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THE FUTURE OF KARACHI'S "PUBLIC" SPACES



By: AR. ARIF HASAN

Public space' has recently become a buzzword in the world of urban planning. The term has also filtered into Pakistan although there have been individuals and organisations who have worked, against great odds, on the issue for decades without employing the term.

There are many types of urban space. One type is a part of a larger city or neighbourhood's official plan, such as parks and playgrounds. In Karachi as a whole, much of this space has been illegally taken over for real estate development. Another type is acquired by communities for the purposes for recreation, entertainment and economic activity from 'leftover' spaces of official planning, such as wide pavements, around bus stops and formal markets. If such spaces survive long enough, they become an important part of community life. Yet another type evolves out of necessity and the absence of

options, such as streets in katchi abadis where children play, women socialise and small neighbourhood businesses establish themselves. Very often, residents block through traffic from the lane, turning it into a protected public space.

This article is not specifically about these spaces or their origins. It is about how, in elite and middle-income areas, public space is being taken over from the public domain for the exclusive use of elite or middle-class functions. It is also about how, in the designing and redesigning of public space, government agencies ignore the functions for which the space was originally being used in order to reflect politicians', architects', or planners' points of view of how such a space should be used. In the process, they invest in designs that are inappropriate for the public and which require huge maintenance costs, which are partly recovered by charging a fee from visitors. If this process continues, then very soon there will be no space for the poor in elite neighbourhoods, dividing the city further between rich and poor areas.

The Lost Street Market Pavement market for clothes in Saddar

For example, between Ghazi Abdullah Shah's Mazaar and the Bahria Icon Tower, there is a lane that goes from the shrine to the sea. After visiting the shrine, people used to walk down this lane to the sea and, on the way, visit the aquarium and the Play Land, both of which had been in existence for more than 50 years but not anymore. Millions of Karachiites and visitors from other urban and rural areas of Pakistan have made this journey, because of which a well-organised market for food, seashell trinkets, art work and souvenirs developed along the lane. None of this now exists and you cannot get to the sea from this lane either. The lane now leads to the Beach View Park where you have to pay to get in. The exit from the mazaar to the lane has also been blocked.

As more and more spaces are lost to the public and are taken

over for the exclusive use of elite and middle-class functions, what does it mean for the city? How can urban planners and policymakers avoid further dividing the rich and the poor?

With developments such as the Dolmen Mall, and related offices and car parking requirements, accessing the beach is becoming progressively difficult for low-income visitors. The hawkers of this lane have been scattered to different locations and they complain that their earnings have substantially reduced. Many of them have given up their traditional work and taken to selling food or getting jobs with contractors and as service staff to small businesses in the area. Apart from the economic loss, the death of the street market is also a huge cultural loss.

The Beach View Park obstructs access to the sea and is hardly used because of the fee that has to be paid for entering it and the fact that it does not open out on to the sea.

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NED UNIVERSITY ASSIGNED TO CONDUCT STUDY ON CITY'S DRAINAGE SYSTEM

By TAHIR SIDDIQUI

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah said that the recent heavy rains wreaked havoc on Karachi and Mirpurkhas divisions, therefore, he decided to conduct a study of the drainage system in the metropolis by the NED University and would make necessary changes on the design of the Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD).

This he said while talking to World Bank's Country Director Najib Benhassine, who called on him here at CM House.

The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah and WB's Melinda Good. Mr Shah said that the recent heavy rains had caused urban flooding in Karachi and inundated hundreds of villages in Mirpurkhas division and parts of Hyderabad division.

'I have assigned the NED University to conduct a study on the drainage system in the city and suggest ways and means to improve it so that disposal of water could be made in natural gravity,' he added.

The NED University had started its study and it would be

completed within next two months and then the drainage system of the city would be designed accordingly, he said.

LBOD's design defects The CM said that there were design defects in the 385-kilometre-long LBOD, which started flowing backward during high tide in the sea. 'Therefore, instead of disposing of saline water or rainwater the LBOD starts submerging the nearby localities,' he said, adding that he had decided to remove the design defects from LBOD.

He urged the World Bank to

provide technical assistance to the provincial government in removing design defects from LBOD.

The WB country chief said that his technical team would extend full support to the provincial government in development of a drainage system in Karachi and removing design defects from LBOD.

WB to finance Yellow Line The chief minister said that the World Bank was going to construct the 22-km-long Yellow Line bus rapid transit corridor with an estimated cost of Rs61 billion, including its

Continued on Page # 4

RAVI CITY, ISLAND PROJECTS TO BOOST ECONOMY: PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister said that Pakistan's coastline was not only conducive to tourism and world-class urban construction but had also the potential to create innumerable opportunities for foreign investment.

Chairing a meeting of working groups of Pakistan Island Development Authority (PIDA) and Ravi Urban Development Authority, Imran said that these major projects would have a positive impact on the national economy and the lives of the common man.

During the meeting the Prime Minister was informed that several international companies have shown keen interest to invest in Ravi City project in Lahore and the two islands off the Karachi coast, while several other companies



have expressed willingness to develop master plan and conduct environmental studies for the Island projects.

The meeting was convened to apprise the prime minister of the progress made so far on both the projects. Sindh Governor Imran Ismail and Chief Secretary Punjab Jawad Rafique Malik attended the meeting via video link.

Imran said that these major projects would have a positive impact on the national economy and the lives of the common man, adding that these projects would lead to the development of local industries as well as create new employment opportunities.

Emphasising that the projects would produce immense opportunities of investment and employment, Imran said that the Ravi City project would reduce the population pressure on Lahore and also add new dimensions to the urban planning in Pakistan.

An official statement of the meeting highlighted that the projects were being developed on the basis of partnership instead of loans and international institutions and investors have shown interest to invest in these projects.

For the first time in the history of the country, officials informed the prime minister, the Ravi City and the cities to be built on the islands would be built in accordance with the principles of a green city.

The Ravi Development Authority chairman said that the survey of 18,600 acres of land for construction had been completed, adding that the project would not affect the local population and there would be no need to evict or relocate anyone.

The chairman said that the Ravi City project would set an example in the region in terms of international standard housing as well as drainage, availability and protection of groundwater resources and environmental protection.

During the meeting, the PIDA chairman informed the prime minister about the interest of a large number of international companies in preparing the master plan as well as conducting environmental studies of the island projects.

Meanwhile, during the weekly meeting of the National Coordinating Committee for Housing, Construction and Development, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) governor informed the prime minister that special desks would be set up in 50% bank branches in all the districts to provide loans for construction.

The Punjab chief secretary said that applications for construction work on 44 million square feet had been received from all over the province while approval had already been given for the construction on 20 million square feet.

After the commencement of construction work on 44 million square feet in Punjab, the chief secretary said, economic activities worth about Rs1 trillion were expected.

The Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa chief secretary said that applications for new constructions on about 6 million square feet were received from all over the province and after approval, economic activities worth Rs100 billion would soon start in the province.



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SHC ASKED TO FILE BUILDING PLANS APPROVAL PROCEDURE

BY ISHAQ TANOLI

The Sindh High Court directed the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) to inform it whether the Building Code of Pakistan and fire safety provisions were followed while granting approval of proposed building plans.

It also asked the chairman of a task force and deputy controller of the civil defence to appear in court on Nov 25.

A two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar further directed an assistant commissioner to come up with a viable solution on the next hearing to establish more helpline numbers for assistance of public in order to ensure timely reporting of fire incidents. When the bench took up a petition seeking implementation of the Building Code of Pakistan and Fire Safety Provisions 2016 across the province, AC Aijaz Rind filed a progress report on behalf of the Karachi commissioner.

The report stated that after the last order of the bench, a meeting of the task force constituted for formation of law/rules dealing with incidents of fire was held and some action plans were decided about safeguarding the public interest. A



further report will be submitted on the next date to show the implementation, it added.

The lawyer for SBCA, Dhani Bux, undertook to file comments on the next hearing.

When the bench asked when were the last building regulations framed, he replied that the Karachi Building and Town Planning Regulations were framed in 2002.

The bench further asked him whether there was any provision for safety in the said regulations

for commercial and industrial sites to mandatorily build exit/emergency doors in the buildings. The counsel sought time to assist the bench on the next date along with relevant regulations. The focal person/deputy controller of civil defence, Shahid Masood, submitted that they used to inspect different buildings periodically for the purpose of safety and installation of firefighting equipment and also requested for more time to file comments.

He also proposed that there must be some mechanism or coordination between the civil defence and SBCA before approving proposed building plans of commercial and industrial sites to take the input of civil defence for emergency exit doors.

Advocate Nadeem Shaikh pointed out that a helpline (16) was available to report fire incidents, but sometimes it was found busy causing difficulties for the public to establish contact with fire officials.

The bench directed AC Rind to come up with a viable solution on the next hearing in this regard.

The petitioner had contended that the federal government had introduced by-laws of the Building Code of Pakistan, Fire Safety Provisions 2016 for fire prevention and life safety in relation to fire and fire protection of buildings and structures, but the provincial government had yet to implement these laws in letter and spirit in Sindh and particularly in the provincial metropolis.

Plea against high-rise allowed Another division bench of the SHC has allowed a petition filed against the construction of a multistorey building in Askari-IV and observed that cantonment authorities had failed to justify their action of

amending the master plan.

The bench headed by Justice Mohammad Shafi Siddiqui further observed, 'If at all any alteration is inevitable or the open spaces that vests with the Cantonment Board now is required, the powers and jurisdictions vests with the Board with whose consultation the desired object could be materialized and not otherwise.'

A petition was filed by some residents of Askari-IV who contended that an open space around a mosque, which was in fact a parking area and also used as extension of mosque during Eid prayers, was being used by amending the master plan to raise a multistorey building said to be approved by the Cantonment Board Faisal. The petitioners further argued that that the master plan was approved in 1996 when the Askari-IV project was announced and allotments were made and they alleged that with the passage of time these layout plans/master plans were subjected to forced alteration and addition.

17-year-old girl sent to shelter home The SHC on Tuesday directed the police to shift a girl who contracted marriage of her free will to a shelter home for apparently being underage.

The petitioners, Aqsa Tariq and Waqar Akram, residents of Khanewal district in Punjab, approached the SHC for protection by submitting that they left their houses and contracted a free-will marriage against the wishes of Aqsa's family.

However, when a two-judge bench headed by Justice K.K. Agha asked the girl about her age, she frankly conceded that she was 17.

The bench observed that under the Sindh Child Marriages Restraint Act, 2013, the petitioner girl was too young to be married and directed a woman police officer to shift her to a shelter home till the next hearing.

The bench also directed the SSP Khanewal to ensure the attendance of the girl's parents on Nov 12.

NED VARSITY CONDUCTING STUDY TO REVAMP CITY'S DRAINAGE SYSTEM

Continued from Page 1

infrastructure, drainage, lighting, bus ways, stations, terminal and depot.

He said that the Yellow Line was the most important project for the city and added that it was developed primarily along Korangi and Korangi Industrial Area roads connecting Karachi's south-eastern parts (Korangi, Landhi, Bin Qasim) characterised for being large and dense industrial and residential areas, and parts of South and Central districts.

He said that the World Bank was preparing its design, which needed to be expedited so that the project could be taken up.

The WB country head assured the chief minister that the design of the project would be completed at the earliest. Meanwhile, the meeting also discussed the need of conducting property surveys in Karachi and Hyderabad.

Planning and Development chairman Muhammad Waseem said that the last property survey was conducted in Karachi in 2001 by the excise and taxation department and now it would be conducted by the WB experts.

It was also pointed out that only Rs2bn property tax was collected from the city and the amount was lower than Lahore. Rs2.93bn released for

Karachi megaprojects The CM also chaired a meeting on Karachi megaprojects on Wednesday and directed the finance department to release Rs2.93bn so that five important schemes could be completed by June 2021.

The meeting was attended by Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Shah, Law Adviser Murtaza Wahab, Finance Secretary Hassan Naqvi, LG Secretary Najam Shah, Project Director Karachi Projects Khalid Masroor and others.

The chief minister was told that three new priority schemes with an estimated cost of Rs909.923 million had been launched. They included reconstruction of roads from Ghani Chowranghi Rasheedabad and from Habib Metro to SIT E police station.

The chief minister directed the finance department to release 50 per cent of the amount and when their utilization report was submitted the remaining 50pc might be released.

Discussing another Rs995.03m scheme of reconstruction of road from Gulbai to Y-Junction, the chief minister ordered the authorities to construct all the Hawkesbay roads simultaneously so that the area could be opened up for tourists.

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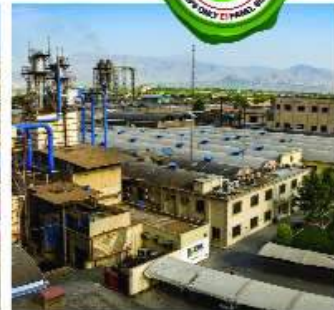
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VIOLATION OF BUILDING RULES, LACK OF COORDINATED PLANNING MULTIPLY PROBLEMS

By Afzal Talib

Parking on roads has become a major contributor to traffic problems in the provincial capital because of non-implementation of building by-laws and poor planning by development authorities.

Lack of proper parking stands forces the citizens to park their vehicles on roadside, which disrupts the flow of traffic.

There is only one parking plaza in the city with an estimated population of about 15 million. As many as 215 parking lots were set up in the provincial capital in 2012 and 2013, whose control was later taken from the metropolitan corporation and handed over to the Lahore Parking Company.

