

"Pathways to Pakistan's Prosperity"

Outline

Introduction

"Pakistan's prosperity is dependent on correcting the social, economic and governance problems."

~~How~~ Economic Pathways for Pakistan's Prosperity

- a) Improving the Fiscal management of the country
- b) Increasing the Tax base
- c) Creating Economic opportunities in impoverished areas
- d) Privatization of loss-making state entities.

Governance Pathways for Pakistan's Prosperity

- a) Bridging the Gap between Governing and Governed.
- b) Reducing Red-tapism and Bureaucratic hurdles
- c) Increasing the efficacy of Local Governments
- d) Ensuring Meritocracy in Public organizations

Social Pathways for Pakistan's Prosperity

- a) Increasing the quality and penetration of Education
- b) Promotion of Tolerance and Compassion within society
- c) Developing quality and affordable healthcare networks
- d) Reducing the gender gap within the workforce

Conclusion

Pakistan is facing a myriad of problems. They range from economic, social, governance-related issues and many more. Since 1947, Pakistan has been facing one economic crisis after another. Partly, this can be attributed to the lack of economic resources and the industrial base the country inherited after independence. However, it does not explain the reasons why the country could never stand on its feet after almost 75 years and counting. With every increasing flip of the calendar's pages, the problems remain the same. In essence, it can be said that Pakistan's economic woes are more structural, as they have cemented themselves in the nation's mind/psyche. Moreover, the country is plagued with governance issues. ~~red~~ Red-tapism and bureaucratic hurdles not only hamper the private citizens' progress but also the public sector's progress too. Lack of effective local governments have created the current rift and gap between the governing and governed. Similarly, the social fabric of the country has also taken a hit; a highly polarized youth/society is what the country offers. Lack of education and decent/qualitative healthcare in the country are forcing many to seek opportunities abroad. All in all, the picture is bleak and many would say there is no hope. However, ~~where~~ one must not lose hope. For wherever there is hope, surely there is a way out. Pakistan's success is something that citizens want. The pathways for that prosperity are achievable, if the country focuses on correcting its economic, social and governance problems.

The first and foremost problem that ^{country has to} tackle is the economy and all related ails. Fiscal management, on the country's part, has been lacking. Even the IMF in its processes regularly advises the country to, 'step up ^{to} its commitment'. Learned corridors on power regularly suggest that the government be cut down to size. Moreover, the spending and collection be aligned to avoid paying visits to the IMF and other international lenders. Frivolous spending and publicity projecting (politically-motivated projects) must be avoided, in order to preserve the balance between the above.

The second point comes from ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~point~~ issue of a low tax-base. It is imperative that the country increase its tax base. Since long, the country's rulers have longed for a tax-to-GDP ratio of 15%, however, till date that ratio has gone up to only 10%. Pakistan has the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios in the region. With neighboring India and Bangladesh collecting more due to their enhanced tax bases. For this will of the government is necessary. Agricultural tax, land tax must be imposed without any 'ifs' and 'buts'. Moreover, increasing the tax base means substantially overhauling the tax infrastructure of the country to accommodate and bring new/old payers. The entities responsible must make use of the latest technologies (Artificial Intelligence/Cloud Computing) to leverage the highest possible results.

The tax bases need ^{additional} tax payers if they want to be increased. One cannot over burden existing tax payers with new taxes. As it would disincentivize existing tax payers because of the additional financial burden. In this regard, creation of economic opportunities in impoverished areas is of utmost importance. These areas

contribute to the informal economy. However, their inclusion in the formal economy is a must. Due to less economic opportunities in areas such as ex-FATA, interior Sindh, Balochistan, these places have become havens for illicit activities that range from petty crimes to hard-core terrorism. Economic opportunities will disincentivize these activities and create a new flourishing and vibrant that is not dependent on illicit money but is generated through real and proper economic activity.

While discussed above, that taxpayers be added and economic growth/activities be promoted. These proposals are ultimately never going to bear fruit if the elephant in the room is not addressed. That is, the public sector entities that are hemorrhaging billions in losses. In today's world, where the private sector has been to be at the forefront of wealth/resource generation. The government's role has been reduced.

Therefore, it is imperative for the state to either privatize those entities which are taking on billions of losses or if they are unable to; ~~not~~ reform them and ^{turn} ~~make~~ those entities into either no profit, no loss entities, or if possible profit-making entities. It must be emphasized that tax-payer must be used to cover up losses of those entities who are under-performing and cannot survive without government intervention.

Government and governance, as regarded by many, is the sacred trust between the public and the public-office holders. Every state strives for maintaining and improving this trust. Alas, this trust in Pakistan is not so well-kept. ~~The problems~~ ^{There the public regard} ~~regarded~~ a government and its functionaries as aloof from the situation on the ground. The disconnect between the governing and the

governed has grown considerably. In order to, correct this perception/motion that public officials are out of reach. Considerable efforts are required on part of the state and the officers. On the state level, policy frameworks for quick redressals of grievances must be devised. Moreover, adequate capacity building of officers must be done. In order to, inculcate an tolerant and humane approach when dealing with the public at large.

