nations, but Muslim Iranians very astutely changed this trend in their own favor.”

Describing Norouz as a “truth belonging to people”, Ayatollah Khamenei said: “Today’s Norouz is not the ancient Norouz, but Iranian Norouz and the Norouz of a Muslim nation which has managed to carve out an asset for itself from the very heart of this tradition to move towards spiritual objectives.”

“Today, during Norouz and at the turn of the New Year, the most crowded cities in our vast country are the holy shrines of Imams and the mausoleums of their descendants,” said the Leader.

Referring to the coincidence of the anniversary of the martyrdom of Hadhrat Fatima (SA), the daughter of the Prophet Mohammad, and Norouz festivities, Ayatollah Khamenei said: “Given the Iranians’ shrewd view vis-à-vis Norouz, this year Norouz celebrations should not be in conflict with commemorating the martyrdom of the great lady of the Muslim world, Hadhrat Fatima, and certainly there would be no such conflict.”