The move was aimed at providing the citizens model parking facilities with computerised tokens and surveillance cameras. Establishment of new parking sites was also planned.

The metropolitan corporation, which was charging Rs10 for parking a motorcycle and Rs20 for a car, used to collect about Rs67 million annually from the parking lots.

The parking company started charging Rs20 for a motorcycle Rs30 for a car. During the past seven years, the Lahore Parking Company has paid Rs230 million to the metropolitan corporation after deducting the expenses, causing a loss of about Rs280 million to the exchequer. The number of parking stands in the city has increased to 300 from 215 during the period, which includes several illegal stands.

However, the purpose for



which the parking company was formed could not be fulfilled. Violation of parking rules continues throughout the city. Up to four lanes of motorcycle parking along the city's main roads, as well as parking in restricted areas continues.

The areas facing the most severe traffic problems include Lower Mall, district courts, commissioner's office, secretariat, Mall Road, Egerton Road Ferozepur Road, Gulberg, Liberty, Hussain Chowk, IG office, Chauburji, Sheeranwala, Masti Gate, railway station, bus station, Badami Bagh, Model Town courts, Shah Alam Market, Circular Road and Blessing Market.

Improper parking disrupts the city's traffic system and long queues of vehicles can be seen in the morning and afternoon in the affected areas. Precious time of the commuters is wasted because of the slow movement of traffic. The traffic congestion also increases pollution and fuel consumption.

The metropolitan corporation has so far registered about 200 complaints against the parking company for charging excessive fees. The National Accountability Bureau is investigating allegations of corruption in the Lahore Parking Company. The parking problems in the city have increased during the past 15 years as the government's role in this regard

has mostly been confined to planning and not implementation of solutions.

About 15 years ago, the Lahore Development Authority (LDA) built the D-Point Plaza in Shah Alam Market for parking but it could not serve its purpose. Most people still park their cars in front of shops, causing traffic problems.

Owners of private stands are charging higher parking fees than the government rate.

The plans for the construction of commercial buildings in the city are approved by LDA and metropolitan corporation officials. Parking facilities are included in the maps of plazas, but after the completion of their construction

shops and offices are set up in the parking lots and then cars are parked on the roads outside the plazas. The parking problems can be solved to a large extent by strictly implementing the building by-laws in the city.

About 10 years ago, a plan was prepared to build parking plazas at eight spots in the city, including Mall Road, Town Hall, Sheranwala Gate, Nila Gumbad, Barkat Market, Ichhra, Lahore High Court and Akbari Mandi. However, work on the plazas was not started.

Traffic experts say there is an urgent need for an organised parking system in the city.

The parking stands also need to be shifted away from the densely populated areas.

An official said new parking plazas and stands should be constructed in consultation with the LDA, traffic police, metropolitan corporation and the Traffic Engineering and Planning Authority.

Deputy Director Public Services Metropolitan Corporation Lahore Mohammad Sarfraz told The Express Tribune that planning was underway on the directives of Punjab government to solve the traffic problems of the city. Locations are being identified to build parking plazas in areas with more traffic problems.

In reply to a question, he said the provincial government would decide about the operation of parking stands in Lahore. Action was also being taken against illegal parking, the official added.

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LOW-COST HOUSING: BANKS GO ALL IN

By KAZIM ALAM

Banks are urging low-income people to take out heavily subsidised housing loans in quarter-page newspaper ads on a daily basis now.

Except the besotted 20-somethings who believe Imran Khan can simply will any miracle into existence at a time and place of his own choosing, few people thought the PTL government would actually roll out a massive housing scheme. No government, elected or otherwise, has had public housing on its priority agenda since the Bhutto administration in the 1970s. The whole initiative is centred around the government's conviction that banks have the capacity and willingness to generate hundreds of thousands of housing loans for low-income people.

Newspaper ads show banks are playing along so far. They are supposed to generate these loans at market rates, although the borrower will pay only a fraction of the real cost of funds. The government will pick up the rest of the tab through a subsidy. Yet the banks will have to carry the counter-party credit risk albeit with a backstop guarantee of 40 per cent on the overall portfolio.

Given the passivity that our bankers are accustomed to, it seems unbelievable they will process millions of low-ticket mortgage applications mostly based on income proxies other than formal pay slips.

They have never done that kind of hard work before not even for less risky, high-ticket mortgages with clean land titles in upscale localities. In a country of 220 million people, the number of outstanding housing finance borrowers was merely 58,620 at the end of last year. Of that minuscule total, the number of loans generated by conventional and Islamic banks was only 17,100,

according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

In fact, banks have disbursed almost 60pc of their Rs203.6 billion housing loan portfolio among their own employees.

So is this another Dam Fund-like exercise on part of the bankers to dish out flattery to someone hungry for it? Are they expected to keep feigning empathy for the poor only until the government changes or finds another pet project? The reason I feel highly optimistic is that it's been a consultative and comprehensive process. We have set the minimum standards (for developers to qualify for subsidised lending). This is not a corporate social responsibility activity.

The SBP has got a direct debit authority for the disbursement of the promised subsidy without intervention from the Ministry of Finance,' said Muhammad Aurangzeb, CEO of Habib Bank, Pakistan's largest commercial bank with net assets of over Rs257bn. As chairman of the Pakistan Banks' Association (PBA), he works closely with the newly established Naya Pakistan Housing Development Authority (Naphda).

'For the last three months, we have had a steering committee chaired by SBP Governor Reza Baqir. Naphda Chairman Lt Gen Anwar Ali Hyder also joins us every week. There are seven banks in that committee. It meets every Wednesday and about 16 meetings have taken place. We're working on different work streams,' he told Dawn in a recent interview.

These work streams are about foreclosure laws, mortgage-backed securities, bankers' capacity building, income proxies for low-income borrowers and, most importantly, developer's risk acceptance criteria.

Until recently banks cited a poor foreclosure law as one reason for limited

home loans. But the matter was settled for good recently when the Supreme Court allowed banks to auction the mortgaged property of a defaulter without obtaining a court order.

But above all, messy land titles and complexities involved in land transactions and no-objection certificates required from various civic agencies discouraged banks to take exposure to the housing market as an asset class.

Banks along with the SBP, Naphda and the Association of Builders and Developers have come up with the developer's risk acceptance criteria.

Naphda's presence is a welcome development. All these things were outside the scope of the banking industry. But now we are part of this. This means the ongoing process has complete ownership and buy-in, Mr Aurangzeb said.

The fact that a quasi-regulatory body has framed the risk acceptance criteria for developers means that banks will now be a lot more comfortable in extending housing finance to projects that meet a minimum standard, he noted. The seal of approval by Naphda will mean all subsidised housing projects fulfil basic regulatory requirements and won't blow up in one's face.

