

Pathways to Pakistan's prosperity

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The Essay

"If we want to make Pakistan happy and prosperous, we should wholly and solely concentrate on the well-being of the people, and especially of the masses and the poor. [Muhammad Ali Jinnah]. The prosperity of the country surely lies in the well-being of the people residing in that particular country. Pakistan is currently a developing country, therefore, ^{by} harnessing its education sector and by bringing in technology and innovation in the country, Pakistan can transform its economy and improve the living standards of its citizens. However, Pakistan first needs to tackle several challenges such as that of poor governance, unemployment, political instability, rising brain drain, lack of basic facilities and much more. Pakistan as an agrarian society needs to bring in social reforms, provide quality education, promote entrepreneurship, bring in economic reforms, invest in boosting tourism and must adopt sustainable environmental practices to begin its journey towards prosperity.

One of the first and foremost pathway to Pakistan's prosperity is ensuring effective governance in the country. This could only take place if Pakistan's political climate gains stability. Over the last few years, Pakistan

has faced unprecedented political challenges, road closures, protests and much more. Therefore, it is vital for all the political parties to come together on one page and work in collaboration for the betterment and prosperity of the country. Similarly, the government of Pakistan should take stringent anti-corruption measures and ensure transparency. Pakistan was ranked 133 out of 180 countries on the Corruption Perception Index ²⁰²³ [Transparency International]. Although the country's score improved from the previous year, Pakistan still has a long way to go in this regard. Moreover, Pakistan also needs to strengthen its accountability mechanism by setting clear rules, regulations and standards. Furthermore, effective governance is only possible if the government works on the policing system of Pakistan. From 2011 to 2020, there has been a 10.8% increase in the number of police stations in Pakistan [Gallup]. However, this is not enough. With an ever growing population, the ratio of crime is also growing at an unprecedented rate. Therefore, it is important to empower the police force of Pakistan, provide them training, weapons, modern equipment, education, more resources and establish more ~~more~~ number of police stations to cater the growing crime rate. More importantly, it is vital to hire educated, honest and ethical police members at higher positions so that the police force could become more effective and efficient.

Social reforms are another important pathway towards the prosperity of Pakistan. With inflation in the country, the healthcare sector has become expensive for a good majority of people. Therefore, Pakistan must ensure that its people have access to affordable healthcare in both urban and rural areas.

Similarly, priority should be given to the health of women in Pakistan as it is currently in jeopardy. Women in Pakistan are suffering from reproductive health problems, malnutrition, anemia, breast cancer etc. ^(UNFPA). Therefore, accessible healthcare should be at their doorsteps. Prosperity in Pakistan would not be possible unless poverty

is reduced in the country. Pakistan's poverty rate rose to 25.3% in 2021, adding 13 million to impoverished population [World Bank report]. World Bank report highlighted economic shocks, floods and inflation as the key drivers of worsening poverty. Therefore, these factors need to be addressed on a priority basis in order to reduce the rate of poverty in Pakistan. Improving the lives of the people of Pakistan is another important factor. The government must provide basic facilities such as clean drinking water, roads and infrastructure, employment, affordable housing options and education to improve the lives of the masses in Pakistan. Similarly, Pakistan must ensure the safety and security of its citizens as well as that of

foreigners. Pakistan has been fighting terrorism and militancy since its advent. Currently, Pakistan is conducting intelligence-based operations to counter terrorism. However, full-fledge military operations are required to put an end to terrorism once and for all.

One of the most important factor that would ensure the prosperity of Pakistan is access to quality education for all. An estimated 22.8 million children aged 5-16 years are out of school in Pakistan [UNICEF]. The numbers are even higher in case of girls and women. Gender-wise, boys outnumber girls in every stage of education [UNICEF]. Therefore, access to high quality primary and secondary education in Pakistan must be a priority. The governments should also ensure their parents send all their children to attend school. Similarly, scholarships should be introduced at university-levels so that lower and lower middle class can easily send their children to universities without having to worry about the fees. A greater number of student-exchange program to foreign countries should be introduced for enhanced exposure of the students. More importantly, the gender gap in the education sector of Pakistan must be abridged on a priority. In this regard, Pakistan must address barriers that prevent girls from accessing and succeeding in schools. As of 2022, the male

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literacy rate in Pakistan stands at 70% while the female literacy rate lags behind at 48%. This discrepancy reflects the barriers women and girls face in accessing quality education. Understanding current gender inequality in education requires its historical roots where cultural norms favour boys education, deeming girls education as less important. This perpetuated gender disparity has limited opportunities for girls and women, hindering their progress towards achieving gender equality in education. Therefore, it is essential to implement measures that would prioritise and empower females to pursue education.

