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About BTTN

Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN) was established at Quetta, on March 1, 2021. It is an autonomous, non-profit, non-partisan, and multidisciplinary Research Center with a focus not limited to Balochistan only, but includes the regional and global dynamics which can influence Pakistan. Broadly, BTTN endeavors to undertake in-depth research of provincial issues with a view to developing the socio, political, and economic status of the province. Its interests also include issues of Energy, Regional Stability, Strategic Stability, Peace and Security, Arms Control and Disarmament, Non-Proliferation, Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Technology, Conflict Resolution, Regional Connectivity, and Socioeconomic development at the national level. Geopolitically, besides South Asia, BTTN's research areas also include regions of Europe and Africa.

BTTN OP-EDs

Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN) Faculty of Research has been writing op-eds on a regular basis on different contemporary issues that are published on various international and national platforms. The opinions expressed in this edition are the authors' individual views and do not reflect the official policy of BTTN or any governmental organization. This electronic review is compiled on a monthly basis.

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Boosting Exports

Musavir Hameed Barech

August 01, 2024

Pakistan has long pursued an import-based economic model, relying heavily on importing goods and services from other countries to meet its domestic consumption and production needs. This resulted in persistent trade deficits. The import expenditures exceeded export revenues, straining the balance of payments, impacting currency stability, and causing indebtedness. The country has by far the lowest export-to-GDP ratio of nine percent among the emerging economies. It, therefore, could not attract much export-oriented foreign direct investment (FDI). Moreover, its major exports remain concentrated within the textile sector (around 60% of total exports) and confined to a few major destinations, such as the USA, EU, UK, and China, which together account for almost 60% of exports. Amid the global tensions, Pakistan's excessive dependence on imports, particularly food items and crude oil, has made it vulnerable to external shocks such as changes in global supply chains, geopolitical tensions, and disruptions in trade relations. Such vulnerabilities have negatively impacted industrial productivity and overall economic growth.

Global rivalries and climate change have compounded the difficulties. The abrupt seasonal variations and a cycle of floods and droughts have badly affected agriculture, resulting in Pakistan having to import cooking oil, pulses, and wheat to cater to the growing needs of its population.

Pakistan faced a significant setback due to a natural calamity that caused extensive damage, resulted in losses amounting to approximately \$31 billion in loss and damage, and required an additional \$15 billion for reconstruction. To compensate for this cost, Pakistan put forward the Resilience, Rehabilitation, Recovery, and Reconstruction Framework (4RF) and successfully got the \$9 billion from international community in the form of loans and grants

This economic plan is built around the Export, E-Pakistan, Environment & Climate Change, Energy & Infrastructure, and Equity & Empowerment. 5Es Framework, which

conforms to the Vision 2025 and puts boosting exports atop it, given its importance vis-à-vis the challenges of economic downturn, high population growth rate, yawning trade gap, and unemployment.

In order to drive economic expansion and revive economic activity, the export-led growth model promotes and prioritizes the production and export of goods and services to international markets, encouraging businesses and industry to strive for a competitive edge. The country can earn foreign exchange to finance imports, repay foreign debt, and invest in development projects. Foreign exchange earnings also contribute to stabilizing the balance of payments and maintaining currency stability. Engaging in international trade exposes domestic firms to global competition and knowledge spillovers, which can drive technological upgrading and innovation. This, in turn, enhances productivity and competitiveness, fostering long-term economic growth.

The export-led economic model will primarily contribute to tackling the long-term boom-and-bust cycles by mitigating the foreign currency liquidity conundrum and preserving the economy's competitiveness by emphasizing efficiency enhancement, market diversification, and product diversification. Export-oriented industries often have higher labor intensity, leading to increased job creation and reduced unemployment rates. This can contribute to poverty reduction and socioeconomic development.

In order to promote exports, the government has launched a number of initiatives. To begin with the 5Es Framework, the government is steering a major transition in the national strategy for economic growth. This innovative framework, known as the 5Es strategy, prioritizes boosting exports over the other four Es.

Further, Pakistan has devised a National Productivity Master Plan in collaboration with the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) and the Korean Development Institute (KDI) to enhance productivity. To diversify the market, Pakistan has signed trade agreements with the Central Asian Republics (CARS) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, as well as established a border market with Iran to improve intra-regional trade. Recognizing China as Pakistan's largest trade partner, the government is actively

engaging with the Chinese government to strengthen exports. While China's imports with the world amount to approximately 3 trillion dollars, imports from Pakistan are currently around 3 billion dollars. To address this disparity, the government can work to identify potential products for the Chinese market, improve trade infrastructure, and negotiate favorable trade agreements.

Pakistan, facing numerous challenges such as low economic growth, a balance of payments crisis, currency depreciations, significant debt servicing, and low industrialization, urgently needs to implement the export lead model. Increasing exports can mitigate the mentioned challenges and set Pakistan on a trajectory of growth and prosperity

<https://www.nation.com.pk/01-Aug-2024/boosting-exports>

Pakistan on the Frontline

Summra Hamid

August 7, 2024

The rising temperatures all around the world and the global transition of ‘global warming’ to ‘global boiling’ marks a critical juncture for humanity. The term “global boiling” was coined by António Guterres, the present head of the United Nations, during a news briefing on 27 July 2023. As our planet heats up, increased water vapour— also a potent greenhouse gas— turbocharges extreme weather events, leading to this new era of “global boiling” showing the increasing severity and intensity of climate change impacts, particularly those related to rising temperatures.

Global boiling compresses the urgent and alarming nature of the current climate situation, highlighting the dire need for immediate and comprehensive action. In such a case, Pakistan, like numerous other nations, is highly vulnerable to the impacts of global boiling. Despite being a fractional emitter (less than 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions), Pakistan ranks as the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change, according to the Global Climate Risk Index. The effects of climate change in Pakistan such as, rising temperatures, extreme weather events, water scarcity, food insecurity, glacier melt, flooding, and coastal vulnerability, have economic as well as social implications for the country. Therefore, Pakistan needs to review its policies pertaining to climate change to apply preventive measures for upcoming implications of climate changes and manage the climate crisis at the present stage.

Agriculture is the backbone of Pakistan’s economy, employing nearly 40 percent of the workforce which contributes about 19 percent to the national GDP. However, rising temperatures are severely disrupting this sector. According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, temperatures in Pakistan have risen by approximately 0.6°C over the past century, and projections suggest a further increase of 1.4-3.7°C by the end of this century. According to the agronomists a 1°C temperature increase can lead to a decline of approximately 194,740 tons in rice production. Similarly, wheat production faces a reduction of about 351,234 tons due to rising temperatures. Maize production is impacted, with an estimated decrease of 387,812 tons. Moreover, rising

temperatures affect sugarcane production, resulting in a decline of around 349,128 tons and cotton production is also compromised, with an approximate reduction of 5,519 tons.

All of the mentioned crops are the top export or consumption crops of Pakistan, impact on its yield will directly affect the GDP of the country. If floods are bringing up fertile soil which can be beneficial for quality crops, higher temperatures may lead to increased evapo-transpiration, which reduces soil moisture and impacts crop yields. Staple crops like wheat, rice, and maize are particularly vulnerable. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) projects that wheat yields could decline by up to eight percent by 2050 due to climate change. This decline in productivity threatens food security and increases the risk of hunger and malnutrition in Pakistan.

Flooding is another major concern. In 2010 and then again in 2022, Pakistan experienced one of the worst floods in its history, affecting over 20 million people and causing economic losses which include damage to structures exceeding \$4 billion, and wheat crop damages were estimated at over \$500 million. The total economic impact may have been as much as \$43 billion.

Moreover, Pakistan has witnessed an alarming increase in extreme heatwaves. The heatwave that struck Karachi in 2015, claiming over approximately 2000 lives, serves as a grim reminder of the deadly effects of rising temperatures. This year, from June 20 to 26, a total of 568 deaths were reported due to extreme temperatures. On June 25 alone, 141 people lost their lives. According to the reports, the Edhi ambulance service transported approximately 30-40 individuals daily to the Karachi morgue during this period. Such extreme heat events are becoming more frequent and intense, posing significant health risks. Rising temperatures have direct and indirect effects on public health, posing a severe threat, particularly to vulnerable populations such as the elderly, children, and outdoor workers. Additionally, higher temperatures exacerbate air pollution, leading to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases..

