

Overpopulation in Pakistan: A ticking time bomb?

I - Introduction

II - Deciphering overpopulation in Pakistan

III ~~How~~ overpopulation in Pakistan is a ticking time bomb

- 1- Food and Water security
 - i- Food fortification; not meeting international standards
 - ii- Malnourishment; case study of Sindh
 - iii- Pakistan - a water stressed nation
 - iv- War on Water - projections horrifying the masses

2- Less Job opportunities and Brain Drain

- i- Nearly 20 million people left the country in the year 2022.
- ii- Country spending on its intelligent assets but foreigners taking advantage.
- iii- Psychological stress

3- Aggravating Poverty

- i- Inability to meet up Sustainable Development Goal-1
- ii- Many a people went below the poverty line.
- iii- Increased dependency ratio
- iv- Intensified crime rate
- v- Civil unrest

4- Burden on Economy

- i- Crunched and Debt-ridden economy
- ii- Spending on procuring food imports
- iii- Sky-rocketing inflation rise
- iv- Foreign Direct Investment hitting the nadir

5- Toll on Education

- i- A meagre budget of 2.4 percent
- ii- Inability to make it at par with international standards
- iii- Government unable to rejuvenate educational institutions
- iv- Remote area schools; still only primary level education

- 6- Overwhelmed health sector.
- i- Pakistan; still a polio-endemic country
 - ii- Tuberculosis plagues the society
 - iii- Low budget allocation
 - iv- Overburdened health system
 - v- Overwhelming doctor-patient ratio burden

- 7- Comprised Ability of state - spending on socio-economic development
- i- Human Development Index Report 2022
 - ii- Almost No room for spending on development domains.
 - iii- Inability to reduce gender parity

- 8- Enhanced need for accommodating increased population.
- i- Urbanization
 - ii- Land use changes
 - iii- Migration.
 - iv- Threatening sustainability.
 - v- Enhanced ecological footprint.

IV - How overpopulation is Not a Ticking time bomb for Pakistan

- i- Youth bulge; asset for a state
- ii- Proper channelization can yield remunerations
- iii- Examples of India and China.

V - Measures for controlling overpopulation

- i- Incentives for small family sizes
- ii- One child Policy of China
- iii- Family Planning
- iv- Awareness and Education of masses

VI - Conclusion

The jug cannot be filled more than its capacity; if still done, it will lead to its spillage. Overpopulation does the same and its spill over impacts a plethora of domains in the country. It becomes a burden on the resources of the country which are necessary for sustainability of its populace. The developing states like Pakistan that are already struggling with the rollercoaster ride of the debt-ridden economy find it hard to keep a balance between supply and demand of the available ^{resources} necessary for the survival of the masses. The recent census of 2022 revealed the population of Pakistan to be almost 24.2 million; increasing its rank to become the fifth largest population across the world. This overwhelming population becomes a huge ~~load~~ ^{burden} on the economy, health, education sector and undermines the capability of the state to invest in the socioeconomic development of the masses; resultantly producing psychologically stressed masses indulging in illegal means to make both the ends meet. Overpopulation in Pakistan is a ticking time bomb because it ^{does} not allow a country get out of the burden of providing the basic necessities to its whole population and decreases its capability of engaging in socioeconomic progress and technological development; perpetuating the cyclical process of poverty; uneducated and ill-health masses and breeding grounds for the crimes.

Overpopulation is having a population in a state that exceeds its capacity to provide for them adequately ensuring a healthy and progressive populace becoming social and economic assets for the country and proving to be a

beneficial human capital. The overpopulation reduces the effectiveness of the population as it exceeds the carrying capacity of the state and impact the ecological footprint; accommodating more in less space, hence, compromising with space and capabilities for everyone to be polished enough to return his due share to the state. Pakistan is the state that is facing the problem of overpopulation and stands at "late-stage expanding" of the demographic transition due to decreased death rate of the older population resulting in increased dependency ratio of the masses.

The overpopulation in Pakistan is a ticking time bomb as it impacts the food and water resources of the state. It compromises its ability to provide nourishing food to all the citizens; hence, the not meeting the food fortification standards of the International community. The malnourished children of Sindh dying of inability of their bread-winners to procure nourishing food is a stark reminder for the state not fulfilling its basic responsibility. Also, the geographic location and topology of Pakistan also makes its vulnerability enhanced to water security as it is one of the states that are water-stressed and according to a study, the Himalayan glaciers that are the sole source of fresh water for the subcontinent are going to wipe out by 2035 as per climatic predictions due to their rapid melting. Still, more projections exist that predict the probability of the upcoming wars upon water.