'If a developer approaches us and passes the risk acceptance criteria, we will extend financing after due diligence. Why won't we? I know this wasn't the case before. But now it's become an industry standard,' he said.

The SBP has asked all banks to increase their housing finance portfolio to 5pc of their domestic private-sector credit by the end of next year. Currently, it hovers around 3.4pc of total loans to the private sector.

According to Mr Aurangzeb, his bank will have to grow its housing finance portfolio by about Rs20bn or 100pc in the next year and a quarter.

'It's not going to be easy. We reached this level in so many years and now we have to double it by the end of 2021.

In order to qualify for a subsidised loan, one has to be a first-time home buyer. They must come up with at least Rs800,000 on their own to buy a house of 125 square-yards or a flat of 850 square-feet. The most basic housing unit that the government is willing to subsidise under Naphda is supposed to cost Rs3.5 million (or less).

The prospective home buyer can go to any participating bank, tell them which Naphda-approved housing project they like and get financing of up to Rs2.7m for 20 years. They will pay the bank a monthly instalment of between Rs15,000 and Rs20,000 for the first five years when the interest rate will be five per cent. It will go up to 7pc for the next five years. The government has promised a subsidy of Rs33bn for the payment of mark-up over a period of 10 years along with an assurance to continue the facility afterwards.

HLB and other banks are helping Naphda in two subsidised housing projects in Lahore and Islamabad.

There is no Naphda-approved scheme in Sindh so far, according to Mr Aurangzeb. Neither Naphda Chairman Lt Gen Anwar Ali Hyder nor Deputy Chairman Maj Gen Amer Aslam Khan responded to the repeated requests for comment.

Economist Ammar H Khan raised doubts about the long-term viability of this initiative.

'It's impossible to find land in major cities to build homes at a price of Rs3.5m. The obstacle in setting up such schemes on city outskirts is the absence of lease,' he said in reference to suburban housing schemes like Bahria Town, which doesn't receive home loans from any bank except the one set up by its own sponsors.

In addition, Mr Khan noted,

builders use regular instalments from their customers as a source of liquidity. They build housing units on an incremental basis, ensuring their major expenditures coincide with the flow of instalments. Other than a few well-established names, banks won't feel comfortable making a Rs2.7m payment to the developer of a housing society on behalf of a low-income borrower.

To address this problem, the PBA chairman said, the banking industry is scaling up its capacity to do bridge financing for developers. 'Our skills are in end-user mortgage financing. Banks have hardly done any bridge or contractor financing. We're training our corporate and investment banking people.

The ideal structure will be to do project finance and its take-out is then generated from end-user mortgages. Their handshake is necessary,' he said.

Outstanding loans for construction amount to only Rs72.8bn, about 1.4pc of the total loans to private-sector businesses.

Pakistan Institute of Development Economics Vice Chancellor Dr Nadeem ul Haque said the government should resist the temptation of subsidising housing loans for the poor. 'The government should help the poor become part of the middle class. Handing out housing units to the poor won't do them any good. At best, they'll sell those units and move back to where they came from,' he said.

The only solution is to go for high-rise buildings in the centre of cities, he said. 'A population of 220m can't live in bungalows. You have to grow the cities vertically. In addition, he vehemently opposed the idea of subsidised housing finance.

'There shouldn't be any backstop guarantees. Otherwise, banks will hand out loans left, right and centre and then come to the government for a bailout. They have done that so many times and in so many countries.'

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INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUMS FIRMS SUBMIT BIDS FOR ISLAMABAD MASTER PLAN REVISION

By KASHIF ARRASI

The city managers have received bids from four consortiums of international town planning firms for the revision of Islamabad's master plan.

Sources in the CDA said after evaluation the financial bids would be opened in about a month to award the contract to the lowest bidder.

The master plan was prepared in 1960 and supposed to be revised after every 20 years. However, successive governments did not make proper revisions in accordance with the city's emerging needs.

However, time and again selective changes were made by different governments to the master plan but without any input from professional consultants. The sources said so far over 40 changes have been made to the master plan.

'PC-list worth around Rs 600 million but after opening the financial bids we will see what rate the companies have offered,' said an official of the CDA.

He said the four consortiums have representatives of 11 companies.

After a considerable delay in hiring a consultant firm, the CDA had sought applications from reputed firms in September this year. The PTI government had formed a commission in Dec 2018 to revise the master plan.

In October 2019, the federal cabinet headed by Prime Minister Imran Khan had approved an interim report prepared by the commission and directed for proper revision through a consultant. The CDA then got the Request for Proposal (RFP) documents vetted by Planning Commission as directed by the cabinet, a step which took many months before calling bids from international firms.

CDA officials said Islamabad is a fast growing city and currently it has a population of over 2.2 million but the civic agency has been running the city in accordance with the existing master plan developed by Greek Firm Doxiadis Associates in 1960.

'After 60 years, this city has saw many changes and it requires revision and changes to the master plan for better solutions to chronic problems,' said an official of the CDA, adding the selective changes made to the master plan ignoring the proper revision had ended up in the poor planning and mushroom growth of the unauthorised construction, particularly in the rural areas of the capital. He said there were dozens of slums in the city area as well.

After holding a series of meetings, the commission in its interim report had addressed some issues such as bylaws of commercial buildings and left a comprehensive revision of the city's blueprint to the consultant, which would be hired soon after the financial bids are opened. Thousands of people have built homes and other structures in parts of the capital where construction was not allowed under the original master plan. The CDA, which is responsible for regulating buildings all over the capital, did not attempt to halt the



unauthorised construction beyond the planned sectors that resulted in the mushroom growth of the unauthorised buildings.

The consultant firm will also come up with a solution to the problem besides proposing a solution to highrise buildings

constructed in non-permissible areas.

'The response of international firms is very good. Four

consortiums have submitted their bids and after one month we will open the financial bids to award contract to the lowest bidder,' said a senior officer of the CDA. He said the revision of master plan is a gigantic task and is likely to take around two years for completion.

The officer said in the past two attempts were made for the revision of the master plan but without success. However, this time the government has been taking a keen interest in completing the revision.

'We are hopeful the much-needed revision of the master plan will be completed,' he said, adding the consultant will propose solutions to chronic issues such as unauthorised construction, slums, water issue, public transport, environment, roads, etc.

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IS KARACHI WORLD-CLASS CITY?



The city of Karachi is something of an enigma. While it is Pakistan's largest city and commercial hub, bad governance and lack of vision have turned it into an ever-expanding, lawless sprawl.

The World Bank, in its Pakistan Development Update, launched recently, has broken down the city's problems in a systematic manner and offered solutions as well. It would be worth recalling what ails Karachi.

Among other things, the report points out Karachi's ad hoc planning and weak financial and institutional capacities. If we were to ask the common citizen of Karachi, he or she would offer a long list of what exactly ails this chaotic metropolis high crime, no public transport system to speak of, monstrous traffic, water woes, broken roads, and mounds of rotting garbage strewn across town would probably top the list of complaints.

