**Profiling Misfortunes Of Punjab**

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During my farming days in Kasur, part of my land was fronted along river Sutlej. During winter days it would be a delight to enjoy barbeque along the riverbank in the company of friends. Sutlej waters are controlled by India under the Indus Treaty. In normal times the flow of water was limited, however during the rainy monsoon season that would change. With gushing rain waters, the Indian reservoir capacity would overflow and they would release the excess water downstream causing floods and havoc. Sutlej, like other Punjab rivers, has a meandering flow changing its course several times over decades.

One particular year these powerful waters hit a part of my farm. My manager informed me and I rushed over with Afzal Ghauri to assess the danger and take steps to curtail losses. That is when I witnessed the power of Mother Nature; the rising flood waters cut into nearly 20 acres and washed them away. It was like a sharp knife cutting through a cake as we watched on helplessly. I felt sad, and it probably showed on my face that prompted a pious, God-fearing neighbor to comment, “Raab agay kehda zoor aiy Khanji?” It was a statement of fact that soothed me. It also made me reflect that while farmers enjoy the bounties of Allah through their produce; they are also most vulnerable to any change. It creates a special bond with Nature and the need to be subservient to His will.

Pakistan’s farming sector is headed for a huge debacle when farmers are denied their ability to redeploy their working capital for future crops.

The farming community in Punjab is the backbone of it social structure. More than 60% per cent of Punjabis depend on it for their livelihood. Wheat is a staple crop for most of them that feeds the whole nation. After the growing cycle and harvesting by farmers, the supply chain takes over, which is controlled by the Government through the Food and Revenue Departments. Both these departments are renowned for their corruption. Wheat bags known as “bardana” are distributed to farmers by these departments to bag the wheat. Wheat procurement is done by the Government at rates announced annually. This year, it has been a total disaster.

Political leaders at times acquire nicknames through their actions that stick to them for life, like “Diesel” for Maulana Fazal allegedly smuggling fuel across the border. I believe Ms Maryam has acquired the “Tik Tok” title that will hound her for a long time due to her shenanigans after usurping the office of CM.

Back to the wheat disaster, its origins are under the “blue-eyed” interim regime. PM Kakar and CM Naqvi were on a hunt to extract their pound of flesh while on their “joy ride.” They found an opportunity and procured a million tons of wheat from Ukraine just before the harvesting season. Reportedly procurers have lined their pockets with billions of rupees. This ill-timed purchase is a crime that hit millions of growers in Punjab. It has curtailed the storage space available.

The official Punjab’s procurement price was announced as Rs 3900 per 40 Kg bag. It barely covers the cost of production due to soaring fuel and input prices. However, the present regime failed to supply “bardana” and continues to deny wheat procurement at the announced rates. The cash-starved farmers are being forced to sell their crops in the open market at a 30 percent or more discount.

The hoarders are having an extremely lucrative season at the cost of the poor and suffering farmers. What is most tragic is the callous attitude of the Punjab Government while the 2/3rd population of Punjab is impacted. They are ignoring the whole issue and heavily censored media is not permitted to say or write a word about this colossal tragedy. Pakistan’s farming sector is headed for a huge debacle when farmers are denied their ability to redeploy their working capital for future crops.

The farmers have been protesting this cruel treatment this season. When they congregated in Lahore to lodge their peaceful protest, they had the daylights beaten out of them by our guardians, the Punjab Police.

There’s no actual performance of Shahbaz Sharif, who remains clueless. CM Punjab Maryam is living out her childhood fantasies more concerned about how she appears and is perceived.

The government has failed miserably and every honest and patriotic Pakistani is full of resentment. Even the strongest rope breaks when it is overloaded for long periods. The economy is a disaster, inflation is back-breaking, the justice system has been taken for ransom and our youth has no future or hope. Mr Powerful where are you steering the ship to?

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