

Democracy and development

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WHILE addressing a huge gathering after performing the ground breaking ceremony of Hala-Moro additional carriage-way, the Prime Minister (PM) said, "democracy is a path and development and prosperity are its goals". Nothing can be more true. Development is meaningless without the welfare of the people. In fact it is a crime against humanity to restrict prosperity to a section of the society. A nation is an extended family. Every home has a street/road that is a connection to the world outside. The state of this path reflects on the health of the home and its inhabitants. Pakistan has been a victim of mismanagement and government-sponsored ignorance campaign. Elected, imposed, manipulated and all other kind of leaders totally ignored human resource development. Only the original 1973 Constitution recognised the individual's right to education and development. The 1977 Martial Law neutralised all gains of democracy and development even tampered with the unanimously agreed Constitution.

Democracy and development are both long-term commitments. Democracy follows an evolutionary course as opposed to the revolutionary mode. Progress is slow but sure. The bounties are evenly distributed and the entire nation moves as a team. There is openness, debate, discussion and consensus. Development requires a game plan and stability/continuity for its implementation.

In this century several Asian countries ventured on the road of economic development. Some took the democratic course, others autocratic and a few tried a mixture. Japan's economic growth stands as a beacon of hope for Asia's emerging democracies. Japan had a plan that was implemented over several decades. After evolving a stable two-party system there was consensus on the approach towards development. Mass education of the general population and government initiative and support for development/industrialisation was started. Impediments in the path of growth were removed. Co-existence of modern and traditional approach was achieved. High standards of education were attained. By the early 1970s the level of technology in Japan had surpassed that in Europe and reached about the same level as in the United States. Today Japan leads the world in manufacturing technology. Now it is turning from initiative to creative technology and more and more basic research has started. All this has been achieved at a moderate human sacrifice. Families have limited time together and the work place dominates.

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South Korea is another success story in Asia. President Park, a dictator, laid the foundation for South Korea's march to development and prosperity. The country capitalised on being a 'late comer'. Institutional framework was provided by the government. Powerful autonomous bodies were created to oversee development. All obstacles to progress including bureaucratic red tape were eliminated. A centre stage to development was provided. Human sacrifice has been tremendous and the distribution of wealth has been skewed. South Korea has serious political problems and student unrest. There have been allegations of human rights abuses.

Singapore is also an important success model. The country has flourished under the dynamic leadership of former Prime Minister Mr Li. The country has an excellent plan of development in all areas under controlled democracy. Singapore has one of the most efficient and honest state machinery. Even the post office is run profitably. Education, growth and nourishment of the younger generation is taken seriously. Mr Li according to some political scientists is one of the biggest statesman of this century but on a very small stage. The country has peace, stability and harmony. There is tolerance for religion, language and cultural diversity. Singapore is a small country with no natural resources. Only an efficient system and able minds have produced one of the most flourishing economy of the world. The country has an excellent future without the toll of human suffering and sacrifice.

The development in China is no small achievement. Educating, feeding and running such a large system is a big feat. There has been a tremendous human toll and sacrifice both during and after the revolution. China is now liberalising the total state control in a planned mode. Unlike the Soviet Union the Chinese transition has been smooth. China has invested heavily in its future and all the indicators point in the right direction.

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Burma has been an autocracy. The country has achieved nothing. There are human rights abuses, political unrest and stagnant economy. Burma is a living proof of the importance of the people's participation in running the state. People of Burma have to be liberated before they can prospect.

A chain is as strong as its weakest link. Similarly a nation is judged by the development, prosperity and growth of its population. An ignorant pedestrian can disrupt the entire flow of traffic and the limousines and Pajeros will come to a grinding halt. Democracy is by no means an ideal system but it ensures participation at all levels. It forces the state apparatus to serve not rule.

A modern state is a system that can only be run with training, education and role definition. A slight infringement can result in chaos. Once the chaotic state takes over it becomes very difficult to restore order. Unfortunately, Pakistan is in this chaotic state. In the name of discipline, martial laws and dictators have been imposed on the nation. Every tyrant created more chaos and disorder as they failed to address the basic issues. It is true, democracy does not provide quick fixes but it ensures results with participation/consensus. Benazir is right 'democracy is a path and development and prosperity its goals'. Democracy and development are inseparable.