According to the World Health Organization, air pollution has caused around 60,000 deaths annually in Pakistan. Moreover, vector-borne diseases like malaria and dengue fever are also influenced by rising temperatures. In 2022, Pakistan faced a surge in

dengue cases due to historic flooding, resulting in 52,894 cases and 224 deaths. As of September 2023, Pakistan reported 25,932 confirmed dengue cases and 62 deaths, with 74 percent of these cases occurring in September alone. The National Institute of Health (NIH) in Pakistan also confirmed reports of a growing number of dengue fever cases in recent years, correlating with rising temperatures.

Pakistan is already a water-stressed country, and rising temperatures are exacerbating this issue. The Indus River, which provides water for 90 percent of Pakistan's irrigated land, is highly dependent on glacial melt. As global temperatures rise, the glaciers in the Himalayas, Karakoram, and Hindu Kush Mountain ranges are melting at an accelerated rate. For instance, glaciers in Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regions are melting rapidly, creating over 3,000 lakes, with around 33 at risk of sudden bursting, endangering seven million people.

Although the initial increase in water flow from melting glaciers might seem beneficial to the average person, the long-term consequences will be faced by future generations. Glaciers, which act as natural water reserves, are melting, leaving no preserved water for the future. While the lakes formed from this melt might appear advantageous, extreme heat will eventually cause them to evaporate, leading to their drying up. Although the government has done a little to prevent floods in those regions, unfortunately, it has done nothing to preserve these lakes or the water from the melted glaciers. This lack of action will ultimately result in reduced river flows, causing severe water shortages throughout the country.

According to the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), Pakistan is expected to face absolute water scarcity by 2025 as fresh water availability has dropped to less than 1000 cubic meters per capita. The country's water consumption is projected to increase to 274 Million Acre-Feet by 2025, while supply will be down to 191 MAF, leaving a massive gap of 83 MAF². In 1950, water availability per capita was over 5,000 m³, but it has steadily declined over the years with the increasing heat and high temperatures, and by 2025, it is expected to touch the "absolute water scarcity line". This dire prediction is further supported by the World Resources Institute (WRI), which ranks Pakistan as the 23rd most water-stressed country in the world.

The boiling temperatures and their impacts on Pakistan underscore the urgent need for comprehensive climate action and change in Pakistan policies towards climate change. Mitigating the effects of rising temperatures requires a multi-faceted approach, including enhancing water management and preservation practices, investing in climate-resilient agriculture, improving disaster preparedness particularly regarding the floods, and strengthening public health systems to avoid the spread of diseases and enhancing public health. Additionally, it is crucial that the global community makes every effort to meet respective domestic targets and pool resources to help countries like Pakistan that are already experiencing the crippling consequences of climate change without delay.

Also, Pakistan should actively participate in global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and advocate for climate justice, ensuring that the most vulnerable populations receive the support they need to adapt to a changing climate. The future of Pakistan hinges on its ability to navigate the challenges posed by rising temperatures. With proactive and sustained efforts, it is possible to build a more resilient and sustainable future for all Pakistanis and for the generations to come.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/08/07/pakistan-on-the-frontline/>

Somaliland's Statehood Dilemma

Shahzadi Irrum

August 9, 2024

Around the world, many territories are vying for independence and international recognition. Few of these, like Somaliland, which broke away from Somalia in 1991, have a stronger claim for international recognition. By all accounts, it satisfies every requirement to become a state. It also enjoys considerable international sympathy. And yet after three decades, it remains completely unrecognized.

Somaliland is a self-declared state, recognized only as an autonomous region of Somalia. Despite its de-facto independence, it is not recognized as a sovereign nation by any single country. The Somaliland government asserts that it meets most of the requirements of a sovereign democratic state: it holds free and fair elections, has its own currency and security forces, and issues its own passports. But today, despite its lack of international recognition, Somaliland is among the most intriguing secession cases in contemporary global politics.

Situated on the Gulf of Aden coast in the Horn of Africa, it has fully functioned as a sovereign state for the last three decades. Despite maintaining relationships with other nations, its attempts to get recognition from the global community have been unsuccessful. Thus, this article aims to explore, despite meeting the necessary criteria for statehood, why is Somaliland forced to struggle for formal international recognition.

The territory first gained global attention in the late 19th century, when the area fell under British colonial rule, becoming the British Somaliland protectorate in 1884. This set it apart from neighboring Italian Somaliland, which was to the east and south of it. As Britain withdrew from its empire, the decision was made to grant the territory independence, and on June 26, 1960, the state of Somaliland came into existence. More than 30 countries, including the United Kingdom, immediately recognized it. The new country, though, did not last long. After a few days, on July 1, 1960, the Trust Territory of Somalia (the former Italian Somalia) and the State of Somaliland voluntarily joined to become independent, officially forming the Somali Republic. Once the country

was unified, there was much celebration, but relations between Somalia and Somaliland soon soured. Following its merger with the Somali Republic, the residents of Somaliland felt that their region was being deliberately ignored and marginalized by the central administration in Mogadishu and that their matters and interests were not being sufficiently handled by Somali authorities. Due to these concerns, on May 18, 1991, Somaliland unilaterally opted to secede from Somalia.

Over the three decades since it seceded from Somalia, Somaliland has successfully solidified its position. It has been so generally acknowledged that it satisfies the requirements for statehood outlined in the Montevideo Convention. First, it has a defined territory and has kept control of it. Cities such as Hargeisa Berbera, and Burao are also part of this delineated territory. Second, it clearly has a settled population. According to the most recent estimates, the current population of Somaliland is in the region of 6.2 million people. Third, one of its main selling points is its stable government. In stark contrast to the political chaos that has existed in Somalia for much of the past thirty years, Somaliland has long been a bastion of calm and stability. Crucially its government is fully independent. There is no suspicion that it is merely a proxy for another power. The fourth criterion is the ability to enter into relations with other states, the situation is especially interesting. Compared to many other completely unrecognized states, Somaliland is more accepted internationally. Even beyond its borders, it has forged some degree of political contact with Sweden and the United Kingdom. Besides, it also has representative offices established in the US as well as some European and African nations.

Despite its achievements, Somaliland is not yet recognized by any international and regional institutions like the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU). Also, both the AU and the US cling to the fiction that Somaliland is a part of the broken state of Somalia. The AU's insistence that the continent's colonial borders should remain unchanged is arguably the biggest obstacle keeping all African nations from recognizing Somaliland. Apart from that, the AU wants both parts of the country to be split to agree. However, Somalia refuses to recognize the independence of Somaliland. Furthermore, the union is reluctant to support these kinds of secession initiatives. Union believes that,

these kinds of secession movements may spark unpredictably different secession dynamics throughout the continent.

Recently, Somaliland has struck a major port investment deal with Ethiopia, which is ready to recognize this breakaway state, in exchange for a long-held desire for access to the Red Sea through its Berbera Port. Somalia, which considers Somaliland as part of its own territory, has been angered by the deal and sees it as a breach of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Over the deal, Somalia also has the support of several countries and different organizations that urged Ethiopia to respect Mogadishu's sovereignty. Alternatively, Somaliland is asserting its right to self-determination and sovereignty. It believes that the deal, in which Ethiopia promises to recognize Somaliland as a sovereign state will unlock significant political and economic benefits. In such a situation, Somalia should recognize the sovereignty of Somaliland in order to bring this years-long conflict to a logical end and for the good of the people of both countries. Lastly, it is also imperative for global powers to abandon their historical approach and contribute meaningfully to the region's stability and growth, enabling the African people, who have been deprived of a better life, to finally experience it.

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/09082024-somalilands-statehood-dilemma-oped/>

Role and Implications of Artificial Intelligence in South Asia's Security Structure

Usama Khalid

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Emerging disruptive technologies are making far-reaching changes and modifications in defence affairs. These technologies are likely to bring a radical change and a major transition in military strategy.

Disruptive technology comprises data, Artificial Intelligence, Autonomy, Space Technologies, Hypersonic Systems etc. These technologies are being developed for military purposes mainly by the US, Russia, China, and other countries. This suggests the possibility of a global arms race with uncertain consequences. More countries are also making strides in the field of AI worldwide.

This development is widely and progressively prevailing in a broader South Asia region. China has launched advanced Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs) such as Sea Eagle and Soaring Dragon with medium to high altitude endurance. Another Chinese achievement in the field of AI-integrated weapons is the development of "Sea Whale 2000" which is an Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) that has the capacity to work 2000 meters underwater for 40 days with long endurance missions.

In India, the debate to expand the relevance of AI from the experimental to the operational stage commenced in 2019 by the Defence AI Council (DAIC). For this purpose, India established a special task force to explore various pathways towards becoming an AI power in South Asia. The task force comprises representatives from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) as well as the National Cyber Security Advisor (NCSA), and other academic and research institutions.

