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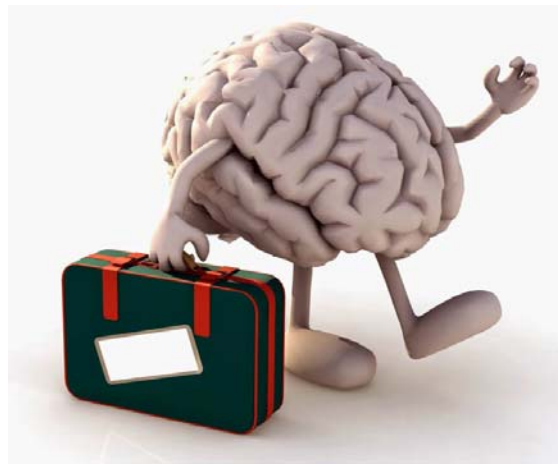
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Pakistan's Fretful Brain Drain



Pakistan's Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment's recent report reveals that the country observed an unprecedented increase in migration in the last two years. Pakistan is facing difficulties in multiple sectors due to this brain drain. The key reason behind this high level of migration is Pakistan's economic and political instability. The country needs to take significant measures to stop this loss of skillful youth.

In the years 2022 and 2023, Pakistan observed an unprecedented brain drain of its skilled youth. According to the data issued by the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, in 2023, the number of highly skilled migrants from Pakistan to other countries reached to 45000 while the number of highly qualified migrants soared to 23000. The report highlighted a dramatic surge in the migration of labor from Pakistan last year. Moreover, some other reports suggest that the ratio of skillful people seeking employment abroad has increased by 119 percent while the ratio of highly qualified individuals soared by 26.6 percent in 2023 as compared to the previous year. Overall, the total number of 107288 skillful migrants in the

last two years exceeds the total number of 100039 people migrating from Pakistan in the period 2017-2021.

Furthermore, the Pakistan Economic Survey for 2023–24 reports that more than 13.53 million people have officially migrated to over 50 countries in search of employment by April 2024. This makes Pakistan the seventh leading country of migrants in the whole world, as per the International Migration Report (2022). Although it is an intricate process to understand this unprecedented surge in the migration of skillful youth in Pakistan, there are certain ways to comprehend the reasons behind this spike. People often migrate from their native land due to the dearth of opportunities and resources. Countries and cities with access to opportunities and resources attract people from countries with fewer opportunities. The “Push and Pull Theory of Migration” best explains the reasons behind this surge in migrations from Pakistan. It states that certain pushing factors like economic and political instability, and internal rivalries force the people to migrate from a region. Meanwhile, many pulling factors such as economic prosperity, political stability, and peace pull the migrants to a specific region.

Causes of Migration from Pakistan

If Pakistan’s current situation is considered and studied deeply, the country’s political and economic instability, along with many others, are amongst the leading causes behind this migration of Pakistani youth. Political instability has triggered economic instability in Pakistan, hampering the government from managing the payment of interests and debts. This has also strained the finances of the country. The government’s poor planning, financial constraints, and bad governance have also exacerbated many other issues. Pakistan’s power sector is also facing difficulties, resulting in the shutdown of around 50 percent of the industrial units of the country, creating a huge number of unemployment in the country. Additionally, the political instability in the country has also led to increased terrorism in Pakistan. TTP, BLA, ISIS (are banned in Russia), and other terrorist groups see this political instability as an opportunity to conduct their activities in the country.

Benefits of International Migration

All these circumstances are prompting the skillful youth of the country to search for better opportunities elsewhere. International migration brings with it both negative and positive implications. Along with providing benefits, international migration also proves detrimental to the pace of development opportunities. International migrants gain significant benefits abroad. They stand to gain higher incomes, secure high-paying jobs along with attaining wider experience. Moreover, they gain exposure to rich cultures, which helps in their

personal growth and a better living standard. This also helps in enriching their career path along with opening doors of novel opportunities for them.

Families of migrant individuals also gain significantly from their migration. Remittances sent back to their families by the migrants help their families to adopt better living standards, entrepreneurial ventures, and better educational opportunities. In countries like Pakistan, these remittances also help the families of migrant individuals to bolster their resilience against economic shocks and inflation in the country. Moreover, these migrants are also helpful to the native country in bolstering cultural hegemony, and economic prosperity, and strengthening diplomatic ties with the host countries.

Migrants also help their native countries in increasing foreign exchange reserves, which helps in stabilizing national currencies. In the Fiscal Year 2023, Pakistan's remittances reached almost \$27.4 billion, according to the Pakistan Economic Survey, making Pakistan the sixth country in the world to gain the highest remittances. Furthermore, international migration plays a significant role in increasing the native country's labor market dynamics by exporting surplus labor. Currently, Pakistan is home to almost 71.76 million labor force, with over 4.5 million unemployed individuals. This labor force is increasing by almost 1.5 million per year, a number that Pakistan is unable to provide employment. Therefore, migration helps the country to manage these unemployed people. However, it also has numerous detrimental implications for the country.

Implications and Challenges of Brain Drain

Migration of the skillful youth creates a high reduction of skilled individuals. Moreover, it creates a social and professional gap in education, healthcare, and some other sectors, leading to a decline in productivity in these sectors. Continuous brain drain from a country, slows the economic growth of a country, causing a decline in innovation and competitiveness. Furthermore, it also creates a shortage of intellectual capital in the country. Therefore, Pakistan needs to take serious steps to deal with this brain drain. Economic prosperity is the key to dealing with this issue, which is impossible to attain without political stability. Pakistan needs to take severe anti-corruption measures and transparent governance. In addition, stable and impartial electoral processes are also mandatory for achieving political stability in the country. Without political stability, Pakistan cannot deal with terrorism effectively. Therefore, the first and foremost step to hamper this brain drain is to achieve political stability, which is only possible by the cooperation of all the political stakeholders of the country.

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