Islam

Political power is a responsibility

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Solomon, an Israelite Prophet as well as a King, was the ruler of Palestine and Syria. While engaged in trying to win over the Queen of Sheba in both the political and religious sense, he asked for the throne of the Queen of Sheba to be brought to him.

The queen and her throne were hundreds of miles away at that time, but because he had been endowed with special powers, he expected his order to have immediate effect.

The Quran refers to how Solomon responded to his order being instantly complied with in the chapter entitled Al-Naml (The Ants) of the Quran.

The relevant verse is as follows: "But one of them who had some knowledge of the Book said, 'I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye.' When Solomon saw it placed before him, he exclaimed, 'This is by the grace of my Lord, to test whether I am grateful or ungrateful. Whosoever is grateful, it is for the good of his own self; and whosoever is ungrateful, then surely my Lord is self-sufficient and generous." (27:40)

This verse illustrates the Quranic concept of political power, i.e. it is not a kind of a worldly blessing; it is a test set by God. Just as everything that one possesses in this world is a test paper, so also is political power a test paper. God Almighty is constantly watching the behaviour of the ruler to ascertain whether he is just or unjust in performing his duties.

A king is accountable before God just as the common man is.

According to this Quranic concept, political power is a responsibility rather than any kind of blessing. The possession of political power does not mean that the ruler is a superior person, or that the ruler is the master of his subjects, or that the ruler is great and others are not great.