DRDO and Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (CAIR) also undertook projects with knowledge-based and combined electronic warfare systems which focus on multi-agent robotics, creating AI algorithms for Simultaneous Localization and Mapping

(SLAM) – is a method used for autonomous vehicles that lets you build a map and localise your vehicle in that map at the same time – , drone swarms and decision support systems, together with data mining and Intelligence, Surveillance, And Reconnaissance (ISR) robots. The Indian Government is joining other states to trade AI technology and LAWS. Israel, for instance, is extensively supplying UAVs to the Indian armed forces. The Indian military is deliberately attempting to use AI-augmented technology in its defence strategy, aiming to prepare Pakistan for mechanised warfare within the next five years.

In Pakistan, the military's use of AI is relatively limited. The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) has introduced tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and "Maritime Patrol Aircraft" to improve the ISR capabilities of the Fleet. Pakistan has also upgraded the previously made military armed drone namely, "Burraq" integrated with "Selex Galileo Technology" in 2019 which has the capability to eliminate targets from a height of 15,000 feet.

In 2018, the Pakistani government successfully established the National Centre of Artificial Intelligence (NCAI), which focuses on scientific research and AI training. The NCAI aims to take the lead in AI development, as well as foster its integration into PAF operations. Primarily, focus on advancing sensor fusion technology which involves merging data from various resources for instance, radars, lidars and cameras to create a unified model. Having nine research labs in different universities emphasises to disentangle AI algorithmic problems. Another research faculty in Pakistan namely 'Sino Pak Centre for AI' is promoting Research and Development (R&D) with separate labs including deep learning, intelligent system designs, computer vision, robotics and applied neural interface.

The Centre of Artificial Intelligence and Computing (CENTIAC) established in 2020, aims at exploring several domains like big data, machine learning, deep learning, predictive analysis and natural language processing (NLP). The development and progress will have an impact on fifth-generation stealth aircrafts, Medium-Altitude Long Endurance (MALE), UAVs and other advanced weaponry under Pakistan's Project Azm. Project Azm is the collaborative effort of Pakistan and Turkey for developing Fifth Generation Fighter Aircrafts (FGFAs) that will be equipped with AI powered Unmanned

Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs) technology. This technology will bring a revolutionary change in the existing aerial combating strategy as well as if acquired will provide Pakistan with strategic advantage over India in the region.

Pakistan, being a developing country offers opportunities for exploring and innovating in the field of AI to make it a rapidly increasing sector for the country. Several leading universities have initiated AI Research hubs like the NUST's National Centre of Robotics and Automation (NCRA) which will provide researchers and scientists a designated space to technologically promote Pakistan. The University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Centre of Intelligent Systems and Networks Research (CISNR) in Peshawar, the NUST National Centre of AI (NCAI) in Islamabad, the UET AI Research Lab in Lahore, and the AI Lab at IBA in Karachi are few leading universities that are providing platform for Youth interested in understanding AI.

Substantially, numerous states have demonstrated keen interest in AI, spanning from advancing their research and development sector to significant investments, all the way to enhancing their corporate structures, economies, and national security strategies. The rise of AI has undeniably posed a substantial challenge to the global arms control framework. Nowhere is this challenge more pronounced than in the most hostile Asian region, where countries like China and India are vigorously modernising their armed forces. Both nations are committing significant resources to the integration of AI technologies within their military operations, further complicating the setting of international arms control as well as destabilising the strategic stability of the broader South Asian region.

<https://www.wqi.world/role-and-implications-of-artificial-intelligence-in-south-asia-s-security-structure/>

From textbooks to Chatbots

Muneeb Ur Rahman

August 11, 2024

For the most of human history, literacy was referred to as a person's ability to read and write texts. Around 3400 BC, in the old ages, the ability to write in Sumerian on a clay tablet to document business contracts and agricultural matters made one literate in Sumer (modern-day Iraq). On the contrary, you wouldn't be considered literate in some discourse communities in 2023, if you didn't have the skills to navigate the internet, send emails, join video calls and use various other apps. As cultures and technologies change and as our understanding of reading and writing gets more complex, definitions of literacy are also evolving.

Initially, the advancements in technology transformed the way people engage, communicate, work and learn. It involves learning via a variety of technological platforms, including computers, the internet, distant learning, or a mix of all these three. But that's not all— it is now remarkably transformed by ChatGPT, a language model that can respond to your questions instantly, engage in dynamic discussions, and even anticipate your next question.

“What is literacy in today's digital world?” is what I recently asked the free, less-powerful version of ChatGPT. The answer was the following: “Literacy in today's digital world goes beyond reading and writing to include digital literacy, media literacy, and information literacy. These skills enable individuals to effectively use digital tools, critically analyze media, and find, evaluate, and utilize information in a complex, interconnected society”.

This artificial intelligence technology known as “generative AI” is capable of producing text, images, audio, and synthetic data, among other kinds of content in a matter of seconds. A vast amount of text, including books, journals, and web pages, were used to train ChatGPT. The language model is better able to produce accurate responses on a variety of subjects, including sports, politics, science and technology. Additionally, the bot is capable of producing creative work, including poetry and fictional stories. This

highly proficient chatbot was developed by Open AI. It processes and analyzes vast volumes of data using machine learning techniques to provide answers to user queries. This language processing software can comprehend both spoken and written human language. When a learner types in a question, ChatGPT responds with an answer that is clear and comes in a number of formats with specific guidelines.

It's like having an informed and knowledgeable assistant at your disposal, willing to help you with any subject, information or inquiry you throw at it. Although it is trained on a massive dataset of diverse internet text, which includes both accurate and inaccurate information, but it can generate highly convincing responses, it can answer questions so accurately that it's legitimately scary. On the one hand, this newfound capability has opened up opportunities. It also raised questions about detrimental cybersecurity attacks against organizations, and deepfakes, which are digitally fabricated images or movies. Misinformation may be disseminated as a result, or even content that appears authentic may be produced.

It also has an impact on general education at colleges and universities. It is able to offer personalized learning experiences that adjust to the particular requirements and learning preferences of every individual. Compared to traditional approaches, this can aid pupils in learning more successfully and efficiently. In contrast there are also significant issues and difficulties with it for education. The tide of academic dishonesty is rising swiftly, and this seems to be the latest wave. It is more concerning that students are not participating in the writing process and are losing out on chances to conduct research, exercise critical thinking, and develop original responses. It appears that some educational institutions are only closing their eyes to what is inevitable, as several have already outlawed the usage of AI models such as ChatGPT. However, instead of ignoring them or viewing them as a kind of cheating, it is crucial to learn how to use AI language models ethically and effectively, as a tool to enhance learning experience, not as a shortcut to avoid the learning process.

Developing digital abilities is essential in the fast-paced digital world of today. Digital skills open doors to a multitude of opportunities, whether you're a professional, student, or someone looking to stay relevant in a tech-driven society. Similar to other

competencies, digital literacy ought to begin in the classroom. But many educational institutions are not equipped with the right technology, teacher training, infrastructure, or learning standards to incorporate digital literacy into the curriculum in an effective manner. Public and Private investments in digital infrastructure, frameworks for policy and governance, and training in the use of digital technology is required for effective digital literacy and skill-building.

The development of generative AI is a revolutionary development that will change the direction of markets and the distribution of power among states. Growing capabilities in AI will have a significant impact on issues related to national security, productivity, growth, and human culture. The digital divide remains an ongoing societal concern, this development may widen the already-existing digital and technological divide globally, making it more difficult for low-income countries to develop.

Revolutions in technology have the ability to shift the power dynamics. Though almost every state is getting ready for an AI future, not every country will see the same effects of this technology. The countries whose populace, express greater optimism and are prepared and willing to integrate AI technology into their institutions and daily lives might be able to outpace their more developed counterparts. Although ChatGPT is a significant technological breakthrough, AI-enabled technology will advance further, the choices we make now will shape the possibilities for the future

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/08/11/from-textbooks-to-chatbots/>

Fostering Peace in South Asia

Sher Ali Kakar

August 12, 2024

On August 5th, Pakistan observed Youm-e-Istehsal (Exploitation Day) to mark the fifth anniversary of India revoking Kashmir's special autonomy and to reiterate solidarity with the people of Kashmir. Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi described it as a turning point in India's history and a new era of progress and prosperity for Jammu and Kashmir. However, Modi's decision to annul the articles granting special rights to Jammu and Kashmir under the Indian constitution left a deep scar on the people of Kashmir, escalated the Pakistan-India rivalry, and affected broader regional interests.

