**Energy Divide**

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Energy production in Pakistan has become a contentious issue, marred by the presence of Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and the resultant increase in bills due to maintenance and service charges. This story of economic division in the energy sector highlights how a basic necessity has been transformed into a privilege, disproportionately affecting the country’s populace.

The energy landscape in Pakistan is primarily shaped by private entities operating within a public grid system. While the intention was to ensure widespread electricity availability, the reality has been fraught with challenges, stemming from issues along the supply chain, fuel extraction, and independent power generation. Energy in Pakistan can be best described as an oligopoly, where a fragmented market is controlled by multiple dominant players, each holding sway over their respective territories. Unfortunately, this sector has become a fragmented monopoly, with organizations prioritizing short-term gains over their moral and ethical obligations.

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Controlling the flow of energy effectively means controlling a state’s economic output. This power dynamic has led to energy theft, where energy is siphoned off the grid with no repercussions, and power providers default on their bills, which subsequently drives up energy costs. These issues have resulted in the failure of the energy supply chain, turning this essential commodity into a privilege for the affluent and a burden for the less fortunate.

The supply chain’s breakdown has given rise to “Load Shedding,” a phenomenon where power distributors intentionally curtail electricity supply to cope with high demand and inadequate supply. This chronic issue underscores the neglect of sustainability by independent energy organizations. Another pressing concern is the lack of comprehensive data on non-commercial energy consumption, which provides a more accurate picture of Pakistan’s energy usage. The focus on commercial consumption has masked the sector’s underdevelopment and the exploitation of the people by multinational organizations.

Government policies further exacerbate the problem, with greater subsidies allocated to oil-based fuels, at the expense of sustainable and renewable energy sources. The combination of insufficient supply, inadequate power transmission infrastructure, and generous incentives for private entities has transformed the energy sector into a profit-driven industry. The alarming lack of progress in regulatory laws perpetuates this issue, with bills unchanged for over three decades.

While Pakistan has witnessed growth and evolution in various sectors, the energy sector remains trapped in a bygone era. As long as this status quo persists, the country will continue to face unnecessary challenges, akin to fighting with one arm tied behind its back by its own choices.

The situation requires immediate attention, including regulatory reform and investment in sustainable energy solutions, to bridge the economic divide exacerbated by IPPs and their associated charges. Pakistan’s journey towards a more equitable and accessible energy landscape must be prioritized to ensure that energy remains a right, not a privilege for all its citizens.

*The writer is a freelance columnist.*