**Why the Mess-Up?**

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As one sits back to ponder why things go wrong in many spheres of our national activities, one factor supersedes all. It’s the absence of merit, lack of care and attention. Why are various systems at the national level in disarray? And with time, people have come to accept them in their deteriorating state. People have also got used to hearing that the country is passing through difficult times. When will the difficult times end and good times begin?

Systems in some countries are so efficiently streamlined and meticulously followed that these countries are quoted the world over for their perfectionism in running their governments. Scandinavian countries are believed to be the most peaceful states with respect for human rights of their citizens. In a different region, New Zealand offers the most orderly and peaceful life to its citizens. Recall how a white supremacist attacked Muslims during the Friday prayers and how the Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern handled the sensitive issue.

She adorned a Muslim dress and attended prayers in the mosque to placate rising feelings of the Muslims. She succeeded. Would any of our prime ministers extend such a gesture, other than mere lip-service, to the minority communities in our country? While the western powers may have made their countries most livable for their citizens, we on the other hand are making our lives harder as time goes by.

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Let me use the cliché – we don’t have to reinvent the wheel. All we need to do is to follow the systems that are running efficiently in the advanced countries. Our systems fail because of the callousness of those who are responsible for running them.

And in the event of a serious mishap in the system, nobody is taken to task. Were a practice of conducting impartial accountability in letter and spirit and those held responsible for dereliction in duty punished, the number of system failures would have been negligible.

Consider the transport systems. From the PIA, Railways, and the road traffic, you can’t tell which of them is in a bigger mess. PIA has the reputation of employing the highest number of workers per plane compared with any other airline. The record of arrival and departure of the flights is deplorable, not to mention the shoddy on-board service provided to the passengers. The national flag carrier, once the pride of performance of the nation, has now been reduced to, for want of better words, a Rest and Recreation Centre for the retired and tired.

After the PIA, come the railways. The only news one often comes across is that of derailment of bogies. Passenger trains and goods trains compete with each other as far as the derailments go. There were frequent railway accidents when Sheikh Rashid was the railways minister. After a serious train accident once, when the opposition members demanded Sh. Rashid’s resignation, he retorted, “Why should I resign, I wasn’t the driver of the train that met with an accident.”

So much for owning the responsibility! Sheikh has never been at a loss for words.

Democracy may well be a viable form of government but why do we invariably get its rough end? In Australian election 2022, Anthony Albanese defeated serving PM Scott Morrision and ascended to the position of the prime minister without any fuss. The new prime minister will spell out the policies of his government and things will move on without making any ripples. Compare it with our type of democracy, which is no less than a circus. One episode of the circus, the so-called long march, has just ended, leaving behind burnt trees in the capital city.

Why the type of democracy we have doesn’t allow real talent to come on top? Take the case of Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute. Dr Saeed Akhtar who had a successful practice in the States came all the way to set up PKLI during the tenure of the PMLN government. Patients, instead of going abroad for kidney and liver transplant could be treated at home at much less cost. But a man of justice didn’t like the idea and ordered the institute to shut down. The good news is that Dr Saeed Akhtar has been recalled from the USA and reappointed as chairman KPLI by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif.

 When will the benefits of democracy trickle down to the common man? For the decades gone by, the poor yokels have only been used for holding placards and shouting slogans in favour of one political party or the other yet they live a life of deprivation and squalor.

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