Five years have passed without any diplomatic breakthrough, with diplomatic and trade relations between Islamabad and New Delhi remaining suspended. India's state behaviour has consistently been coercive, marked by state terrorism, false flag operations, and even direct interventions. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, India has adopted an even tougher approach to the disputed Kashmir region and Pakistan. During the recent election campaign, the BJP, as in its previous two terms, used anti-Pakistan and anti-Muslim rhetoric to garner political support. As a follower of the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Singh (RSS), Modi is committed to promoting Hindu nationalism. In recent years, there has been a sharp rise in extrajudicial killings, torture, and custodial deaths in Kashmir. Violence against the Indian Muslim minority has also increased, especially after the implementation of the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019. Recently, a BJP leader made threats against Muslims and vowed to "slaughter 200,000 Muslims" after a cow's head was found near a temple in Delhi.

Modi's government policy aligns with the BJP's historical approach, adopting a staunch stance against perceived external threats and promoting a nationalistic narrative that portrays India as the leader of the region and a rising global power. Modi's policies during his previous two terms were characterized by assertiveness, a tough stance on Pakistan, and anti-Muslim rhetoric. The Indian political and military leadership has repeatedly issued contentious statements, such as reclaiming Azad Jammu and

Kashmir. Additionally, Indian media and think tanks highlight social unrest in Gilgit Baltistan, portraying the people of GB as willing to become part of India and characterizing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as neglecting the interests of the people of GB.

Pakistan has consistently extended diplomatic overtures to India. In May 2023, the then-foreign minister of Pakistan, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, visited India in an attempt to break the ice, but no breakthrough occurred due to the Indian side's reluctance. On the occasion of Youm-e-Istehsal, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif extended an olive branch to India, offering a fresh peace initiative.

The world should not remain silent on India's expansionist designs. It is high time to resolve the long-standing Kashmir dispute, which threatens the peace, stability, and security of South Asia. Progress and prosperity in Kashmir can never be achieved without granting the right of self-determination to the people of Kashmir and implementing the United Nations resolutions on Kashmir.

There is a need for bilateral steps to reduce the trust gap, which includes:

Restoring diplomatic missions as part of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), which will also facilitate the resumption of trade between the two countries. India should cooperate with Pakistan and increase diplomatic engagements at multilateral forums.

Strengthening and institutionalizing the existing CBMs between the two countries, many of which have weakened due to violations by the Indian side. The two sides should introduce CBMs in visa regimes to promote cultural exchange, business, sports, etc.

As part of the Cricket for Peace initiative, the Indian government should allow its national cricket team to participate in the ICC Champions Trophy, to be hosted by Pakistan in February 2025, and resume bilateral series.

Lastly, the Indian government, media, think tanks, and academia need to realize that rivalry between the two nuclear-armed neighbours not only risks the peace and security of the region but also has devastating effects that could entangle global peace. They

should highlight the urgent need to prioritize de-escalation, diplomacy, and peaceful conflict resolution.

<https://www.nation.com.pk/12-Aug-2024/fostering-peace-in-south-asia>

میں نے حال ہی میں اس کالم کے لیے مختلف سرکاری اسکولوں کے طالب علموں کے ساتھ بات چیت کی۔ میرے پاس ان سے پوچھنے کے لیے صرف دو سوالات تھے: "کیا آپ کے اسکولوں میں سرکاری معائنہ ہوتا ہے؟" اور "اگر ہاں، تو اس طرح کے معائنے کے دوران آپ کے اساتذہ کا عام ردعمل کیا ہوتا ہے؟" ان میں سے تقریباً سبھی، چاہے وہ جماعت تیسری کے ہوں یا دسویں کے انکے ایک جیسے جوابات تھے۔ ان کا کہنا تھا کہ ان کے اسکولوں میں معائنے بہت کم ہوتے ہیں۔ تاہم، جب معائنہ ہوتا ہے تو ان کے اساتذہ کو عام طور پر پیشگی اطلاع دی جاتی ہے۔ یہ پیشگی اطلاع اسکولوں کی معمولی تزئین و آرائش کا باعث بنتی ہے، طلباء کے سزا کے لیے استعمال ہونے والی لائٹھیاں الماریوں میں چھپادی جاتی ہیں، اور بہترین اور ذہین طلباء سے پہلی دو قطاریں بھرنے کو کہا جاتا ہے۔ معائنہ کا دن اسکولوں میں ایک پارٹی کی طرح محسوس ہوتا ہے، کیونکہ اساتذہ معائنہ کرنے والے افسران کو سموسے، چائے اور کولڈ ڈرنکس پیش کرتے ہیں۔

میرے کئے گئے فیڈ بک سے جو نتائج سامنے آئے ہیں وہ واضح ہیں: کوئٹہ شہر میں معمول کے معائنے کی کمی کی وجہ سے سرکاری اسکولوں کی اکثریت میں تعلیم کا معیار کافی پست ہے، اور حوصلہ شکنی اور قانونی ممانعت کے باوجود جسمانی سزا کا رواج کم از کم سرکاری اسکولوں میں رائج ہے۔ حالیہ مطالعات میں بچوں کے تعلیمی نتائج اور ان کے بعد کی بالغ زندگیوں پر کم معیاری تعلیم اور جسمانی سزا کے گہرے اور دیرپا اثرات کو اجاگر کیا گیا ہے، جن پر بحث درج ذیل ہے۔

سب سے پہلے، تعلیم کا کم معیار تعلیمی سرگرمیوں میں خراب کارکردگی کا باعث بنتا ہے۔ ناقص وسائل اور غیر تربیت یافتہ اساتذہ کی وجہ سے تعلیم کا معیار پست سے پست تر ہوتا جاتا ہے۔ اس کے نتیجے میں امتحانات میں خراب کارکردگی، ڈراپ آؤٹ کی شرح میں اضافہ اور کالج اور جامعات میں بھی طلباء کو تعلیمی اعتبار سے بہت مشکلوں کا سامنا رہتا ہے۔ دوسری بات یہ کہ معیاری تعلیم انسانی ذہن کی نشوونما کے لیے انتہائی اہم ہے۔ مطالعات سے پتہ چلتا ہے کہ کم معیاری تعلیمی اداروں میں بچوں کی سیکھنے کی رفتار کم ہوتی ہے، اور یہ ان کی سیکھنے کی صلاحیت، تجزیاتی استدلال اور ذہانت کو سست کر دیتا ہے۔ سوم، کم معیاری تعلیم کے معاشی اثرات بھی دور رس ہیں۔ معیاری تعلیم کی عدم موجودگی کم آمدنی والے روزگار کے حصول کے امکانات کو بڑھاتی ہے، جس کے نتیجے میں کافی سارے طلباء آگے کی زندگی میں معاشی مسائل کا شکار رہتے ہیں۔

جہاں تک جسمانی سزا کے اثرات کا تعلق ہے، وہ بھی گہرے اور دور رس ہیں۔ مطالعہ سے پتہ چلتا ہے کہ جسمانی سزا بچوں میں جارحیت اور غیر سماجی رویے جنم دیتا ہے۔ امریکن اکیڈمی آف پیڈیاٹرکس کی ایک تحقیق سے پتا چلا ہے کہ جن بچوں کو جسمانی سزا کا سامنا کرنا پڑتا ہے ان میں پرتشدد رویے کا زیادہ امکان ہوتا ہے اور انہیں صحت مند تعلقات بنانے میں دشواری ہوتی ہے۔ دوم، جسمانی سزا کے نفسیاتی اثرات بھی گہرے ہوتے ہیں۔ یہ تشویش، ڈپریشن، اور دیگر دماغی صحت کے مسائل کی اعلیٰ شرح سے منسلک ہے۔ جسمانی سزا کا نشانہ بننے والے بچوں میں اکثر خود اعتمادی کم ہوتی ہے۔ سوم، جسمانی سزا کے تعلیمی کارکردگی پر منفی اثرات مرتب ہوتے ہیں۔ یہ سیکھنے کے مخالف ماحول پیدا کرتا ہے، جس کی وجہ سے اکثر طلباء میں کچھ نیا سیکھنے کی طلب نہیں رہتی۔ تحقیق سے پتہ چلتا ہے کہ جن اسکولوں میں جسمانی سزا رائج ہے ان کے مقابلے میں وہ اسکول کئی بہتر طلبا تیار کرتے ہیں جہاں ایسی کسی سزا کا تصور نہیں۔ مزید یہ کہ جسمانی سزا کے اثرات جوانی تک ان طلباء پر ہوتے ہیں۔ جن بالغ افراد کو بچپن میں جسمانی سزا دی گئی ہوتی ہے ان میں مجرمانہ رویے، ذہنی صحت کے مسائل اور اپنے بچوں کے ساتھ تشدد کے امکانات بہت زیادہ ہوتے ہیں۔