Pakistan is a home to a huge youth bulge; almost half of the population is the youth

that ~~which~~ is finding it difficult to procure jobs for it. A study of 2022 revealed that nearly 20 million people left the country in the search of jobs in Europe and the Gulf countries. In this way, the state spending its precious assets to polish them and utilize this groomed potential for the betterment of the society leaves the country and the state faces brain-drain. Further, the ones still looking for the job opportunities and not getting them face mental toll in the form of either not being able to get the job or securing a job that is below their mental calibre; resultant psychological stress ensues causing decreased productivity.

Moreover, overpopulated states face aggravated poverty. The impoverished masses curb the state's ability to materialize the 1st Sustainable Development Goal: Zero Hunger. In the last two years, the country also faced the worst economic crunch due to marked depreciation of the currency, thrusting many a millions below the poverty line. It resultanty enhanced the dependency ratio onto the state, bringing less yield for the country. The impecunious citizens fall prey to the illegal activities becoming the easily approachable instruments for terrorism and criminal activities. The intensified crime rates result in civil unrest.

Furthermore, the overwhelming population burdens the economy of the state. The already crunched and debt-ridden economic edifice of Pakistan finds it difficult to increase the budget for imposing food and agricultural products for providing the needs for its populace. Despite being an agrarian

economy has to resort to import of edible items aggravating the unsustainable economy. ^{Also} But the country faced sky-rocketing inflation hit the citizens hard. It reached the sky-high of 34% which not only horrified the masses but also made the foreign direct investors flee the country due to less progressive opportunities for flourishing of business.

Also, it puts a great toll on academia and educational sector of Pakistan. This burden is aggravated by a meagre budgetary allocation of only 2.4 percent of GDP (Gross-Domestic Product) which makes it unable to meet the international standards. It is still one of the countries struggling with provision of free and compulsory education for all keeping in view the Article 25 A of the constitution of Pakistan. It is a state that still struggles with schools located in remote areas, many a miles away from the inhabited areas along with inability to upgrade them to higher secondary schools.

In addition to that, the health department also faces overwhelming burden and has still been unable to uproot the menace of polio plaguing Pakistan only with Afghanistan that still have this disease as an endemic in the country. Also, Tuberculosis also plagues the society and increases the disease toll on the economy. It also faces the issue of low budgetary allocations making it unable to utilize its expenses and leaving almost no room for overhauling of its system. Further, the health system also faces a huge burden ratio, a study reveals 1 doctor for 10,000 population making equitable

health opportunities for all a distant dream.

Similarly, the overpopulation comprises the ability of Pakistan to spend for the socioeconomic development of the masses. The Human Development Index Report 2022 ranked Pakistan at 161st position among 192 states. The huge toll of providing the basic necessities to all the masses leaves almost no room for spending on developmental projects for the upgradation and betterment of the society. Also, it impacts the capability of the country to reduce the gender parity where Pakistan stands at 145th rank against 146 states.

Furthermore, the increased population beyond the carrying capacity of the state of Pakistan has led to the land use changes for accommodating the people migrating from rural to urban areas for the search of livelihood and better living standard. These endeavours interfere with the climate change by clearing the forest lands for establishing housing societies, industries or farms thereby, threatening the sustainability of the environment. This contributes to the enhanced ecological footprint where every state gives its chunk and making the overwhelming 1.5 of the ecological footprint requiring one and a half of the Earth systems to ensure sustainability.

On the other hand, the overwhelming youth bulge comprising almost half of the population is an asset for the state. This human capital can be translated into economic capital if channelized properly and utilized adequately. It can yield proficient remunerations for the state. It can be seen by observing the examples of China and India that are home to the world's largest and the 2nd

largest populations and are ascertaining their influence on the higher echelons due to their mighty populations.

The state of Pakistan must take ample measures for controlling its overpopulation so that it becomes an asset for it and does not prove to be a burden. The incentives for small family sizes must be propagated by starting a scheme of providing scholarships for their children that meets their educational and health needs. "One child Policy of China" can be attuned to the Pakistani norms and needs so that it fulfills the needs of the Pakistani society. The notion of family planning is considered a stigma in the society; for removing this stigmatisation religious leaders and scholars need to step forward and enlighten the masses for adopting it and achieving its benefits both for themselves and the society. The tool of media must be brought to use for the awareness of the public regarding menace of overpopulation alongwith the beneficial impacts of its successful control.

The overpopulation in Pakistan is a menace that proves to be a burden on the economy of the state to provide primary needs of the masses while reducing its capacity of investing in progressive development of the state and its masses so that it does not reach its highest potential and can not establish its influence in the global corridors. It is an ever-increasing menace of stressing the resources of the state and not allowing room to breathe for the nation to achieve its success and progress. Adequate

measures ~~both~~ addressing ^{both} the religious and social aspects must be propagated from all the forums. The government is spending rightly in provision of free of cost family planning services even in the basic health units of the villages that can help in meeting the touchstone of attaining sustainable population so that the state of Pakistan having potential youth bulge can earn a respectable and honorable place among the states and exert its powerful influence among the countries of the world.