

Let's redefine the 'common man'

LAHORE: Right now, it takes tons of courage to declare the common man is satisfied with the performance of this government when they can neither afford basic food, nor can they see any job security, let alone creation.

If that is true, then we would have to redefine the common man. The families facing starvation, braving huge utility bills, facing street crimes, seeing increase in corruption will have to be omitted from this definition.

Because commonsense dictates this segment of society comprising labourers, white collar workers, the poor and destitute cannot be pleased with the performance of this government. Perhaps the ruling elite are referring to the likes of Razzak Dawood, Jehangir Tarin, Makhdoom Khusró Bakhtiar, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, etc as common man (as they represent their constituencies). They and their likes are the ears and eyes of the Prime Minister.

Neither the head of the government nor his favored stalwarts have bothered to go to the grassroots and see for themselves the miseries that most Pakistanis are going through on a daily basis.

The people on streets would have been grateful had the ruling party delivered on its promises to create two million jobs a year, handed over at least 25 percent of the five million low-cost houses it promised to construct in five years (not a single house has been handed over to anyone as yet).

The common man would have been overwhelmed with joy had the economic growth been enhanced. The poor that always live in fear of police would have taken a sigh of relief had the police been reformed. The litigants see no improvement in the justice system. Their cases are still pending in lower courts for years and decades.

The development expenditure on infrastructure creates huge opportunities for the poor. That expenditure has been curtailed. Utility bills, particularly of power and gas, have almost doubled in the past 27 months. This certainly would not please the common man.

After dashing the hopes of its electorate this regime comes up with lollipops of Ehsaas programme, loans for youth that hardly cover 1 percent of the total population. The Ehsaas programme in fact is a dole-out to poor families.

The amount is not enough to provide even one week's food to a family. The government hospitals are dysfunctional. There is no accountability of the medical staff that neglects its duty.

The poor at the outdoor patients' wards must waste a full working day to get a dear one examined or treated unless they bribe the lower paramedical staff.

The government schools are producing educated illiterates. The quality education is now available to only those that are well-resourced. This government has back rolled the e-governance introduced by the previous government. The government schools and hospitals were remotely controlled through technology. Absentee teachers and doctors were apprehended by showing real time present in the classroom or hospital by sending their photographs in real time from the place of their duty and biometric attendance system.

If this government could not improve the system then it at least could have maintained the e-governance introduced by its predecessor. This government has made the entire bureaucracy dysfunctional. Decisions are delayed as bureaucrats do not want to take any risk fearing if their initiative, taken in good faith, backfired the National Accountability Bureau would drag them in the streets.

The ministers in the government are drawing room planners. They do not feel obliged to work at grassroots level. They make flowery presentations that depict huge imaginary benefits for the people and the country.

The government is acutely short of funds. It is managing the foreign exchange reserves totally on borrowed money. It is not possible to deliver without adequate funds. The problem of short resources is further compounded by the deteriorating governance. Even the available amount is not transparently consumed.

The past regime doubled its tax revenues from Rs1,900 billion in 2013 to Rs3,942 in 2018. The Prime Minister immediately after assuming power boasted that the tax revenues would be doubled to Rs8,000 within the first two years of his government. Unfortunately, this regime failed to even surpass the tax revenues achieved by the previous government in its last year.

The government cannot deliver without resources and transparency and still it has a delusion that the electorate is satisfied with its performance. The opposition would not have dared to organise street protests had the electorate been happy with this regime.