مجموعی طور پر، تعلیم کا کم معیار اور جسمانی سزا بچوں کی زندگیوں میں شدید مسائل کا باعث بنتی ہے۔ سرکاری اسکولوں میں معائنے نہ ہونے کی وجہ سے اساتذہ میں جوابدہی کا فقدان پیدا ہوا ہے، جو بالآخر تعلیم کے معیار پہ سمجھوتے کا باعث ہے اور ملک میں قانونی ممانعت کے باوجود جسمانی سزا دینے والے اساتذہ پر کوئی خاطر خواہ قانونی کارروائی کی مثال نہیں۔ میں کچھ عرصہ قبل ایک سکول کے اساتذہ سے ملا جنکی ایک بات مجھے اکثر یاد آتی

ہے کہ: "جسمانی سزا کو این جی اوز کے دباؤ پر ختم کیا گیا تھا، ورنہ ہم اساتذہ کبھی بھی اس کو ختم کرنے کے حق میں نہیں تھے۔" ان صاحب نے پوری بحث میں بڑے اعتماد کے ساتھ جسمانی سزا کے صحیح ہونے پہ جواز پیش کیے اور بصد رہے کہ جب تک بچوں کو جسمانی سزا نہ دی جائے وہ نہیں پڑھتے۔ تاہم، جیسا کہ اوپر زیر بحث آیا، تحقیق جسمانی سزا پر پابندی کے فیصلے کی حمایت کرتی ہے کیونکہ اس سے بچوں کی زندگیوں پر منفی اثرات مرتب ہوتے ہیں۔

اسلئے حکام کی طرف سے سرکاری اسکولوں کا اچانک معائنہ معمول بن جانا چاہیے، اس بات کو یقینی بنانا چاہیے کہ ایک سال کے اندر کوئی بھی اسکول بغیر معائنہ کے نہ رہے۔ معائنہ کرنے والی ٹیمیں اکثر سکول کے ریٹائرڈ اساتذہ پر مشتمل ہوتی ہیں۔ اس رواج کو بدلنے کی ضرورت ہے، عوامی نمائندوں کو بھی ان انسپکشنز میں گہری دلچسپی لینی چاہیے اور مختلف متعلقہ محکموں کے لوگوں کو بھی معائنہ کرنے والی ٹیموں کا حصہ بننا چاہیے۔ ایسے اساتذہ جو لائٹھیوں کے ساتھ پائے جائیں یا جنکے متعلق طالب علموں کی طرف سے جسمانی سزا دینے کی اطلاع دی جائے انہیں قانون کے مطابق سزا دی جانی چاہیے۔ حالیہ قوانین کے مطابق کسی بھی اسناد کو کسی بچے پر جسمانی سزا کی اجازت نہیں اور خلاف ورزی کی صورت میں ایک سال تک قید، پچاس ہزار روپے تک جرمانہ یا دونوں سزائیں ہو سکتی ہیں۔ اس قانون پر عمل درآمد ہونا چاہیے۔

مزید یہ کہ باقاعدگی سے بہتر نتائج حاصل کرنے کے لیے اساتذہ کے لیے مناسب تربیت ضروری ہے۔ مزید برآں، ہر استاد کو سالانہ نفسیاتی امتحان سے گزرنا چاہیے تاکہ یہ معلوم کیا جا سکے کہ آیا وہ بچوں کو پڑھانے کے قابل ہیں یا نہیں۔ کیونکہ چھوٹے بچے بہت سے اثرات کا شکار ہوتے ہیں اور منفی رویے نمایاں نقصان پہنچا سکتے ہیں۔ فیلڈ ورک کے دوران بہت سے بچوں نے شکایت کی کہ جب وہ اساتذہ سے سوال پوچھتے ہیں تو اساتذہ غصے میں آ جاتے ہیں۔ بدقسمتی سے ایسے اساتذہ کی تعداد بہت کم ہے جو سوال کرنے پہ حوصلہ افزائی کرتے ہیں۔ اس لیے اس شعبے میں بڑی تبدیلیوں کی ضرورت ہے کیونکہ یہ بچے ملک کا مستقبل ہیں اور کوئی بھی عقلمند قوم اپنے مستقبل کو بے قدری کی نگاہ سے نہیں دیکھتی۔

https://dailyurducolumns.com/blog/asadullah-raisani/quetta-ko-parhne-do.aspx#google_vignette

Behind the Closed Doors: The Truth about Education and Corporal Punishment in Quetta's Govt Schools

Asadullah Raisani

August 18, 2024

I recently had interactions for this piece with students from different government schools, both girls and boys. I had only two questions to ask them: "Do inspections take place in your schools?" and "If yes, what is the typical response of your teachers during such inspections?" Almost all of them, whether they were in class 3 or class 10, had similar responses. They said that inspections were rare in their schools. However, when inspections do occur, their teachers are usually informed in advance. This advance notice leads to minor renovations of the schools, the beating sticks used for corporal punishment are hidden in almira's, and the best and brightest students are asked to fill

the first two rows. The day of the inspection feels like a party in the schools, as teachers contribute money to offer samosas, tea, and cold drinks to the inspecting officers.

I can recall almost the same scenario from when I was in school about 15 years ago. The routine still remains the same. This piece provides a critical analysis of this grave reality, discusses its impacts, and outlines a future course of action in this regard.

The conclusions/findings from the fieldwork I conducted are clear: the standard of education in the majority of government schools on account of lack of routine inspections leading to lack of accountability, in Quetta City, is quite low, and despite the discouragement and legal prohibition of corporal punishment it remains prevalent in these schools. Recent studies have highlighted the profound and long-lasting effects of low-standard education and corporal punishment on children's educational outcomes and their subsequent adult lives, which are discussed as follows.

Firstly, low standard of education leads to poor performance in academic activities. Schools with poor resources and outdated curricula with untrained teachers do not equip students with skills and knowledge. This results in poor performance in tests, increased dropout rates, and limited chances for advancement and college education. Secondly, quality education is important in the development of the human mind. Studies reveal that children in low-standard education settings have a slower learning pace, and this slows their learning, analytical reasoning, and intelligence. Thirdly, the economic repercussions of low-standard education are far-reaching. The absence of quality education increases the chances of obtaining low-earning employment, therefore resulting in low lifetime earnings and poverty.

As far as the effects of corporal punishment are concerned, they are also profound and far-reaching. Study shows that corporal punishment is associated with increased aggression and antisocial behavior in children. A study by the American Academy of Pediatrics found that children who experience corporal punishment are more likely to exhibit violent behavior and have trouble forming healthy relationships. Secondly, the psychological impact of corporal punishment is also profound. It is linked to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Children subjected to physical punishment often develop low self-esteem and a negative self-image. Thirdly, corporal

punishment negatively affects academic performance. It creates a hostile learning environment, leading to disengagement and lower academic achievement. Research indicates that schools where corporal punishment is prevalent tend to have poorer academic outcomes compared to those that prohibit it. Moreover, the effects of corporal punishment extend into adulthood. Adults who were physically punished as children are more likely to engage in criminal behavior, experience mental health issues, and perpetuate the cycle of violence with their own children.

In sum, low standard of education and corporal punishment cause severe problems in children's lives. The lack of proper inspection in government schools has led to a lack of accountability among teachers, ultimately compromising the standard of education and allowing corporal punishment to go unnoticed despite its legal prohibition in the country. I recall a statement by a school teacher some time ago: "Corporal punishment was ended under the pressure of NGOs, and we teachers were never in favor of ending this." He justified corporal punishment with great confidence throughout the discussion. However, as discussed above, research supports the decision to prohibit corporal punishment as it has negative impacts on children's lives.

As a way forward, sudden inspections of government schools by competent authorities should become routine, ensuring that no school goes unnoticed within a calendar year. The inspection teams often consist of retired school teachers. This custom needs to be changed, public representatives should also take keen interest in these inspections and people from different but relevant departments should also be part of inspecting teams. Teachers found with sticks or reported by students for administering corporal punishment should be penalized according to the law. Recent laws state that any teacher convicted of assaulting a child can face imprisonment for up to one year, a fine of up to fifty thousand Rupees, or both. This law should be implemented in letter and spirit.

Last but certainly not least, proper training for teachers is necessary to achieve better outcomes regularly. Additionally, every teacher should undergo a yearly psychological test to determine whether they are fit to teach children. Young children are vulnerable to many influences, and negative attitudes and behaviors can cause significant damage.

Many children during the fieldwork complained that their teachers become furious when they ask questions. Unfortunately, dedicated and devoted teachers are exceptions and are few in number. Therefore, great changes are required in the sector on a war footing because these children are the future of the country, and no wise nation takes its future for granted.

