

**Measures for better governance**  
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*We have read of the terrible tri-train collisions at Ghotki in recent months, of the unsatisfactory estimates and construction of flyovers, of underpasses and of motor ways, that there are 40 per cent power losses in the Karachi Electric Supply Corporation (KESC) system, that our river telemetry system is in tatters, of the cartelization of some industries and several other negative processes. Is there a common thread among the above?*

Thus, there is a need for some historical introspection to guide us towards a phased interventionist strategy so that the subservient tactics are made to move in the right direction. The use of curative historical (penal) measures needs to be kept to a minimum while simultaneously introducing preventive (forward looking) processes. The need for reliable feedback is absolutely essential.

Historically, we are a nation that has been be-commissioned, investigated, structurally reformed, reorganized, privatized, nationalized and denationalized apart from several high powered judicial enquiries etc which were conducted over the years. We lost half the country in the process but our systems and procedures remain the same. So something is basically at fault. In short, little has worked in our favour to date despite good intentions. Not that we do not move forward a number of steps, but that we also move backwards a number of steps.

Two matters need to be understood, the first being the willingness of the leadership to accept the concept that the principle of public interest comes right on top as it equates fairly and squarely with the welfare of the common man. The second, despite whatever form of government may exist, that wealth must not circulate horizontally amongst the few, but it should flow vertically to involve all in the population value chain. The higher the velocity, the better it will be for us. If this were to come about, what difference does it make to the type of government we may have, because the common man is taken care of! When there are obstacles or insuperable administrative tariff walls in converting excellent strategy into successful tactics, we need to find out what is causing administrative constipation and what administrative castor oil (curative) and what health regimentation (preventive) measures are required to keep the processes conducive to public interest in a bid to ensure the circulation of wealth to the forefront. Further, in matters that demand experience, particularly of understanding technology and managing change, we must accept that this cannot be implemented by those who have not had the relevant hands on experience. If not, the result is the failure of the ad hoc "improvements" which reflect nothing but the failure of the ad hoc!

To be also understood is that what is honoured in a society will be cultivated! The former head of the World Bank and at least one newspaper has reported that the incumbent World Bank president has asked us to clean up our departments! ie to harness corruption. Look at the construction of flyovers, underpasses, motorways, the WAPDA/DISCO/

NEPRA administrative schnozzles. We appear satisfied or highly critical because we know how to react but do not how to pro-act because of our accountability process. The politicians, the businessmen, common public, the bureaucracy ie the stakeholders – all have their sorry tales to narrate. Recently the IMF has also expressed quite pungently its views on corruption and its deleterious effects. In any case, this makes investment in value added medium to long-term projects very problematic. We are told that we have got rid of our international begging bowl but certainly not the innumerable tactical begging bowls that are forced on us every day. All these factors act as hurdles to investment, both in the setting up transitional phase, and later in the continuous phase which makes sustainability difficult. It reflects on interpretation of tax laws, on enforcing contracts and on financial obligations as well as the wasted time (which is of the essence) to get various facilities or permissions to move ahead.

We need to try to follow that we are admonished for; “But waste not by excess, for God loveth not the wasters (Holy Quran 7:31). As a starter: development needs to be defined otherwise it is usually misunderstood. The garbage dump near my house has increased in size over the years, but that is not development! Development means to improve productivity, in the first instance, within the existing resources. This leads to a frame of mind receptive to generating the proper methodology. It is only this frame of mind that ensures that good macro economics is converted into successful micro economics ie the level where our tactics have admittedly failed. We must move over from passive receptivity to active economic determinism. If a society does not want to change, it cannot be reformed through the educational system because the failings attributed to maintaining the status quo will automatically be injected into the education system, as is currently happening.

We need to revisit our “roots” to find out what made the early expansion of Islam successful. It came through revamping of the mind set. The late Dr. Hamidullah, in a series of lectures given by him many years ago in Bahawalpur, had stated “Within 10 years, Madinah had become the capital of a vast state the area of this state, according to historical evidence, was no less than 3,000,000 sq kms which means that during 10 years, the average expansion was 845 sq kms per day. This expansion was achieved partly through peaceful means and partly through war ..... details of casualties .... the average number of enemies killed in the course of conquests .... works out to be less than 240 people were killed... this was an example.... providing a practical precedent of avoiding necessary bloodshed by the Prophet (pbuh).”

This proves the power of concepts versus coercion in one form or another. However, never to be forgotten is that we live in no other time but the present, in that sense we cannot move backwards. It is the future that should be our immediate concern. Then what is the common thread in implementation problems? We need to accept that in order to promote development, there are certain hygiene factors that are essential prerequisites. The first is the maintenance of Law and Order (L&A). Not that a good L&A situation brings about development but without it, you cannot develop. It permits the cutting edge ie increasing productivity to remain sharp by providing the protective supporting environment (preventing the edge from rusting).

The second, concerns the continued harassment by various national agencies' begging bowls. This makes sustainability of competitive productivity impossible. Apart from other irritants, these two stand out like sore thumbs. If improvements can be made in this, it will assist in achieving what the founders of Pakistan had envisaged 58 years ago. Generally, when penal action is taken against a public servant, it is the junior rung usually that bears the brunt, however the operating systems remains unchanged.

The fact is that the faults lie higher up. The common thread is the difficulty in holding the seniors accountable. This arises out of discontinuities in the process of converting strategies into solutions at the ground level. So this goes back to introducing transparency in the administrative process; to containing corruption, not eliminating it; to making a gear shift from having judicial review of executive decisions to ensuring review of executive decisions is only made within the Executive. This is in concurrence with Islamic tradition going back to the days of the Holy Prophet (pubh) when all systems were in overdrive.

Finally, it may be stated that we all complain of the lack of infrastructure and aver that we need to hasten social development (trickle down has yet to work) without giving a second's thought to removing the discontinuities, which if done will automatically bring about a much more satisfied populace and is that not our objective?

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