It is not just the multilateral lender that has pointed out Karachi's many faults; many respected Pakistani urban planners have been highlighting issues such as weak infrastructure and growing informality for years. But what is to be done? The World Bank says Karachi has the potential to be a 'world-class' city; to achieve this, 'pillars' need to be erected to put the city on firm foundations. These pillars include 'coordinated institutions' and 'closing infrastructure gaps'. Indeed, Karachi is blessed with many bounties, such as a natural harbour and a large populace with a variety of skills.

The primary challenge is channelling its energies in a positive direction.

The solutions offered by the bank as well as the suggestions of other experts must all be considered. However, until there is the political will to transform these suggestions into concrete realities, the fate of this city is unlikely to change.

And an empowered local government is the only solution capable of giving practical shape to these suggested remedies. Unfortunately, the Sindh government prefers to keep key local government powers, resulting in toothless and unresponsive civic institutions that are incapable of running this city.

Elected local bodies answerable to the people and overseen by the province -indeed have the potential to create a sustainable city that provides shelter to all income brackets and social groups.

But unless things change on the governance front, the fear expressed in the World Bank report that 'The city may be headed towards a spatially unstable, inefficient, and unliveable form', may become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

With Robert Fisk & Zaha Hadid in Beirut

Robert Fisk had just arrived in Beirut where Zaha Hadid was finishing her course in Mathematics and I was doing my Architecture course. None of us knew each other and no one knew where these two persons would rise to. In the 80s I read Fisk's book on "Pity the Nation" on the Palestinians. The Jews were backed by America. So what more can any one add?

After my first year I moved to London and got a chance to join a prestigious college called the Arch Assoc School of Architecture where a bit later Ms Zaha Hadid also entered. This was a small and selected one comprising a total of 450 students. And as Fisk said Beirut capital of Lebanon is a great place to live in as it has a long history, wonderful food and a generous with small population of just 9 million. I was in love with Beirut so went to visit it on a small budget.

In mid 1970s I was walking in Beirut on a vacation when suddenly a military jeep screeched up the pavement and two soldiers jumped out and said hands on the



grill. I did that and they asked me for my passport which I had in my jacket's inside pocket. I told them please get it from there. They looked at the inside pages, and gave it back to and left. I never got a British passport due to my national feelings. Fisk hit the headlines for his blunt and unbiased reporting. He was beaten up in Quetta by Afghan students for reporting on the situation in Afghanistan.

Ms Zaha finished her studies and tried for two years to get a project and failed as every one said she is a failed architect. Then she got her first one in America and really took off. She won 32 International awards and did over 1,000 buildings. There are so many books on the buildings she built. Among all the buildings she did is

the Beijing airport completed at a cost of \$ 6 billion. She has a staff of 450 architects working on a computer software with huge screens on which you could turn the building around and blow up its image. And what about myself? I always was some what a politician too. I was in Miraj Mohd Khan's party to over throw the worst ruler, Gen Zia ul Huq. I was tried to be eliminated with 3 bullets fired at me. One hit me right next to my left eye and is lodged in my shoulder the other in my abdomen, third missed and made a hole in my diary. As a fortune teller said when he looked at my eyes and said something far off.

Ar. Navaid Husain
Arch Assoc of Architecture
Karachi

PHA project

THE Pakistan Housing Authority (PHA) Foundation is a state-run body to build housing projects for federal employees and low-income segments of society. The PHA Foundation runs various housing schemes all over the country, including the federal capital.

PHA flats of D and E categories

in I-12 sector of Islamabad are also part of one such project. It was started in 2016 and was to be completed in early 2020.

However, due to slow progress of work, the project is yet to be completed. Instead of giving relaxation to the allottees, the Foundation has been adding delayed payment surcharge at the

rate of one per cent per month to the allottees. This is absolutely unjustifiable.

The management should give relaxation to the allottees by waving of the charges and by rescheduling the instalments.

Saeed Ahmed
Islamabad

Ignoring engineers

IN a developing country like Pakistan, it is essential to ensure that those dealing with modern, sophisticated technologies have proper engineering background. New courses for engineers should be introduced to prepare them for environmental and safety

challenges. For this reason, the Pakistan Engineering Council chairman filed a petition in the Supreme Court demanding higher posts for engineers in projects of national interest.

At present, there is no engineer serving in BPS-22 in the

federal government. It is high time engineers were included in the top postings related to technical projects so that they may play a role in devising public policies.

Engr. Malik M. Hamza
Lahore

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KARACHI CITY AIR QUALITY IS WORST

Karachi ranked third on the United States Air Quality Index grouped among the world's most polluted cities



By: AFTAB KHAN

With an AQI of 281, Karachi was preceded only by Delhi and Lahore - ranking second with 359 AQI and first with 489 AQI, respectively - as the cities with the worst air quality in the world. Global scales typically rank good air quality between a 0-50 AQI. An AQI over a 100 is termed dangerous for the more vulnerable groups while an AQI past 150 is typically deemed unhealthy and an AQI above 300 is dubbed hazardous.

Poor air quality can have detrimental effects on public health and air pollution has been deemed the greatest environmental health risk currently by the World Health Organisation. Typically described as a 'silent killer' given that it is among the top most contributing causes of early death, air pollution can lead to lung tissue damage, cancer, early death and respiratory illnesses such as asthma, bronchitis and emphysema.

In the short term, it can cause difficulty breathing, chest pain, wheezing, coughing, general respiratory discomfort and irritation of the eyes, nose and throat. Of late, doctors and researchers across the world have also pointed towards a correlation between air pollution and deaths in patients whose lungs are weakened by Covid-19.

Jawad Memon, of a private weather station, told that the air pollution in the port city is likely to increase due to smog and low humidity.

The direction of wind in the city is changing due to Western disturbances entering the country and air pollution will likely decrease after November 16 when rainfall is expected in the city under this Western system, he said, advising citizens to wear masks. In 2019, Pakistan ranked as the country with the world's second worst air quality with an average AQI of 156.

Bangladesh with an average AQI of 165 ranked first and India ranked fifth with an average AQI of 152 in 2019, according to IQAir, a Swiss air quality technology company that also monitors the AQI in major cities of the world.

Mumbai in India ranked as fourth most polluted city in the world recently with an AQI of 182, followed by Kabul, Afghanistan with an AQI of 175 and Bosnian city Sarajevo sixth with an AQI of 162.