<https://www.wqi.world/behind-closed-doors-the-truth-about-education-and-corporal-punishment-in-quetta-s-government-schools/>

Pakistan's Strategic Edge in South Asia

Dr. Zafar Khan

August 19, 2024

Many presume, including some from the rival state, that Pakistan has not yet carried out Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle (MIRV) test and it is India that has tested for the first time this capability in South Asia. More recently, India tested MIRV technology over Agni-V ranging from 3000km to 5000km.

Pakistan's MIRV test in 2017 with the Ababeel missile challenged India's ballistic missile defense system.

However, it is equally important to note that Pakistan has already successfully tested MIRV technology in January 2017 when it tested a Medium Range Ballistic Missile

(MRBM) Ababeel ranging from 2,200km. Ababeel which has become a credible surface-to-surface ballistic missile can carry multiple warheads to hit multiple targets in multiple locations.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), “The test flight was aimed at validating various design and technical parameters of the weapon system...Ababeel is capable of carrying nuclear warheads and can engage multiple targets with high precision, defeating the enemy’s hostile radars.”

Furthermore, the statement reads, “Development of Ababeel Weapon System is aimed at ensuring survivability of Pakistan’s ballistic missiles in the growing regional Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) environment. This will further reinforce deterrence.”

India’s development of BMD systems and hypersonic capabilities raises the stakes in South Asia.

In the arms race for MIRVing, the United States was the first country to develop MIRV technology in the early 1970s followed by the Soviet Union and other nuclear weapon states. It is reported that Russia may MIRV up to 16 warheads of both the ICBMs and the SLBMs.

MIRVs are much more sophisticated and can hit multiple targets in multiple locations compared to multiple reentry vehicles (MRVs) where multiple warheads hit one target. The rationale for MIRVing was primarily to defeat the deployed defensive systems. That being noted, Pakistan’s rationale for developing and testing MIRV technology is to defeat India’s BMD.

India has been working to develop two types of BMD systems: the first tier is the Prithvi Air Defense (PAD) capable of intercepting high-altitude incoming missiles and the second tier is the Advanced Air Defense (AAD) capable of intercepting the low altitude missiles. The Indian security leadership might be pondering expanding its BMD system and make the perceived defensive system more sophisticated and embracing advanced technologies.

To counter India's BMD, Pakistan may need to enhance its hypersonic missile technology.

India has been the first mover to develop a ballistic missile defense system to protect its major cities, if not the entire India, from the decisive incoming missiles in the broader Southern Asian region. A single factor may not help us understand the rationale for India's acquisition of the BMD system.

However, the deployed defensive system may provide India the shield and sword incentives. Many perceive that India will have the incentive to strike first with the false incentives to shield itself since the defensive systems can be defeated by offensive speed in the form of a high hypersonic system.

As a part of effective countermeasures like the rivals do against each other, Pakistan has tested MIRV technology to undermine the defensive capability of India's BMD and its other sophisticated air defense systems. To retain deterrence balance in South Asia, Pakistan may also need to speed up its other countermeasures such as hypersonic missile capability, which can penetrate the adversary territory and hit the targets quite efficiently without bothering much about the rival sophisticated defensive systems.

Strategic stability in South Asia hinges on effective countermeasures and maintaining deterrence.

It is reported that the Pakistan Air Force has developed hypersonic missile capability after it acquired stealth fighter jets. Many may argue that there is no substantial defensive mechanism to intercept hypersonic weapons. Presumably and quite ambitiously, the defensive systems could be converted into some type of hypervelocity to intercept the incoming hypersonic missile.

However, many may argue that it is not the hypervelocity, but the maneuverability that matters. In any case, speed matters too, which makes the potential adversary vulnerable to preemptive strikes. India has already developed a BrahMos supersonic cruise missile. It has now been trying to turn this into hypersonic missile capability.

In doing so, India is being tempted to escalate dominance and counterforce preemptive strikes in South Asia, which potentially increases crisis instability, arms race, and unintended consequences. Pakistan will need to produce effective countermeasures to offset India's offensive capabilities. This is to retain deterrence balance and ensure broader strategic stability in South Asia.

<https://stratheia.com/pakistans-strategic-countermeasures-in-south-asia/>

Surviving on the Edge

Asadullah Raisani

August 21, 2024

Imagine a man in his 30s earning around 30 thousand rupees a month as a daily wage worker. He must pay his house rent, provide for and educate his four children, feed his wife and parents, and cover the medical expenses of his ailing and aging parents, all within these 30 thousand rupees.

No economist in the world can formulate a monthly budget for such a person. He is vulnerable to numerous insecurities and burdens, leading a life that is simply hellish as he struggles to make ends meet for the sake of his children. The plight of this common man is not unique; it resonates deeply across the landscapes of Dalbandin, Panjgur,

Noshki, Barkhan, Kholu, Chaghi, Kalat, and other remote areas of Balochistan, where economic opportunities are scarce and survival hinges precariously on meager wages. In these regions, individuals earn even less than our imagined daily wage workers in the cities, amplifying the hardships faced by families already on the brink of poverty.

I recall a man I met during fieldwork for a study in Dalbandin, who was in his 70s and asked me for a job. If a man in his 70s, when he should be resting, is asking for a job, imagine the condition of people in their 20s or 30s who are responsible for supporting families and still have much of their lives ahead of them. How are they coping with their expenses and the lack of proper job prospects?

This opinion article aims to highlight the severe financial hardships faced by the common people in the country, particularly Balochistan, focusing on the daily struggles of low-income earners. It sheds light on the high costs of healthcare, the poor quality of government education, the unaffordability of private education, the dire nutritional deficiencies resulting from financial constraints, and the increasing inaccessibility of higher education due to financial strain on universities. By presenting these ground realities, the article aims to illustrate the widening socio-economic disparities and the persistent cycle of poverty exacerbated by decisions made by the elite. It seeks to propose a way forward to address these pressing issues and improve the living conditions and future prospects of the affected populations.

I recently learned that the cost of labor and baby delivery in an average private hospital is between 150,000 to 200,000 rupees. Due to lack of trust in government hospitals, people often prefer private hospitals for such cases. Even those who can afford these expenses are frequently dismayed by the high costs relative to the average facilities provided. For those who live paycheck to paycheck, taking out loans to cover these expenses often leads to debt, further compromising their quality of life. Those who run their households on wages, such as laborers, auto-rickshaw drivers, taxi drivers, and roadside stall owners, cannot afford these expenses at all. They are at the mercy of largely inefficient doctors and hospitals.

When it comes to the education of children, the situation is equally grave. The majority of the government schools offer poor quality education, providing below-average skills

and knowledge that leave a large segment of society deprived of the basic education necessary for their careers and adult life. In contrast, private schools offer better, though not ideal, education but charge substantial fees that many families cannot afford. This financial barrier prevents a significant number of children from accessing a higher quality education. Consequently, these disparities in educational opportunities perpetuate social and economic inequalities, keeping classicism alive in the country. The divide between those who can afford private education and those who cannot ensures that the gap between the wealthy and the poor continues to widen, hindering social mobility and overall national progress.

Thirdly, the monthly food ration for a family of six costs around 20 thousand rupees. Lower Middle Class and Lower-Class citizens cannot afford this expense, so they are forced to compromise on their food intake, leading to malnutrition in themselves and their children. This malnutrition often results in diseases like anemia, especially in females, which further complicates their health. An inadequate diet also causes mental and physical retardation, adding to the hardships these individuals face. The lack of proper nutrition affects their ability to work and learn effectively, thereby perpetuating a cycle of poverty and poor health. This situation not only impacts the affected families but also negatively affects the overall well-being and productivity of our society.

Moreover, higher education is becoming more expensive with each passing year. In Balochistan, the situation is particularly dire as universities are compelled to cut scholarships and endowment funds because they are struggling to pay salaries to their staff and teachers. This financial strain further exacerbates the problem, limiting access to higher education for many deserving students. The inability to afford university education means that a significant number of young people are deprived of the opportunities necessary to improve their socio-economic status. As a result, the region continues to face a shortage of qualified professionals, hindering its development and perpetuating the cycle of poverty. This growing inaccessibility to higher education further deepens the existing educational and economic disparities in Balochistan in particular and in Pakistan in general.

In a nutshell, the gap between the ruling and ruled classes is evident in the plans and policies made in the country, particularly regarding the budget. The budget for the current fiscal year is not unique; as usual, the struggling class continues to struggle without any considerable improvement in the country's financial management. They suffer from birth until death, as the lack of proper finances leads to compromised lives. With no business-friendly environment, they continue to struggle to make ends meet, which has become the new normal in Pakistan.