If capacity-building is being done on officers to treat the public as tolerantly as possible, then it must be also be done to empower them to cut through all the red-tape and hurdles. As a popular character once remarked on bureaucratic red-tapism, "Red-tape is what holds the nation." Policy frameworks must be implemented to ^{reduce} ease the over-regularizations of processes. Similarly, programs such as Pakistan Single window must be fully implemented throughout the country. Laws which are not relevant to this current time must be reformed. Moreover, laws which complicate procedures/processes must be looked at in order to streamline government working. ♣

The best results of any program can be conceived if they are implemented at the local level. Local governments are still the best way to carry out policy implementation, redressal of grievances and so on. Effective local governments are answerable to the community and ensure adequate service delivery. In Pakistan, effective local governments still remains a distant dream even after the 18th Amendment. The financial ^{powers} autonomy of local governments are still no where to be seen. To make sure that every citizen's concern has answered, local governments need both administrative and financial

powers. To date, local governments have had their powers taken back. Moreover, a community should be allowed develop and manage their own community. Through effective structures in place, they can hold their elected representatives responsible.

To ensure that any representative/public office holder does his job effectively and a sense of trust remains within the institution; meritocracy and its ideals must be upheld. Nepotism is the death of institution. In an institution, such as government, on any level, if meritocratic ideals are not upheld then the public starts to mistrust the very part that gave rise to government. The culture of 'Right man for the right job' must be promoted. If this is not done, then institutions shall not remain as effective as they were one before. Governments must ensure that the recruitment processes are transparent and yield only the best results. Furthermore, qualified candidates must be evaluated not only against the post they are applying for but also on their interactions with the public and the approaches they adopt to address the public's concerns.

A candidate can only do the latter if they are taught crucial social skills during their education. However, in Pakistan, education is just for the sake of education not for the development of the person. This shift is increasingly worrisome as a person is learning only to get their degree, diplomas and so on. Pakistan must bring a societal shift in which the purpose of education is not pass classes but to reform/transform a person into useful member of society. For this, the quality of education and the penetration of education must be increased. The

effect of education is that it transforms a person into a rational ~~an~~ thinking individual. It gives a person a lens to objectively look at things and then make up their mind. Pakistan's literacy rate is the worst as the country has the highest number of drop-outs. Moreover, female education in the country is not at a better state. To change this both state and society need to work together. Society is equally responsible for educating their members. if not more

Of Society's many responsibility include that its members are tolerant and compassionate with ~~to~~ ^{their} and outside ^{its} members and people in general. However, the current polarization within the social fabric of the country; clearly shows that this responsibility was not fulfilled to the highest of levels. In order to progress, this wave of polarization must be broken and new wave of tolerance and compassion be started. The best way is to start at the smallest level of society; ^{the} homes of ^{is} ~~are~~ the birthplace of ideals and thoughts that accompany people for the rest of their. If this structure cannot stop this wave and in turn is playing its part then the social fabric of this country is surely doomed. However, if ~~it~~ it plays its part and work to promote the message of tolerance and compassion, then society can breath a sigh of relief.

In one way, society can only breath if its healthcare is of the highest standard and not out-of-reach for all members. Affordable and qualitative healthcare are the responsibility of the state. If the constitution of the country guarantees the right to life but there aren't only facilities that provide quality healthcare, then ^{there would} ~~there is no use~~ questions asked from the government all this. To progress in the country must increase

coverage of healthcare facilities. Moreover, it has to improve the quality of healthcare that is being provided. For the country to progress, its citizens must be able to access quality healthcare at an affordable. For countries like Pakistan, it is a balancing act to ensure that social initiatives don't drain out the fiscal pool. Whatever the cost may be, it must ensure that its population remains healthy. For a healthy population equals a productive and lively ~~paper~~ workforce.

Lastly, if the workforce is being discussed then gender inclusion must be taken into account.

Pakistan's population comprises of close to 49% of women. However, that 49% contribute only 25% in the workforce. For this both state and society need to join hands. A change in mentality is required so that effective participation of both the genders is enabled. Women, in recent years, have stepped up participation in the medical field and others. Although, commendable, this is far too less. To ensure the country prospers both need to hold up their end.

In conclusion, Pakistan's prosperity is ^{dependent} determined on correcting its social, economic and governance related problems. These problems have plagued it for decades and as, the country nears 80 years of independence it should start making strides to correct the current course. By improving its tax base, easing up bureaucratic hurdles and bringing society on board to help steer the course of the country, it can turn around its fate and with a ~~and~~ new decade, a new Pakistan can emerge.

For
Time
Taken = 3hrs