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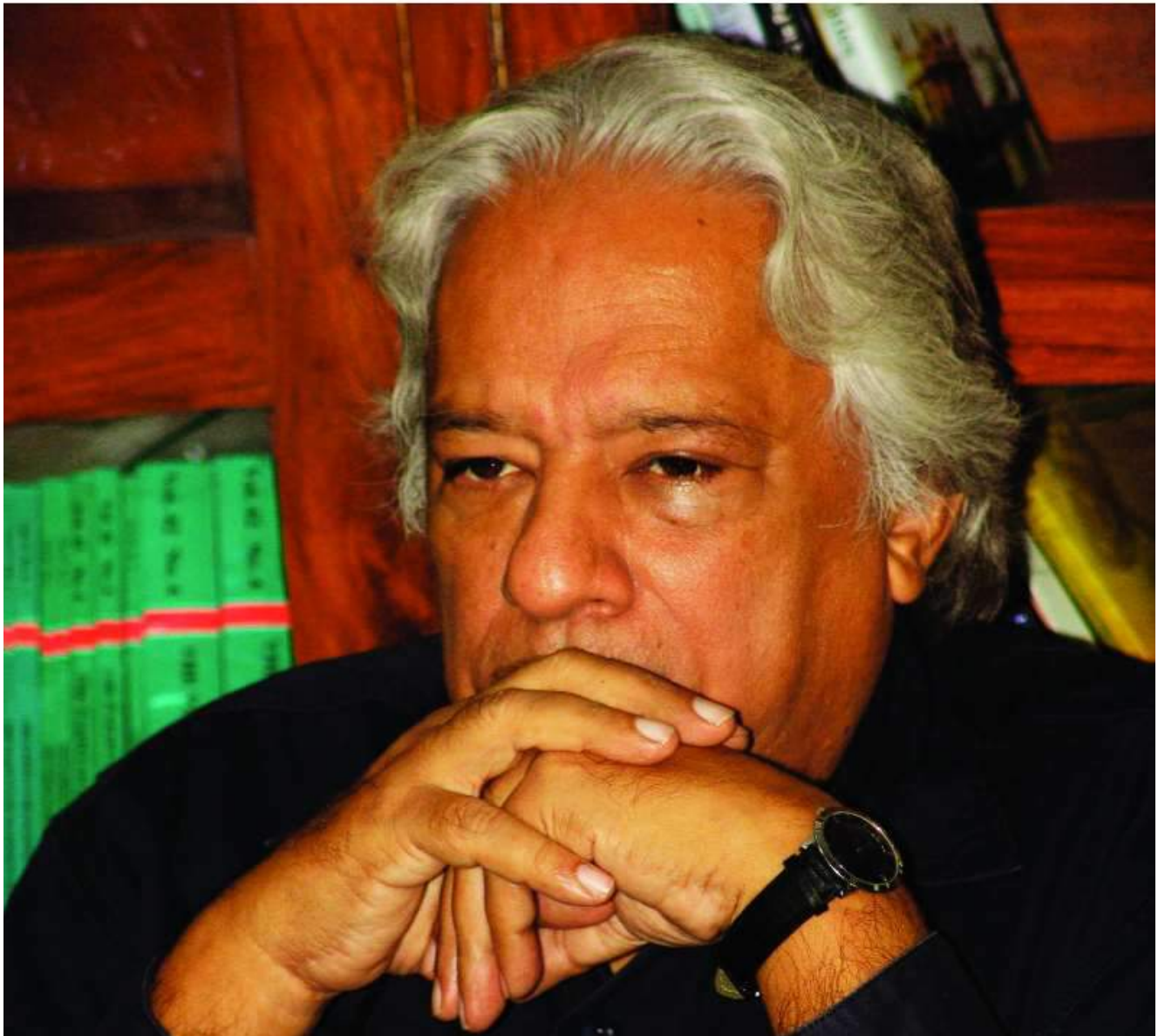
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TALKING ARCHITECTURE



“ I will not do projects that will irreparably damage the ecology and environment of the area in which they are located; I will not do projects that increase poverty, dislocate people and destroy the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of communities that live in the city; I will not do projects that destroy multi-class public space and violate building byelaws and zoning regulations; and I will always object to insensitive projects that do all this, provided I can offer viable alternatives.” I took this pledge in 1983 and I have kept my word except that I have violated some building bylaws. I feel if architects take such a pledge the world would be a happier place.

— Arif Hasan's pledge ”



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Arif Hasan is a Pakistani architect, researcher and activist. Globally, he is better known as an urban sociologist and planner and as the author of over 15 books, hundreds of monographs, academic papers, reports and films on built-environment, urban planning and social change issues. In addition, he has been key to the establishment and success of innovative community managed development projects such as the Orangi Pilot Project and the creation of new institutions such as the Urban Resource Centre Karachi and the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights Bangkok. This work, which has won considerably international acclaim, has fed into academia, policy and planning both at the international and national level. His advocacy work has been primarily for an "inclusive city" and in the process he has successfully challenged and promoted options for a number of anti-people and anti-environment projects. As a result of this work, he has received a large number of national and international awards including the Life Time Achievement Award of the Institute of Architects Pakistan (2003); Hilal-e-Imtiaz for Public Service of the Government of Pakistan (2001); Prince Claus Award for contribution to architecture and development (2000); International Year for the Shelterless Memorial Prize of the Japan Housing Association (1990); and the Best Building Award of the Karachi Development Authority (1983). Meanwhile, the World Habitat Award of the British Housing Foundation was conferred on the Orangi Pilot Project-Research & Training Institute (2000); and the Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan Memorial Award of the Council of Social Sciences Pakistan, was conferred on his book "Participatory Development" in 2010. Details of his writings and of his social and planning projects are available on a number of the international webs and also on www.arifhasan.org

INTERVIEWED BY ZAIN MANKANI | PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY: ARCHITECT

ARCHI TIMES (AT): What is the role of Architecture in society?

ARIF HASAN (AH): Without Architecture you really cannot have a society, because any society needs to have a built environment through which it can perform its various functions. And at the same time, perform them comfortably, in physical, social and environmental terms. So that is what architecture is. It has many forms and shapes that are derived from the culture of that community - from its history, from its geography and the material and technology available.

There is a further role, because we are no longer living in small villages and settlements, but in mega-cities (and this is going to increase over a period of time). And these cities have their own problems, which did not exist previously, especially cities in what is now called the 'global south', where development has come, and change has come at a much faster pace than what we were able to plan for.

So here there are very serious issues of inequity, unequal development, ghettoization - both of the rich and the poor. There is also, because of the influx of populations and very large figures of migration, there is also the problem of fighting over scarce land resources. And those sections of society that are richer, more powerful, create conditions that are very difficult for the weaker sections of society, because they are able to appropriate most land in locations which are suitable for low-income groups to settle - basically nearer to the center of the city or in the city.

And I think it is here that architects and planners' institutions have to play a role, they have to struggle - if they are for an inclusive and just society - they have to fight for development models and ethics for architectural practice that promote, both environmentally and socially, a more just utilization of land.