As a way forward, a simple solution can be drawn from Islamic chronicles when Hazrat Abu Bakar (R.A) set his salary equal to that of a laborer to ensure he understood whether the salary was sufficient to cover expenses. This principle aptly underscores that a state's power can be gauged by how safe and secure its weakest citizens are. However, much still needs to be done, and experts are better equipped than any layman to address these issues. There appears to be complete apathy between the ruling and the ruled classes, a divide that must be bridged. A significant number of people struggle to earn a reasonable income due to factors such as aging, lack of employment opportunities, and diminishing purchasing power parity. These realities must be considered when formulating financial policies.

The focus should shift towards addressing giants who easily evade the country's tax net and engage in money laundering and other corrupt practices, rather than burdening those who have little left to spare. It is crucial to prioritize policies that protect and empower vulnerable citizens, ensuring equitable opportunities and security for all. By fostering empathy and accountability, we can forge a path where every citizen, regardless of their circumstances, can thrive with dignity and hope.

<https://www.wgi.world/surviving-on-the-edge/>

عبدالله فرام بلوچستان

August 28, 2024

Asadullah Raisani

عبدالله ایک مزدور ہے جسکی عمر 30 سال کے آس پاس ہے اور وہ روزانہ اجرت پر کام کر کے تقریباً 30 ہزار روپے ماہانہ کمالتا ہے۔ اسے اپنے گھر کا کرایہ ، اپنے چار بچوں کی پرورش اور تعلیم، اپنی بیوی اور والدین کا نان نفقہ، اور اپنے بیمار اور بوڑھے والدین کے طبی اخراجات سب کچھ ان 30 ہزار روپے میں ہی پورا کرنا ہوتا ہے۔ دنیا کا کوئی ماہر معاشیات عبدالله یا کسی بھی ایسے شخص کے لیے ماہانہ بجٹ نہیں بنا سکتا۔ مالی مسائل کے سبب عبدالله جیسے کئی لوگ بے شمار عدم تحفظات کا شکار ہیں اور ایک ایسی زندگی گزار رہے ہیں جو محض سانس لینے کا نام ہے کیونکہ وہ اپنے بچوں کی خاطر زندگی گزارنے کے لیے مسلسل جدوجہد میں لگے ہوئے ہیں۔ عبدالله کی حالت زار منفرد یا نایاب نہیں ہے، ایسے کئی نوجوان پاکستان کے مختلف علاقوں بالخصوص بلوچستان کے علاقے دالبندین، پنجگور، نوشکی، بارکھان، چاغی، قلات اور دیگر دور دراز علاقوں میں ملیں گے جو شاید ماہانہ 30 ہزار بھی نہیں کما پاتے، جہاں معاشی مواقع بہت کم ہیں اور بقا کا انحصار معمولی اجرت پر ہے۔ ان علاقوں میں افراد شہروں میں روزانہ اجرت پر کام کرنے والوں سے بھی کم کماتے ہیں، جس کی وجہ سے انکے خاندان غربت کے دہانے پر زندگیاں گزارنے پر مجبور ہوتے ہیں۔

مجھے ایک شخص کبھی نہیں بھولتا جس سے میں دالبندین میں ایک مطالعہ کے لیے فیلڈ ورک کے دوران ملا تھا، جن کی عمر 70 سال تھی۔ جب انہیں پتا چلا کہ میں کوئٹہ سے کسی کام کے سلسلے دالبندین آیا ہوں تو انکے آنکھوں میں ایک اُمید دکھی اور نہایت لاچارگی سے انہوں نے مجھے کہا، میرا نمبر لکھ لو آپ اور اپنا نمبر بھی مجھے دے دو، مجھے نوکری کی ضرورت ہے، جیسے ہی آپکو میرے لینے کوئی نوکری / کام ملے مجھے ضرور بتانا۔ اب تصور کریں اگر کوئی شخص جسکی عمر 70 سال ہے جس عمر میں اسے آرام کرنا چاہیے، تمام ذمہ داریوں سے بری لازمہ ہونا چاہیے، زندگی کے آخری ایام سکون سے گزارنے چاہئیں، اس عمر میں وہ شخص کام کی تلاش کر رہا ہے تو ایسے اشخاص کی کیا حالت ہوتی ہوگی جنکی عمریں ابھی 20 سے 40 سال کے بیچ ہیں، جنکے اوپر نجانے کتنی ذمہ داریاں ہیں، جنہیں گھر چلانے ہیں، بچے پالنے ہیں اور جو اپنے خاندانوں کی کفالت کے ذمہ دار ہیں اور ان کی اپنی پوری زندگیاں ابھی انکے سامنے ہیں۔ وہ اپنے اخراجات اور مناسب ملازمت کے امکانات کی کمی سے کیسے نمٹ رہے ہوں گے، وہ بھی ایک ایسے صوبے میں جہاں گھنٹوں بجلی کی لوڈشیڈنگ ہوتی ہے، کئی علاقوں میں گیس کی

سہولت نہیں، آدھے سے زیادہ بلوچستان میں انٹرنیٹ کی معیاری سہولت بھی موجود نہیں، اُنے دن ایران اور افغانستان کے ساتھ سرحدیں بند کی جاتی ہیں، سرکاری نوکریاں نہ ہونے کے برابر ہیں اور اب تعلیمی اداروں میں بھی تنخواہوں کا فقدان ہے۔

مجھے حال ہی میں معلوم ہوا کہ ایک اوسط پرائیویٹ ہسپتال میں لیبر اور بچے کی پیدائش کی لاگت ڈیڑھ سے دو لاکھ روپے کے درمیان ہے۔ سرکاری ہسپتالوں پر اعتماد کی کمی کی وجہ سے، لوگ اکثر ایسے معاملات کے لیے پرائیویٹ ہسپتالوں کو ترجیح دیتے ہیں۔ یہاں تک کہ جو لوگ ان اخراجات کو برداشت کر سکتے ہیں وہ بھی فراہم کردہ اوسط سہولتوں کے مقابلے میں زیادہ اخراجات سے اکثر پریشان رہتے ہیں۔ ایسے لوگ جو مہنگائی کی وجہ سے پیسے کی بچت نہیں کر پاتے ایسے معاملات میں مجبوری میں آکر لوگوں سے فرضے مانگ کر ہسپتال کے خرچے پورے کرتے ہیں جس سے انہیں اپنے معیار زندگی پر مزید سمجھوتہ کرنا پڑتا ہے۔ مزدور، آٹو رکشہ ڈرائیور، ٹیکسی ڈرائیور اور سڑک کے کنارے سٹال لگانے والے لوگ اور ان جیسے مزدوری پر اپنا گھر چلانے والے لوگ ایسے معاملات میں ہسپتال کا خرچہ بالکل برداشت نہیں کر سکتے اور وہ کافی حد تک ناکارہ ڈاکٹروں اور ہسپتالوں کے رحم و کرم پر ہوتے ہیں۔

بچوں کی تعلیم کی بات کی جائے تو صورتحال اتنی ہی سنگین ہے۔ سرکاری اسکولوں کی اکثریت ناقص معیار کی تعلیم فراہم کرتی ہے، جو اوسط سے کم مہارت اور علم فراہم کرتی ہے جس کی وجہ سے معاشرے کا ایک بڑا طبقہ اپنے کیریئر اور بالغ زندگی کے لیے ضروری بنیادی تعلیم سے محروم رہتا ہے۔ اس کے برعکس، پرائیویٹ اسکول اگرچہ مثالی نہیں پر بہتر تعلیم پیش کرتے ہیں، لیکن وہ کافی موٹی فیسیں لیتے ہیں جو بہت سے خاندان برداشت نہیں کر سکتے۔ یہ مالی رکاوٹ بچوں کی ایک بہت بڑی تعداد کو اعلیٰ معیاری تعلیم تک رسائی سے روکتی ہے۔ نتیجتاً، تعلیمی مواقع میں یہ فرق سماجی اور معاشی عدم مساوات کو برقرار رکھتے ہوئے ملک میں کلاسزم کو زندہ رکھتے ہیں۔

