**Prioritising governance over anti-corruption**

[**M Abas Raza**](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/m-abas-raza)

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The term governance does not yet possess any standard meaning, nor its meaning remained constant. However, the term measures and, inter alia, reflects the elements of participation, transparency in decision making, accountability, rule of law and predictability. In other words, governance could be gauged by the overall management of the respective pillars of a society. The concept is now being subclassified, for instance, as “governance for poverty reduction”, “governance for economic revival”, “governance for inflation control” and “governance for domestic revenue mobilisation”. All subclassifications have different contours and require special expertise to induce good sectoral governance.

Pakistan’s global ranking in various sectors of governance is not at all satisfactory. Political parties and the concerned organisations have miserably failed to ensure good governance in all fields, be it revival of the crippling economy, industrialisation, enhancement in exports, controlling rampant corruption, evasion of taxes and duties, soaring foreign debts, deteriorating education, medical and health facilities and moral values, standard of living of general masses etc. The political forces are busy in securing their respective interests and the population has been put to the mercy of none. Such a state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue where every macro issue is going below the peril point.

[Socially-distanced Grammy ceremony welcomes winners, sets records](https://nation.com.pk/15-Mar-2021/socially-distanced-grammy-ceremony-welcomes-winners-sets-records)

Poor governance and lack of rule of law is increasingly being seen as the root cause of all the problems being faced by Pakistan as it is all pervasive and deeply entrenched in all spheres of life. The Supreme Court of Pakistan, media, civil society and some politicians have accentuated the matter accordingly. Poor governance has affected the political government’s own performance, resultantly during the last couple of years, every organisation seems to be in a state of mismanagement and on the verge of collapse. Politicians are following a “beg and borrow” strategy for financing government expenditure, instead of improving governance for resource/revenue mobilisation.

The entire emphasis has been on anti-corruption activities. Billions of Rupees have been and are being spent on anti-corruption organisations and no government has not so far come up to formulate a foolproof strategy to take the country out the prevailing morass. If governance is not improved with the enforcement of rule of law and corruption and mismanagement continues unleashed and unchecked in government departments, the country would soon become an unmanageable state.

[Pakistan records 2,253 new coronavirus cases in 24 hours](https://nation.com.pk/15-Mar-2021/pakistan-records-2-253-new-coronavirus-cases-in-24-hours)

The national and provincial assemblies have to keep a check over the executive and have to ensure that governments function within the parameters set out in the constitution, functions assigned to them as per the Rules of Business, 1973 and the macro economic targets fixed thereunder and hold the executive to account. However, the assemblies, during the past have failed to take significant measures which could set the example of holding the executive accountable. Legislators usurped the executive functions and indulged in practices like nepotistic recruitment and transfer and postings of the officials to places of their choice instead of the right person for the right job. Parliamentarians have never had the desire or the ability to comprehend legislative content nor the oversight and accountability role of the Parliament. As a result, amendments to the constitution and other laws have been passed in even less than an hour. The most affected being the general masses, trade and industry who find no respite and are at the mercy of hardship with no one coming to their rescue.

[Ireland suspends Oxford vaccine rollout over clot fears](https://nation.com.pk/15-Mar-2021/ireland-suspends-oxford-vaccine-rollout-over-clot-fears)

Lack of good governance is one of the prime basic reasons for bringing the organisations to such a crippled state. Pakistan has a large number of ineffective anti-corruption organisations and agencies, some with overlapping functions and some without adequate powers to detect, investigate and prosecute the corrupt. These laws, inter alia, pertain to (a) internal audit system, (b) federal and provincial procurement rules, (c) internal and external audit systems, Public Accounts Committee, (d) Standing Committees of the parliament, (e) Federal and provincial Ombudsman, (f) National Accountability Bureau, (g) Federal Investigation Agency, (h) Prime Minister’s Inspection Commission and Provincial Inspection Commissions, and (i) Provincial anti-corruption bodies. These organisations, instead of controlling corruption, have themselves become corrupt and are facilitating corruption.

The National Commission for Government Reforms (NCGR) earlier prepared voluminous reports to bring reforms in the government but no effective change could be witnessed except for a half-baked paperless file culture which worked in some organisations and failed in others. However, no organisation seems to have a solution to improve governance and implement the rule of law in true letter and spirit. Moreover, the NCGR just had a recommendatory role for its functions. Even the present Prime Minister admitted that he failed to reform government organisations.

[Billion-years old Meteorite found in Sahara: suspected protoplanet fragment](https://nation.com.pk/14-Mar-2021/billion-years-old-meteorite-found-in-sahara-reportedly-suspected-to-be-extinct-protoplanet-fragment)

There is a dire need to expeditiously set up a National Governance Commission in the country with adequate legal and constitutional protection. The proposed commission, with representation from all the provinces and subject specialists headed by a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, should, inter alia, be assigned the task of (i) improving governance and establishment of the rule of law in the country, (ii) monitoring and performance evaluation of all the government departments with respect to their functions under the Rules of Business, 1973 and targets and objectives fixed annually under various macro-economic policies, and (iii) compliance and adherence to national laws and regulations administered by such organisations. The recommendation of the national governance commission should be made mandatory for all the government ministries, divisions and other public sector organisations and to be implemented within a period of sixty days. Improved governance will not only considerably reduce corruption but would improve economic indicators.

[PM Khan to hold Cabinet meeting on Monday](https://nation.com.pk/14-Mar-2021/pm-khan-to-hold-cabinet-meeting-on-monday)

Pakistan certainly cannot wait for Allah or any messiah to come and streamline organisations and take the country out of the current situation. It is obviously the responsibility of the pillars of the system—the parliament, judiciary, executive and establishment—who need to sit together to formulate rules to improve governance and establish the rule of law in the country.