**Rags to Riches**

**The long-term solution to the plagued cricket and other sports in Pakistan lies in adopting a long-term sports policy and a national sports strategy.**

[Saleem Qamar Butt](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/saleem-qamar-butt)

June 26, 2024

[Newspaper](https://www.nation.com.pk/newspaper), [Opinions](https://www.nation.com.pk/opinions), [Columns](https://www.nation.com.pk/columns)

In Pakistan, the best example that fits the idiom ‘Rags to Riches’ is the national cricket team and associates, closely followed up by the politics, media world, and property tycoons, well the bureaucracy takes time. Barring a few examples, our national cricket team has mostly consisted of illiterate or at best semi-literate players with an opaquely rich PCB structure stained by political favouritism and nepotism-based top-down appointments. The consistent pitiable team performance and most recent disgraceful early exit from the ongoing T-20 Cricket World Cup have not only sapped the national morale but also laid bare the rot that plagues this and all other sports in Pakistan. While the hosting of the first-ever T-20 cricket world cup and defeating Pakistan must have made the USA proud, besides adding yet another sport among many already there to bet around, tallying more colours to Las Vegas and New York gambling arenas; however, the fat pockets getting fatter in and around Pakistani cricket, as usual, is likely to remain traceless and go unnoticed. One is perplexed and disappointed to see a large number of retired cricketers and others with a shady past sitting on the TV screens in marathon coverage and indulging in the most meaningless, self-contradictory, and cursory verbose. Such a bizarre environment encircling cricket is indicative of marketing and money-making at the cost of giving emotional and psychological trauma to the cricket-loving Pakistanis by treating them as simpletons.

[Punjab CM gets briefing on establishment of PERA](https://www.nation.com.pk/03-Jul-2024/punjab-cm-gets-briefing-on-establishment-of-pera)

The print and electronic media, TV commercials, and billboard advertisements seem to have played a greater role in making our national cricketers “Zero to Hero” and filthy rich than the performance on the playing field. There is neither any self or enforced discipline nor any check and balance in the system as was revealed in a press conference by the foreign cricket coach Garry Kirsten who resigned after appalling performance by the cricket team. The real test for the PCB is to sack the current team, and all affiliated merry-making officials and give way to a new young talented team based on performance in the PSL and Quaid-e-Azam trophy. As a short-term measure, the newly selected team should preferably have computer analysed statistics based talented representation from all parts of Pakistan including AJK, NA & GB; handed over to the chosen best foreign coach with full control, and a local assistant coach with a minimum of 10 years of experience of coaching national/ international teams. A physiotherapist and an administration manager is all that is needed to effectively manage a national cricket or any other sports team; the rest is all undue fat. The Chairman PCB may like to watch the Hollywood movie “Moneyball” (2011), based on a real story to comprehend the stated points (the success of the ‘Oakland Athletics baseball team and the widespread adoption of advanced analytics demonstrated the effectiveness of data-driven decision-making).

[IHC directs FIA to trace accounts behind judge’s vilification](https://www.nation.com.pk/03-Jul-2024/ihc-directs-fia-to-trace-accounts-behind-judge-s-vilification)

Nevertheless, the long-term solution to the plagued cricket and other sports in Pakistan lies in adopting a long-term sports policy and a national sports strategy. We don’t need voluminous cut-paste papers from fake experts lurking around to seek jobs, perks, and privileges; but sincere visionary people with both sports playing and practical coaching experience at national and international levels. Some cardinal aspects are highlighted here. There is no need to reinvent the wheel; Just look around and analyse what the USA, Russia, China, Australia, Japan, or even Kazakhstan with a small population are doing to win so many Olympic medals. In order to put the horse before the cart, take a natural start by making extra-curricular activities including sports participation mandatory in all schools and colleges from class 5 to 12 (both public and private) with 10% graded marks, That shall play a major role in providing a nursery for well-rounded healthy youth with identification of talent for a specific sport or other fields like arts & craft, poetry, literature, etc. However, with a focus on sports in this piece, it has to be made a mandatory prerequisite for giving licenses to the schools and colleges to have inherent sports facilities like table tennis, volleyball, basketball, tennis, gymnasium, gymnastics, etc., and affiliated sports arenas for hockey, cricket, football, swimming, track events etc. At the moment, the schools, colleges, and universities are merely paper awarding factories, producing an unhealthy and mentally, emotionally, and physically weak generation that has shrunk in even physical size and fitness and without even a shred of sports talent. Thus, we have to get back to the basics instead of playing in the hands of the huge money-minting private education mafia.

[SIFC reviews progress in various sectors](https://www.nation.com.pk/03-Jul-2024/sifc-reviews-progress-in-various-sectors)

Pakistan with a population of 240 million and with a 35% youth bulge has great talent for all sports that are; all we need is a conducive coaching and playing environment while also taking care of a comfortable livelihood. For that, since the Government is unlikely to ever have enough resources, therefore incorporation of the national institutions and corporate world is unavoidable. As a general principle, the three Armed Forces should volunteer to take on the responsibilities of training, coaching, and securing international medals for the chosen/ given teams for example, the PAF can take over responsibility for mostly indoor/ court sports like Squash, tennis, shooting, fencing, archery, etc., and the Pak Navy can take on all water related sports like swimming, rowing, yachting, water polo, diving, etc. and Pak Army can take on athletics, wrestling, Kabadi, tug of war, weight lifting, hockey, and golf, etc., Police can take on volleyball, WAPDA and Pak Railways can sponsor basketball, handball, and baseball respectively. The corporate world may be invited to own a national sports team. Finally, the game of cricket for good or for bad reasons needs to be taken over by the leading Bank in the country, and made to play a role in paying off national debt by betting on predictably unpredictable performances (no pun intended).

[4.5 magnitude earthquake jolts Swat, adjoining areas](https://www.nation.com.pk/03-Jul-2024/4-5-magnitude-earthquake-jolts-swat-adjoining-areas)

Saleem Qamar Butt
The writer is a retired senior army officer with experience in international relations, military diplomacy and analysis of geo-political and strategic security issues.