مزید یہ کہ چھ افراد کے خاندان کے لیے ماہانہ کھانے کا راشن تقریباً 20 ہزار روپے میں آتا ہے۔ نچلے متوسط اور نچلے طبقے کے شہری ان اخراجات کو برداشت نہیں کر سکتے، اس لیے وہ اپنے کھانے کی مقدار پر سمجھوتہ کرنے پر مجبور ہیں، جو ان کے بچوں میں غذائی قلت کا باعث بنتا ہے۔ اس غذائی قلت کا نتیجہ اکثر خون کی کمی جیسی بیماریوں کا باعث بنتا ہے، خاص طور پر خواتین میں، جو ان کی صحت کو مزید پیچیدہ بنا دیتا ہے۔ ناکافی خوراک بھی ذہنی اور جسمانی پسماندگی کا باعث بنتی ہے، جس سے ان افراد کو درپیش مشکلات میں اضافہ ہوتا ہے۔ مناسب غذائیت کی کمی ان کے کام کرنے اور مؤثر طریقے سے سیکھنے کی صلاحیت کو متاثر کرتی ہے، اس طرح غربت اور خراب صحت ایسے خاندانوں کو اپنا مسکن بنا لیتے ہیں۔ یہ صورت حال نہ صرف متاثرہ خاندانوں کو متاثر کرتی ہے بلکہ ہمارے معاشرے کی مجموعی فلاح و بہبود اور پیداواری صلاحیت کو بھی منفی طور پر متاثر کرتی ہے۔

اعلیٰ تعلیم بھی ہر گزرتے سال کے ساتھ مہنگی ہوتی جا رہی ہے۔ بلوچستان میں، صورتحال خاص طور پر سنگین ہے جہاں جامعات اسکالرشپ اور انٹومنٹ فنڈز میں کٹوتی کرنے پر مجبور ہیں کیونکہ وہ اپنے عملے اور اساتذہ کو تنخواہوں کی ادائیگی کے لیے شدید مالی مسائل کا شکار ہیں۔ یہ مالی تناؤ اس مسئلے کو مزید بڑھا دیتا ہے، جس سے بہت سے مستحق طلباء کی اعلیٰ تعلیم تک رسائی محدود ہو جاتی ہے۔ جامعات کی تعلیم کے متحمل ہونے کا مطلب یہ ہے کہ نوجوانوں کی ایک بڑی تعداد اپنی سماجی و اقتصادی حالت کو بہتر بنانے کے لیے ضروری مواقع سے محروم ہے۔ نتیجے کے طور پر، صوبے کو قابل پیشہ ور افراد کی کمی کا سامنا ہے، جو اس کی ترقی میں رکاوٹ ہے اور غربت کے سلسلے کو جاری رکھے ہوئے ہے۔ اعلیٰ تعلیم تک یہ بڑھتی ہوئی عدم رسائی بلوچستان میں بالخصوص اور بالعموم پاکستان میں موجودہ تعلیمی اور معاشی تفاوت کو مزید گہرا کرتی ہے۔

مختصراً، ملک میں بنائے گئے منصوبوں خاص طور پر بجٹ کے حوالے سے حکمران اور محکوم طبقے کے درمیان فرق واضح ہے اور رواں مالی سال کا بجٹ منفرد نہیں۔ ہمیشہ کی طرح، محکوم و جدوجہد کرنے والا طبقہ ملک کے مالیاتی مشکلات کے سبب جدوجہد جاری رکھے ہوئے ہے۔ جبکہ حکمران طبقہ پر کوئی خاطر خواہ اثر نہیں۔

ایک بہتر معاشی مستقبل کے لیے اسلامی تاریخ سے ایک آسان حل نکالا جا سکتا ہے۔ مثلاً جب حضرت ابوبکر رضی اللہ عنہ نے اپنی تنخواہ ایک مزدور کے برابر مقرر کی تاکہ وہ سمجھ سکیں کہ آیا یہ تنخواہ اخراجات کو پورا کرنے کے لیے کافی ہے، یہ اصول مناسب طور پر اس بات کی نشاندہی کرتا ہے کہ ریاست کی طاقت کا اندازہ اس بات سے لگایا

جاسکتا ہے کہ اس کے کمزور ترین شہری کتنے محفوظ اور آسودہ ہیں۔ تاہم، ابھی بھی بہت کچھ کرنے کی ضرورت ہے، اور ماہرین ان مسائل کو حل کرنے کے لیے کسی بھی عام آدمی سے بہتر طور پر لیس ہیں۔ ایسا لگتا ہے کہ حکمران اور محکوم طبقات کے درمیان مکمل بے حسی اور تقسیم ہے، ایک ایسی تقسیم جسے ختم کرنا ضروری ہے۔ اس لیے معاشی پالیسیاں بناتے وقت ایسے طبقے کو خاص طور پر ذہن میں رکھنا چاہیے جنکے پاس روزگار کے مواقع کی کمی ہے، جنکی قوت خرید کم ہے اور مختلف عوامل کے سبب مسلسل مالی جدوجہد میں جٹے رہتے ہے۔ لہذا مالیاتی پالیسیاں بناتے وقت ان حقائق پر غور کرنا چاہیے۔ ایسی پالیسیوں کو ترجیح دینا بہت ضروری ہے جو کمزور شہریوں کو بر لحاظ سے محفوظ اور باختیار بناتی ہیں، سب کے لیے مساوی مواقع اور تحفظ کو یقینی بناتی ہیں۔ ہمدردی اور جوابدہی کو فروغ دے کر، ہم ایک ایسا راستہ بنا سکتے ہیں جہاں ہر شہری خواہ اس کے حالات کچھ بھی ہوں، وقار اور امید کے ساتھ اس ملک و صوبے میں زندگی گزار سکتا ہے۔

<https://dailyurducolumns.com/blog/asadullah-raisani/abdullah-from-balochistan.aspx>

India's nuclear safety and security dilemma

Usama Khalid

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Last month, authorities in Dehradun, the capital city of Uttarakhand, India, arrested a five-member gang for possessing the illegal radioactive substance californium. Californium is a radioactive substance which initiates nuclear chain reactions in nuclear weapons and reactors, serving as power sources. However, the device that was recovered from an alleged gang's custody by the Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) was stolen from the Bhabha Atomic Research Center (BARC). This is not the first incident caught and reported; instead, three other similar instances of radioactive material theft cases surfaced in the past three years. These cases raise a gigantic question mark on the safety, and most importantly, on the security structure of the Indian nuclear programme.

Before delving into the details of these reported theft cases of illicit radioactive material, it is a fundamental requirement to briefly analyze the Indian Nuclear Command and Control (NC&C) structure. The Indian NC&C structure is assertive, which means that complete control of the nuclear facilities, both civilian and military, lies under the control of the country's Nuclear Command Authority (NCA), an amalgamation of political leadership and civil-military bureaucracies.

Despite having the strong assertive NC&C system as has always been propagated, the theft cases of dangerous radioactive material are raising a finger at the safety and security protocols of the Indian nuclear programmes. The facility, BARC, from where such theft cases have occurred, comes under government's oversight and operates under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).

The technical aspect of such radioactive substances can be argued that the quantity of theft substances recovered from the alleged thieves is not as detrimental, but instead the question here is more of a handling of these sensitive materials by the state. The Indian nuclear safety and security system has been breached not once, twice, but

evidently three times in four years which is an alarming sign. This reveals the inadequacy of the Indian authorities in ensuring foolproof security in this regard.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan has issued a brief, yet calculated statement on the issue, "These recurring incidents call into question the measures taken by New Delhi for the safety and security of nuclear and other radioactive material. These incidents also suggest the existence of a black market for sensitive, dual use materials inside India." The apprehension that if theft cases of these sorts are continuously taking place in India, then there might be a possibility of an illegal market place where such toxic substances get sold as well.

The international community is not unaware of India's history of transparency in nuclear exchange agreements. India developed its first atomic bomb in 1974 from a nuclear plant provided by Canada for peaceful purposes. India cheated and violated the norms for peaceful uses of nuclear technology. Despite this blatant violation of the civil nuclear cooperation agreement, the international community and institutions played an unproductive role in hindering India from pursuing this dangerous path, instead indirectly providing India with technical and technological knowledge in this regard.

Now, all eyes are fixed on the international community and institutions on how they are going to react to this threatening situation. However, it is also a bitter fact that India got away with similar cases in the past as well only, because it is one of the strategic partners of the USA, which plays a crucial role in the 21st century Great Power contest. Apart from that, from a nuclear safety and security perspective, these theft cases must be dealt with seriously because if such radioactive materials, irrespective of the quantity, reached the hands of rogue elements it could cause an unimaginable damage that will threaten vital security interests of the USA as well in the region.

Therefore, interference by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) responsible for the safety and security of the civil nuclear reactors of Nuclear Weapon States has become imminent. Additionally, Pakistan and China need to raise this issue proactively at the international forums in order to make the world realize the severity of the issue because neglect of these incidents would be quite detrimental for regional peace and security.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/08/30/indias-nuclear-safety-and-security-dilemma/>