Unfortunately, you have many architects, all over the world, who do projects that destroy the environment, that destroy the poor, that convert multi-class public space into exclusive domain for the rich through a process of gentrification. So I think the role of an architect has to be to support a more equitable distribution of land, finances for the development of the city.

AT: Do you think Pakistani architects are able to play this role?

AH: I know a lot of projects where the architect has helped convert public space into, through a process of gentrification, into the exclusive domain of the rich and middle classes. There are many such projects. Also, I can give you examples of projects which architects have planned, which have destroyed the ecology of the region in which Karachi is located. And which have also destroyed heritage sites, both the tangible heritage and the earth that was destroyed, so the intangible heritage.

I think this sensitivity is very much missing in the world of architecture today but at the same time I can say that there remain architects both in Karachi and in Lahore who have fought for protection of public space and who have fought for the protection of the flora and fauna of the city and the adjacent areas. So you have both these things. Unfortunately the lobby that has struggled for a more equitable society and that has fought for land use being determined based on social considerations rather than on the basis of land value alone - that lobby is





Terrace House, Karachi

very small. And it is certainly not growing at the pace at which the destruction of ecology and the environment is taking place.

AT: Would you like to name any of the projects you have mentioned, either the positive or the negative, so we can learn from their example?

AH: There are two very negative projects which I can mention - one was this beach development that was supposed to take place (Emaar Developers), where we were privatizing 16 km of the Karachi coastline and after its privatization this beach would be lost for purposes of entertainment and recreation to the people of Karachi. In addition about 18 fisherman's villages would have been demolished. The shrine culture that is linked to the fisherman's settlements would have been inaccessible. There were architects involved in this. And there were those who opposed it. There was a *sahil bachao* (save the coastline) movement and I must say that members of the Sindh bureaucracy were also opposed to it (some of them, not all of them) although they had orders to implement it. And also some corporate sector heads were concerned about it, and other important citizens including a senior judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. So that's one project.

Then there is the Bahria Town - the land has been acquired through coercion and force from the rural population. A lot of villagers have been evicted from their historic sites. Then you have stone-age archeological sites that have been bulldozed. There were Buddhist sites that were bulldozed - these are registered sites that were lost forever. Then there was Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's thikana (as it was called) that was here.

It was a pilgrimage site. That has also gone. These are of course historical sites. But also very serious is the drainage typology has been tampered with. And we already know that Karachi floods not because of heavy rains, it floods because its drainage systems, especially the outfalls to the sea, have been taken over by both the elite and katchiabadis (shanty towns). The Kalari Nallah, for instance, is essentially the expansion of the Machhar Colony into the sea through reclamation of land. That's a katchiabadi. The other outlet to the sea has been blocked by the KPT Colony on Mai Kolachi Bypass. So the water can't drain out fast enough as it used to before. And in DHA Phase 7 the Mehmoodabad Nallah and the Gizri creek outlet has been restricted by the Phase 7 development. So these are things that architects and planners have been involved with.

Also Lyari Expressway. I mean you displaced over 200,000 people without offering them anything apart from 50,000 Rupees and a plot in the wilderness and in the process they became far poorer than they were before because they lost everything. And there at Lyari Expressway they had water, they had sewerage, which went into the river. They had electricity; they had schools, community centers, mosques. So all that was wiped out.

The question was: was that project required? And the answer works both ways. There were those like me, who said that it was not required. The Northern Bypass could have been made functional and developed. What was required in the case of Lyari Expressway was removing those people who were in the bed of the river. Those who were removed were not only those who were in the bed of the river, but also those who were removed who were on the banks of the river, where they (some of them) had lived for centuries. So this respect for history, culture,

people and more than anything a search for creating a society and city that is not segregated on the basis of ethnicity, race, religion, class - I think these are important issues that architects should take into consideration. My first experience of this came when I was asked to do a socio-economic study to "justify" a redevelopment project in Karachi. And I was really horrified. I didn't do that study, because the suffering that I saw of the people who were being removed was enormous. And the city was not going to benefit in any way from that project. So that was the first serious opposition that I put up. And that is when I wrote that I would never do a project of this sort. I feel that that role of an architect is very important.

The second thing that is important is energy and climate. I think that if you look around Karachi you will find huge glass facades. And after people start working in them, on the inside of the glass they stick Thermopore (insulation) panels. And this I feel is a complete failure of architecture - that you cannot develop an architecture that responds to the climate. And this is something that is very upsetting, because also some very famous architects do this. There is a need to develop an architecture that responds to the climate without having to put up Thermopore which was not initially there when you designed the building.

AT: Maybe the architects are forced to follow the dictates of the client?

AH: They can take a stand, but the problem is that commercial practices usually have very large staff, and their needs have to be fulfilled. So you have to run after projects. Someone like me doesn't have to run after projects, so I can take a stand, which I have. In my recent architecture I have responded to the climate and I had clients who also had visions of having corporate sector style buildings but we reasoned it out and worked it out.

AT: An architect of your stature is in a position to dictate his terms, but what about young architects?

AH: I don't dictate my terms, I negotiate.

AT: Should architects educate the client then?

AH: No. I don't think the young architect can educate the client. I think the organizations that represent the architects have to take a stand over here. It is they, and academia, that have to work towards public negotiations and discussions - make these subjects that are important. Unfortunately, they do not do that - neither the academia does it enough nor do the organizations that represent the architects. For instance, Enercon is an organization that has dealt with energy. There is also The Green Initiative. My question is: do they have any links with academia? It is not their job to have links with academia, it is the academia's job to de-velop links with them and make them a part of their education process.

So I think that is missing. And although there are a number of young people today whom I meet, who come over to discuss their work, where I feel this consciousness is growing. And hopefully in the next generation things will change. Because you know this older generation, which is my generation, which dominates the field of architecture, followed very strict Modernist principles (whether they followed them consciously or not is another matter, but they followed them). And that was like the Bible. Consequently innovation was very limited. But now you have a much bigger world, and you have greater freedoms. I feel that the schools of architecture could perhaps use these freedoms more constructively, towards developing an architecture that responds to the climate.



NRSP- National rural support program head office, hostel and training centre 2016 Hyderabad



SPO- Strengthening participatory organizations head office, training centre and hostel 2016 Multan



AT: How do you see the work of (Late) Ar. Parween Rehman as contributing to society?

AH: Parween Rehman developed over a long period of time. I knew her for part of her student life, and then over 30 years at the Orangi Pilot Project, where she worked with me. There were three very important aspects of Parween. One, she had a consciousness of injustice and inequity in society.

It was a very strongly felt thing. It is very rare. People arrive at this through logic and understanding sometimes like John Turner did, but in the case of Parween it was emotional - it was deeply ingrained in her. The second thing is that she was remarkably ethical. She was incapable of doing something that she thought was wrong or improper, which is also very rare. And the third was, Parween learned on the job. And her job linked her up with social activists, political activists, community activists in low income settlements on the one hand, and on the other hand it linked her up with those who were running projects in that developing low income settlement both in socio-political terms and physical terms.

