Leader's Address to University Professors and Elite Academics - 13 /Oct/ 2005

October 13, 2005

What follows is an abridgement of a speech made by the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei in a meeting with a large group of university professors and elite academics from across the country on October 13, 2005. Several of the participants at the meeting expressed their views on various issues.

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

I am grateful to Almighty Allah that, after almost one year, I have once again been granted an opportunity to have a very pleasant meeting with our honorable university professors.

I consider this session to be among my most favorable and pleasant meetings. The reason is that a group of intellectuals and scientific elites who are professors at our universities are going to express their views on various issues at this gathering, and their views will be heard not only by me, but also by other officials of the Islamic Republic and by the Iranian people as well.

This gathering constitutes a public and national forum, and whatever is expressed by the participants at this meeting will be heard by all. This is a very valuable occasion. Therefore, I would like to ask those who are going to speak at this gathering to make the most of their time, to skip compliments, formalities and marginal matters and, instead, focus on important issues.

Now I am ready to hear your words.

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In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Our today's meeting, like similar meetings that we had in previous years, was very pleasant and beneficial. The gathering of prominent scholars and academics and the expression of their views, which will be heeded and taken into consideration by the Iranian people and officials, is a great event. Besides, I have been informed that some follow-up measures have been taken with regard to the views that were expressed at similar meetings held in previous years.

I would like to make a few points about what was stated at this meeting, with due emphasis on the fact that the holding of such gatherings and the remarks made at such meetings are always valuable and beneficial to me and also to government officials and the general public.

The first point is that it would be better if at such gatherings, university professors and instructors mostly express their views, not university chancellors and officials in charge of various university departments. The reason is that

when university officials make complaints about certain flaws or shortcomings in their universities, they themselves should be held accountable for those flaws or shortcomings.

Even if they have some legitimate requests, they should present their requests to the government, in particular to the minister of science, research and technology or to the health minister, instead of presenting them here. The most I can do is to convey their requests to relevant government officials.

However, the views expressed by university professors and instructors, which have nothing to do with managerial affairs, are conducive to the promotion of science and are beneficial to university chancellors, to government officials and also to me. Thus, it would be better if university professors and instructors mostly speak at such gatherings.

The second point I would like to mention is that the purpose of establishing the Elites Foundation - I recently suggested that it should be established - is to encourage our elite students, fulfill their requirements and provide them with their needed facilities in cooperation with relevant state organizations.

Honorable professors and academics! You should always bear in mind that scientific growth constitutes the cornerstone of our country's progress and development. Only science and research will be able to advance and improve human infrastructure, which is our county's most important infrastructure. We should try to overcome our scientific retardation. This should be our top priority.

In the course of wars and political and geographical disputes in the world, it happened that Europe attained modern science earlier than other nations in recent historical phase. But this does not mean that Europeans are sharper or more intelligent than Eastern nations. Nor does it mean that nations in the East are deprived of certain capabilities that European nations are endowed with.

One day Eastern nations were advanced scientifically, and at the same time nations in the West were in the darkness of ignorance. There have been several such stages in the history of mankind. However, what is taking place in the present stage of history – something almost unprecedented in the history of mankind – is that Western countries are trying to monopolize scientific knowledge and use it as a tool for exercising political and economic dominance over other countries in the world.

Such attempts have never been recorded in the history of mankind, during which knowledge and civilization have been handed down and transferred from one nation to another. What Western countries are currently doing is unprecedented in history.

In the era of colonialism, colonial states inflicted scientific backwardness on colonized countries. By doing this, they practically barred the progress and development of those nations and also sapped their morale, so that they may feel that they are not capable of making progress.

This also happened to the Iranian nation over a long period of its history. Colonial countries hindered the progress and development of our nation. Of course we do not intend to exonerate the despotic and dictatorial regimes that ruled our country, and we do not aim to ignore their wrong policies and mismanagement. However, colonial states also played a crucial role in keeping our nation underdeveloped.

In the Qajar era, the mismanagement, misguided policies, lack of prudence, greed and indolence of most influential politicians had a very negative effect on our country and nation. However, in this same period when a prominent personality like Mirza Taqi-Khan Amirkabir emerged on the political scene of our country and rightly recognized the role of scientific growth in the country's progress and development, the second factor, i.e. foreign influence, unveiled itself, and colonial powers made every attempt to remove Amirkabir from the political scene of our

country.

This clearly shows that colonial countries are quite aware of the fact that in order to keep a country under their political and economic dominance, they should bar its scientific progress.

A similar situation also existed in our country under the Pahlavi rule. The policies of colonial and Western countries toward Iran over the past centuries are in need of careful study and analysis. There is strong evidence indicating that these policies have been aimed at keeping our country and nation scientifically backward and underdeveloped.

Fortunately, since the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the Iranian people have gained two kinds of awareness, and this has thwarted those countries in their objective. The first awareness on the part of the Iranian people is their belief and confidence in their inherent potential and capability. The Iranian people's second awareness is their realization that arrogant powers are trying to dominate Iran and, as a result, are strongly opposed to our country's scientific progress and development.

Therefore, there are hopes that in the light of the Iranian people's awareness of their innate potential and capability and also their awareness of the enemies' plots and machinations, our nation will succeed in making considerable progress in various fields of science and technology.

I recently read a report in an Iranian publication that had quoted a creditable American statistical institution as saying that the level of knowledge and scientific growth of Iranians residing in the United States, or as they call them Iranian-Americans, is several times as high as the average level of scientific growth of the American people.

In fact, the Iranians here in our country have also displayed considerable scientific growth over the past decades. It is quite likely that those countries holding a hostile attitude toward our nation that are making every effort to pose an obstacle to our scientific progress are afraid that Iranians, with their great and superior talent, will put an end to their monopoly on science.

Today, the Islamic Republic has raised the flag of justice and is determined to confront oppression and defend noble human values. Now if this system with such lofty ideals leads its nation to the peak of scientific progress, certainly the interests of the world's expansionist and domineering powers will be threatened. This is an unavoidable reality.

Considering this reality, we should make every effort to achieve scientific progress. But it should be noted that scientific progress will not be attained through imitation. It will be accomplished through initiative, innovation, originality and the opening of new frontiers in science.

Iranian universities and research centers are entrusted with a heavy responsibility in this regard. I believe what some of our dear academics said at this meeting about the significance of research is quite true. The officials in charge of the country's higher education are expected to take due measures concerning the promotion of research.

Higher education officials should pay attention to the fact that there will be no progress in the field of science and technology without the existence of active research centers. Thus, they should take effective measures to dynamize and give impetus to our research centers.

Considering that it is evening and time to pray and break the fast, there seems to be no more time for me to speak. Therefore, I had better bring my words to an end.

In conclusion, I pray to Almighty Allah to assist us in acting upon Islam and pursuing Islamic objectives, to help our nation attain greater scientific and technological progress as time goes by, and to make His Holiness Imam of the Age – may our souls be sacrificed for his sake – pleased and contented with us.

I also pray to the Almighty to help us benefit from the divine blessings of the holy month of Ramazan, achieve spiritual progress and rectify our deeds in this holy month.

I hope whatever we do, whatever we say and whatever we have in mind will be for the sake of and in the way of Allah.

Greetings be upon you and Allah’s mercy and blessings