**Close to collapse**

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The ongoing degenerative process has brought the Islamic Republic of Pakistan close to collapse. The country faces a serious institutional dysfunction. Crises seem insurmountable. There are stories to tell but no solution. Decay and decadence prevails. Debt keeps spiralling, even the burden of pensions and salaries cannot be carried any further. This leap backwards continues unabated after the fateful partyless elections of 1985 that brought the ‘foundrymen’ into the corridors of power. The ‘corruption foundry’ that emerged has moulded the morals of the nation, pushing it into corruption and decadence. The nation has been robbed of its assets and resources. ‘Spend now and pay later’ is a recipe for disaster. A nation must learn to live within its means, the party cannot continue forever.

Recently, after half a century of the emergence of Bangladesh, growth figures of the two countries have been compared. The secular State of Bangladesh has outperformed the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in all areas including population growth. While their focus has been on economic development and education, our priorities remain off track. We continue to fight political battles together with serious security challenges. Despite persistent efforts to combat corruption, the genie has not been bottled. The corrupt have succeeded in avoiding conviction while enjoying their freedom through bails encashing on loopholes within the law of the land. Common law is weak in controlling white-collar crimes. With collapsed institutions, the executive has ceased to function. The police force has become a party to crime instead of combating the menace of corruption.

[World has tools to defeat pandemic, but all need access to jabs to do so: WHO](https://nation.com.pk/23-Dec-2021/world-has-tools-to-defeat-pandemic-but-all-need-access-to-jabs-to-do-so-who)

Trade imbalance eats away the much needed foreign exchange reserves of the country. The exports have exceeded the imports for the last several decades. Even CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) has been mismanaged and has lost its focus after the resignation of the Chairman of the Authority and disbanding of his team. Currently a Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) is looking after the projects. He happens to be a subordinate of the Minister of Planning; both have worked together at ENGRO—so much for merit. Most CPEC initiatives within the country are being financed through loans obtained from Chinese banks. The Orange Train of Lahore and the Sports Complex in Narowal are a total burden on the meagre earnings of the state. There are no payback mechanisms in place.

Merit has been largely ignored with disastrous consequences for the nation. It is not only corruption—nepotism and favouritism has also been deadly. The alarming situation calls for out-of-the-box solutions on an emergency basis to regain lost ground. Yes, the country has talent both at home and abroad which has not been relied upon. The entrenched ‘Mafias’ have succeeded in neutralising any efforts at reforms. It is a perfect example of the blind leading the blind to spread darkness and gloom. The Prime Minister (PM) has pointed out the ailments but the cure has not come mainly because of poor implementation by the team around him. No nation can survive for long in survival mode—progress is an essential ingredient of success which has not been achieved. A roadmap for the future is not clearly defined.

[Turkey-Iran-Pakistan cargo train restarts after 10-year halt](https://nation.com.pk/23-Dec-2021/turkey-iran-pakistan-cargo-train-restarts-after-10-year-halt)

The loaned money has either been misspent or skimmed off by successive governments. While individuals have grown rich and fat, the state continues to starve and rely on additional borrowings which continue to add to the debt burden. Since the first day, income tax payers have been few, never exceeding 1 percent of the total population. Indirect taxes transfers the burden to those who are not in a position to pay. At least the annual tax returns of all public office holders should be published to know their financial contribution in running the business of the state. According to Shabbar Zaidi, the Ex-Chairman of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Pakistan is out of business. The elite capture is complete which has pushed the country to the brink; there has to be a leap forward not backwards.

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