Another important pathway is the promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country as they are the engines of a knowledge economy. Pakistan must create an environment that encourages creativity and supports new business ventures. In order to achieve this, Pakistan should invest in research and development and create incentives for the private sector participation in innovation. Similarly, Pakistan should establish technology parks and develop incubation centres to provide funding opportunities for startup and small businesses. With the right and adequate funding and support, these startups and digital businesses can

reach the markets as far as US, UK and Europe without leaving their home country. This would eventually create global connectivity and partnerships with foreign countries that can accelerate the development of Pakistan.

Pakistan also need to work on economic reforms to kickstart its economy. One priority should be tax reforms that generate revenue for the country without overburdening the middle class who rely on their salaries to pass through the month. Similarly, it is vital to support the domestic industry of Pakistan. Incentives and subsidies should be provided to businesses so that the local industry can thrive. More importantly, local products and services should be promoted to cut imports. Moreover foreign direct investment should be promoted. Foreign investment not only bring in manufacturing and service infrastructure and facility in a country but it also create hundreds of jobs for the locals of the host country. For example, with Saudi Aramco's first foray into Pakistan, hundreds of people got employment opportunities to work at their petrol pumps and convenience stores in Pakistan. Furthermore, Pakistan must reduce its trade deficit as well as current account deficit to gain economic stability. This can only occur if Pakistan's exports increase in comparison to its imports till the point that

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Pakistan gets to enjoy current account surplus. This way Pakistan will grow economically and prosper with any kind of foreign aid.

Tourism is another significant sector that can push Pakistan towards prosperity. Countries like Turkey, Malaysia, Azerbaijan and Thailand have built their economies on the basis of tourism. Saudi Arabia is another country that rests the burden of its economy on religious tourism after oil. Pakistan should take into account these examples and start to build its tourism sector. Pakistan is a beautiful country comprising of highest mountain peaks, beautiful valleys, rivers, lakes, meadows, beaches in the south and much more. Therefore, Pakistan must take advantage of its natural beauty and should prosper economically via tourism. For this purpose, Pakistan should build roads and infrastructure for the incoming local and foreign tourists. The government must reach out to famous vloggers and travellers to visit Pakistan and portray its soft image. So that, foreigners can visit Pakistan without worrying. Pakistan has a great scope when it comes to winter tourism. Pakistan should promote climbing and all kinds of winter sports to attract enthusiasts to visit Pakistan to enjoy its winter beauty and to bring in revenue along with them. In order to do this

Pakistan must provide all kinds of facilities. From worldclass lodging facilities to internet, roads and convenience for the incoming tourists should be provided at all costs.

A country cannot become prosperous without adopting sustainable environmental practices. The world is currently going through global boiling [UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres] with 2024 as the hottest year on record which surpassed 1.5°C mark. Therefore, every country must indulge in sustainable practices. For this purpose, Pakistan must preserve all its natural resources and control the growing pollution especially smog in both urban and rural areas. Pakistan is the 8th most vulnerable country to climate change. Therefore, it should switch to clean energy options such as hydel, solar and wind energy to meet its growing energy needs. More importantly, all the citizen of Pakistan should get awareness regarding the changing climate and its impact. Collectively, the government, experts, students and the community should work towards climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Furthermore, revitalizing the agriculture is the need of the hour for an agrarian country like Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan must shift towards mechanization and automation

in the agricultural sector. Machinery such as tractors, harvesters and irrigation equipment can significantly boost productivity and reduce labour costs. Similarly, automating processes such as seeding and weeding enables farmers to accomplish more with less. Moreover, smart and efficient irrigation methods would enable effective management of already scarce water in the country. Therefore, the government must provide subsidies and loans to help farmers acquire agricultural equipment and machinery. Similarly, Pakistan as a climate vulnerable state, should focus on developing and disseminating superior varieties of major crops such as wheat, rice and cotton. Improved seeds can ^{raise} yield by at least 15-30%. Therefore, government needs need to take all these measures to bolster the agricultural sector of Pakistan.

In a nutshell, Pakistan must ensure effective governance, social reforms, high-quality education, promote innovation and entrepreneurship, bring in new economic reforms, invest in the tourism sector, revitalize agricultural sector and adopt sustainable environmental practices to ensure its pathway towards prosperity. Without these measures, Pakistan would

continue to suffer and stay stuck in the cycle of economic and political instability along with debt trap. To ensure that Pakistan can grow and prosper, Pakistan must invest in the betterment of its people and provide them with a good standard of life.

Total words = 1820