

## **V1 – a development philosophy to guard against.**

On a recent domestic PIA flight, I was intrigued by an unusual in-flight announcement. After mechanically uttering the standard instructions, the hostess went on to announce that the Airline had launched a VI (Vee One) development project and the upgraded services being offered were a part of this new VI initiative.

As there was no evidence of any thing that appeared different or upgraded, I asked the hostess if she could explain what she meant by the VI project and how was it related to the flight, service or the passengers. She said she had no idea and was merely reading out a pre-written announcement. I then asked the same question from the Flight Purser and his response was identically clueless.

VI is the speed beyond which an aircraft's take-off should no longer be aborted. It was obvious that this impressive sounding, hi-tech cliché had been adopted only to appear modern and innovative, while the program itself was limited largely to papers, in-flight announcements and power-point presentations. A change in staff uniform, aircraft insignias and wishy-washy 'digital foot-prints' amounted to further wastage of resources, specially when an organisation had no intention of changing its primary work processes or practices.

The V1 model for showcasing progress is much like the skin whitening creams - extensively advertised to suggest quick-fixes, superficial appearances and expedited marriages. Sadly this has now been widely accepted as the new 'development' model in Pakistan. A plethora of mindless cosmetic projects have mushroomed in every city of Pakistan that mimic the V1 development model. Essentially based on window dressing at the tax payers' expense the V1 philosophy focuses on

appearances instead of functionality, suitability, sustainability or benefit to the ordinary people

While the 'VI development' philosophy is seen conspicuously oozing from almost every project, here are some manifestations of its adoption at a small hill station called Nathiagali.

Narrow, winding 'katcha' tracks, developed by nature over hundreds of years, laden with fallen leaves, foliage and roots, were always a great attraction for walkers and trekkers on the mountains. Prompted by the V1 fever and the commercial interests of consultants, contractors and the contract-givers, there is a rush to convert these outstanding natural arteries into obscene cement and tile structures. This practice ought to be stopped on urgent basis. Every single brick amounts to taking away a small piece of the forest.



Loads of tiles being stacked to destroy a natural track going to Lalazar.





Portions of a beautiful natural track disfigured by sand and cement – a classic example of commercialisation pushed by a thoughtless development approach called V1.



Made out of non-biodegradable materials these flowerless flower pots have been hammered into natural-stone walls as a part of the V1 style beautification project. Yet other walls are undergoing unnecessary painting at the tax-payers' expense ostensibly to 'attract' tourists.







V1 development - where the walls take preference over the trees.





The V1 development is essentially anti-environment and pro-pollution. Untreated raw sewage from the posh hotels is openly released to the small walkways or down the slopes of the mountains. The Galiyat Development Authority conveniently looks the other way because the pollution is not visible to the tourists, who stick to the main roads.





While the main roads are cleaned, trash is allowed to accumulate in the forest, tracks and the picnic spots. There is neither an arrangement to clean the leftover trash nor a mechanism to hold the violators accountable. The pristine forest areas are now beginning to appear like poorly maintained urban landfills.



A large natural path was converted into a shopping centre by building cement floor and fancy stalls. The stalls were never put to any use and stand abandoned for the last three years. A perfect example of V1 development - focus on appearances, wastage of tax payers' money, environmental degradation and devoid of any benefit to ordinary citizens.





Another V1 project, where a bench had been installed under a shade to allow brief moments of rest to those who walk on this road. The bench is now missing for almost three years. The V1 projects clearly focus only on making a one time killing and not on regular maintenance and up-keep of facilities.



Three years back, the cleaners were given yellow jackets as part of a V1 'image-building' project. The effort was cosmetic and never intended to actually provide suitable dress or uniform that is appropriate to the task at hand. The one time effort (like in all V1 projects) was soon forgotten and the cleaners are back to their private clothes and their pre-historic work processes.









V1 development brings no benefits to the ordinary workers in terms of providing them suitable dress or equipment. Picking trash or cow dung, workers are forced to perform these demeaning and dirty tasks without appropriate tools or safety equipment such as goggles, gloves, shoes and masks.





'Nailed' on hundreds of trees, such jargonised mumbo jumbo quotes perhaps provide an excellent summary of the V1 philosophy of development. Disrespect for trees and environment, use of clichés that mean nothing to the ordinary people, focus on appearances, wastage of tax payers' money and never improving the primary processes. From airlines to urban centres, there is a need to recognise and reject the shallow V1 development philosophy and seek solutions that are environment friendly, sustainable and good for the ordinary people.

