

Efforts by Imran Khan in Moving the Country Towards a Green Economy

With efforts being put into elevating the economic conditions of countries, it has become essential to plug in another variable of 'environment' into the economic growth equation. Such an objective can be achieved by moving countries towards a green economy. A green economy refers to the economic activities that allow low carbon emissions, resource efficiency, and social inclusion. According to a report of United Nation Environment Programmed (UNEP), the main areas of work to achieve a green economy are the demonstration of Green Economy approaches with the main focus on access to green finance, technology, and investments and also, on support to countries in terms of development and mainstreaming of macro-economic policies to support the transition to a Green Economy. Adoption of sustainable technologies and further smart steps in this direction can help a country in mapping out a route towards a green economy.

Pakistan is the fifth most exposed country to environmental degradation. These alarming statistics were taken as a warning by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan. In November 2020, Imran Khan spoke on this pertinent issue at the World Economic Forum (WEF) where he pointed out how climate change is a challenge across the globe for the current generation. Following this, this issue was highlighted by him at the Climate Ambition Summit 2020 where he reiterated the need to move towards the use of renewable resources and made a target 60% of national energy production using renewable resources by 2030. It is in these conferences where he stated the solutions such as planting trees and deviating away from coal development projects.

To put a halt to coal development projects, the government has already canceled 2600 MW of its additional development and replaced it with hydroelectricity. If coal was to be used, it would be used via the methods of 'coal-to-gas' and 'coal-to-liquid' which are a much better way to move towards a green economy. The rationale behind this is to limit the number of pollutants released from coal power such as Sulphur dioxide, lead, mercury, and other dangerous pollutants. All these pollutants can be a cause of heart problems, brain damage, and asthma. Moreover, in the conference, it was also decided that by 2030, 60% of energy will be from clean energy renewables and 30% of vehicles will be run by electricity. Along with that, the zero-emission metro line project powers buses by turning cattle dung into methane was approved by the city of Karachi. Full implementation of these measures will prove to positively uplift the environment of the country.

Furthermore, the government's "10 billion Trees Tsunami" initiative and the plan to increase the number of national parks and forests from 30% to 45% has proved to be beneficial for the people laid off from their jobs. This is because of the efforts of the government to employ these people to plant trees across the country. The share of youth that is not in employment; education or training was 31% in 2018. (World Bank, 2018). Hence, this initiative is needed to improve the employment in the country. Steps like these also help in promoting the tourism industry of the country. The "Protected Area Initiative" plans to enhance the protected areas of land from 12% to 15% and also, to preserve the unique biodiversity of the country. This plan managed to increase the number of national parks from 30% to 45% in just a span of one year. Therefore, these green jobs and enhanced tourism that emerged from the improved environment will help in paving the way towards a green economy and at the same time, it will enable people to earn a livelihood for their family.

Another step in the direction of a green economy is the government's initiative of making a five-year Pakistan Electric Vehicle Policy 2020-2025. Under the umbrella of this policy, a launch was held of Pakistan's first-ever locally manufactured electric motorcycle. Imran Khan, at this launch, spoke

about how 17 companies had already shown interest in this initiative and that the main target areas for Pakistan would be Africa, Central Asia, and Afghanistan. This policy is aimed towards enhancing the exports of the country by using local raw materials to manufacture products and it also comprises a framework for the development of an area and charging infrastructure for these electric motorcycles. Pakistan has an oil import bill of about \$13 billion. Therefore, this gap can be contracted by the use of renewable energy in vehicles. Under this policy, some local startups have taken the initiative of manufacturing electric bikes. An example of this can be Teleport. Teleport is a local startup in NIC Peshawar and it has manufactured an electric bike capable of running 100 km on a single charge. All this will elevate the environment as electric vehicles help in reducing dangerous emissions into the atmosphere.

Pakistan has also started work on a lot of green financing instruments. It wants to enter the green bond avenue for financing. Green bonds are designated bonds used to fund various projects that help in improving the environment. On 27 May 2021, WAPDA launched Pakistan's first-ever US-dollar dominated green Eurobond, seeking \$ 500 for environment-friendly projects to increase the share of clean energy shares in the power generation share. Moreover, United Kingdom, Canada, and Germany issued a joint statement to start a dialogue for the model of Pakistan's first Nature Performance Green Bond. Such lookouts by Pakistan for opportunities to be a part of green financing globally will help to combat the negative impacts on the environment.

To sum it all, Pakistan is now holding ground internationally on the issue of environmental degradation and also, is making policies for improvements within the country. Therefore, such efforts by Imran Khan are pertinent in taking economic growth along with environmental improvement.