

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Carefully formulated, effectively implemented and vigorously monitored plan is a panacea for reeling economy. It is heart-rending to note that the planning process in Pakistan has been a superficial, rather theoretical exercise. The ground realities and the real stakeholders were either ignored or taken for granted, resulting in a fiasco. This was the prima facie cause of our disjointed and ill-conceived policies which owe us present precarious situation in every sector of economy, whether it be education, energy, infrastructure, investment or taxes.

It is, however, all not over yet. Tough though, yet the path to economic revival is not impossible if we set our priorities right even at this point in our history. We should capitalise on private sector investment, tax reforms, export-led growth, and effective institutional reforms to put the country in right direction, which would lead to our prosperous and self-reliant future.

One can surely heave a sigh of relief to see a discernable urge of the democratically-elected government to offer quick but permanent remedies to the economic maladies of the country. Planning Commission, the country's supreme think tank responsible for economic planning, has geared itself up, under the vibrant leadership of Professor Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms, to steer the country out of quagmire of crises through sound, sustainable, and viable planning for all sectors of economy. It is making hectic efforts to prepare long-term (Pakistan Vision 2025) and medium term (11th Five Year Plan 2013-18) like planning documents for the country to meet this end.

It is further encouraging to observe that the Planning Commission adheres to participatory and collaborative planning for ensuring effective participation and complete ownership of the real stakeholders in each sector of economy. This is a leap forward in our national planning history. We can aspire now to achieve our growth targets, set after thorough consultation of parliamentarians, private sector, academia, professionals and all those who matter. To lend practical evidence to this belief, a national consultative conference of 1000+ stakeholders was held on 22nd November, 2013 in the Convention Centre, Islamabad under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. People from all walks of life from arts, culture and media to education, energy and infrastructure were invited to attend this one-day consultative conference to solicit their suggestions for Pakistan Vision 2025 and 11th Five-Year Plan 2013-18. More than 2000 distinguished participants gathered together to make this consultative process truly representative and meaningful. Provincial chief ministers, Prime Minister AJK and representatives of all political parties also attended this conference to give maximum ownership to the whole planning exercise across the political divide.

The inaugural address of the prime Minister was followed by brainstorming sessions in groups, formed under seven major thematic areas of Vision 2025. These areas included integrated energy; self-reliance, inclusive and sustainable growth; human and social capital; value-addition and competitiveness in productive sectors; modernisation of

infrastructure and regional connectivity; SMEs and private sector-led growth; and security, institutional reforms and democratic governance. The participants were grouped into almost forty groups under these seven main thematic areas, to facilitate the whole consultative exercise. At the end of the conference, seven theme leaders submitted outcome of the consultation in their respective groups. Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms made all-out efforts to make this event more meaningful and productive in achieving the desired objectives. If things go right as they are planned, one has a fair reason to aspire for good days in our national economic history.