[Population explosion worsening](https://nation.com.pk/12-Jan-2019/population-explosion-worsening" \t "_new)

Gulsher Panhwer January 12, 2019 The Nation

According to a UN Report quoted in the media, 15, 000 children were born in Pakistan on the eve of 1st day of New Year.  This indicates that we have reached precipice of disaster. According to 2017 figure Pakistani population growth rate was 2.0 compared to 1.7 in India and 0.6 in China

On the other hand government departments are already overburdened and have no capacity to absorb millions of job seekers produced by universities every year. Private sector has been shattered by energy crisis and government’s overarching regulation. The INGOs who provided jobs to thousands and benefited hundreds of thousands has been expelled by government. Funding for local NGOs has dried up again due to strict regulations by government. Saudi Arabia, who provided jobs to thousands of unskilled and skilled labour from Pakistan has raised taxes exorbitantly and has tightened laws on the extent that it is nearly impossible for employees to survive, thousands are returning home from Saudi Arabia only to depend on nothing. Other Gulf and European countries have unfriendly job environment for Pakistanis due to security problems. Agriculture sector that absorbed 70 percent of the workforce directly and indirectly, is on stretcher due to water shortage and prevalence of outdated methods of cultivation. Our agriculture products are   in no position to compete in international commodity markets against highly subsidised agriculture output from developed and most of the developing countries.  No system of preserving and storage of perishable agriculture commodities is in place.  The small farmers incurring high costs on agriculture inputs mostly on high interest rates are doomed when the prices of their agriculture output go down on the extant that they even cannot meet their expenses. The farmers only stuck to agriculture because they don’t find any alternative livelihood source. Industry in hands of politicians, feudals and retried officialdom, from very beginning has not developed. The intention of majority of the industrialists is to start with government loan, declare the industrial units sick and eat away the loan.

Our education system, especially universities haven’t succeeded to discourage white collar job seekers and to persuade them to blue collar technical  sound graduates. Thus we import everything and export virtually nothing. Our society remains consumer society and is averse to any production. Assorted   TV channels continue to ignite the craving of the consumers with low or no purchasing power for expensive consumer products. PTI government under Imran khan has good intention to transform Pakistan into egalitarian society but the mess made during last many decades is not easy to remove and vested interests are so strong that they cannot be dislodged.  Instead they are in position to choke fragile economy and that is exactly the situation where powerful political and business cartels have brought the economy to almost standstill. Dollar selling for 140 Pakistani rupees, circular debt mounting on alarming pace and overall economy nose-diving.  All these indicators reveal that dark forces are at full play in the background and some openly. And dark forces are being provided favourable playing field by high population. Aggressive USA policy under its anti-Pakistan vagabond president Trump has also added to the worry of Pakistan and purported pull-out of USA forces from Afghanistan may add to the trials and tribulation of already beleaguered Pakistani government in case of flood of Afghan refugees.

The opposition in Pakistani wants it pound of flesh. They pay only lip service to interest of Pakistan. Mainstream political parties’ leadership, top officialdom and business elite being fully cognisant to the ground realties launder and hoard looted money from national exchequer to forging lands.  Time and again the rulers,  particularly Nawaz Sharif a  business tycoon himself appeal oversee Pakistanis to invest in Pakistan but he and his ilk  established business in Saudi, UAE  and other European destinations. Such hypocrisy has played deciding role in bringing Pakistan to this pass.

Pakistani society is divided on population control. The religious right has laid strong a foundation in support of population growth in the minds of the common people that no amount of traditional awareness campaigns can dislodge. Poorest families are responsible for galloping increase on the ground that God Almighty sends every soul with guaranteed provision. Prayer leader and even highly qualified religious scholars continue to enjoin the public to increase manpower for countering infidel west.  Government departments fearing the backlash from religious right continue to change sobriquet of tackling population growth measure   like population welfare etc.  The majority of the employees in population department are demotivated and of poor quality. Lower staff only works to eke out living and some high officials and workers of population welfare department are found apologetic and running short of logical points when encountered by religiously motivated persons against population control. Common refrains from most of population department employees goes that population control is wrong but we are here to earn only living. Medical professionals particularly, lady doctors and those who perform surgery with rare exceptions, discourage willing couples for fearing complications and headache of repeated visits by the females availing services.  Thus dream of population control remains a pipe dream.

China is best example for population control and harnessing its population blob for phenomenal economic growth.  But it seems that we are light years away to achieve millstone of population control, and population welfare.

If all stakeholders including government, civil society, religious right, media and political parties join hands sincerely on single agenda of population control, most of the problems of Pakistan can come under control.  The energy, service sectors and infrastructure under stress can be relieved, employment opportunities can be available to each and every job aspirant and exploitation by employers in government, private and non-profit sectors can vanish. And present majority of employees are working on extremely low wages, long hours, in extremely unfavourable economic conditions. Ever increasing road accidents, increasing crime rates, frustrated unemployed youth taking shelter in drugs, violence at home and streets and other social evils, all can be curtailed if we succeeded in controlling population to optimal levels.

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