And by the time Parween matured she had clearly understood what her role was. That was to provide technical advice and social guidance to low income communities for three purposes: One, for improving their settlements through whatever means they had. Second, linking them up with official planning so that they could make use of government plans for the physical improvement of their settlements, and in this process marking existing infrastructures, identifying what was missing was very much a part of her role. And third, which I think was extremely important, was bringing people together from different areas, so that they could operate as a larger entity. These were built into the philosophy of the Orangi Pilot Project from the very beginning, but I think that as Parween matured she took on this role more and more from Akhtar Hameed Khan and from myself. And over a period of time she became the person guiding the direction of the Orangi Pilot Project.

AT: How did her demise affect the OPP?

AH: There were periods of concern after she died, but now things have stabilized, and I think that the second-tier leadership that we had has taken over. It will take some time to carry out projects that had been identified earlier - after Parween's death things slowed down on that account - but I think it will be okay. But I think there is one thing that has to be understood: that since we began working in Orangi - I began working in 1981, and in low income settlements I began in 1974 - we are living in a very different world today. Communities have changed; governments have changed; NGOs have changed, and very important is the fact that aspirations have changed as well. Also Modernism and its various facets have now been replaced by Neo-Liberalism. I think the NGO world as a whole, in Pakistan, has not grasped the extent of this change - I think they are in the process of doing that, and once they do that I think there will be a change in the manner in which they deal with low-income settlements.

AT: Can you explain the effects of this change from Modernism to Neo-Liberalism?

AH: Well, let's take a bigger view to begin with. In the early 90s we started liberalizing - Neo-Liberalism started to take root. I don't think our policy makers - especially not those who work with cities or rural areas (maybe right on top yes, but on this level) - understood what this meant in philosophic terms. But they did pick up some vocabulary, which over time they used to justify the State's policies. Let's take a look at the terminology: we were told it is not the business of the state to do business, which means privatize. We were told cities are the engines of growth. Yes true, but we were not told that there are many cities which have declining GDP per capita, or declining resource per capita. We were told that the city has to be a world-class city, which means it should get direct foreign investment. This meant replacing planning by projects, so that they could get money from there. Also it meant that the city should be identified by some important event. Like FIFA; like Formula One in Istanbul. It should be an



SOS Children Village, Karachi



event city and it should be built for being an event city. Beijing Olympics, Commonwealth Games, etc. All these events were not meant for the poor people. This was completely unaffordable to them. Not only that, there were massive dislocations of populations to create these events and to create this branding, like Formula One. In Istanbul many people were displaced from their homes for Formula One. In Delhi, more than 500,000 people were removed from the city and left on the outskirts - far away from places of education, health, entertainment, recreation, work. Also the thinking that emerged out of this terminology was to gentrify whatever you could gentrify, and the need for gentrification actually arose because globalization and Neo-Liberalism created a very big middle-class, which is one of its positive features, that it created a big middle-class and an affluent middle-class. But at the same time it created insecurity as well for that middle-class and that led to creation of gated communities, and segregation according to ethnicity and class. So I feel that we were not able to absorb the positive features of Neo-Liberalism. We were not able to use them to create better cities, rather we used them to create exclusive cities, and divided cities.

AT: Our Architecture schools focus a lot on Western celebrity architects, like ZahaHadid, Frank Gehry, DanielLibeskind etc. What (if any) is the contribution of these architects to the field of architecture?

AH: Architecture, in my opinion, is a social art, which serves society. I'm a firm believer in minimalism. There is a contradiction here: there are students I have talked to that glorify vernacular architecture, which is all minimalism really, with surface decoration. And it is continued. You copy it, century after century with minor modifications, taking into consideration cultural changes. And yet what the students are taught is to be original. And the modesty, the humility, the environment and the ethos of humanity is killed when you emphasize originality. I'm not saying don't be original, but at the same time there is wisdom

in producing an architecture that responds more to the environment and to human needs than to some grand concept, idea or icon. Zaha Hadid and Frank Gehry are okay. I have no problems with them. They didn't work for the masses, or for creating better cities, or for social aspects. They worked to create iconic buildings. But if they are to be the role models for students, then I think it is a great tragedy. Because the architecture that they produced, it had an arrogance about it. Again, it is something I have no objection to, because it was not destroying the city. So it had an arrogance, it was very individualistic. As a piece of architecture there is no problem with it. But it is not something that you can possibly use - or extract something from it for the city as a whole, or for society as a whole. I don't think their architecture contributes in any way to a better social, political or physical environment, although the buildings in themselves are pieces of great architecture.

And then to be original, you have to have talent, and you have to have intuition also at the same time. Most architects don't have this. They can't have it. It is a rare thing. As an architect you have to follow some rules and regulations somewhere. But if you are a great genius like Frank Gehry, then it's alright, you don't need to follow rules, you set your own rules and regulations.

AT: What are your thoughts on the current trends in the development of Karachi?

AH: We have a number of development trends in Karachi, and this is what my recent publications are all about. I would identify five trends:

1. Densification of Low Income Settlements. And this is because the population of Karachi has increased from about 11 million in 1998 to over 20 million in 2006. Where do you house this population? The low income groups are in a special problem: the old katchiabadis were near their places of work because at that time the city was small. So the fringe of the city was near places of work, places of health, education, recreation. When the city, in physical terms,



SRSO complex, Sukkur



in this period has expanded more than twice of what it was in 1992, consequently the only land available to the poor today is on the fringes of an expanded city, far from places of work, recreation, health, education. So it has become cheaper to live in the city, rent in the city rather than live on the fringe. So today the informal sector has responded by densifying the katchiabadis which are nearer to the city. So where there were single or double story houses, now you have high rises of six, seven or eight floors, with terrible consequences of overcrowding especially for women and children because the street previously, when their houses were one or two floors, was public space / community space, which women and children could use. Today it is no longer communal space. Also, because the buildings are high and the lanes are narrow there are major problems of ventilation, light and the Karachi heat wave - this heat tiding effect - is very much there in these settlements, and caused a number of deaths. Also, there is a question of toilets. In these settlements today, through a process of densification, there are six to seven persons per room, and densities as high as 2000 to 4000 persons per hectare. So this is one very important aspect - densification. How are we going to deal with it? We do not know. There is no government policy on this very important issue. If I show you photographs and details, you will be horrified.

2. Densification of Middle Income Areas. This densification, a major part of it, is for purposes of speculation. This is not informal, this is formal. Take Sharfabad, Bahadurabad for instance. This is how you speculate. And under the previous by laws this was not allowed. But we now have something that is known as the Sindh High Density Board Act. The board consists of nine politicians and government servants, and under this act any area can be declared high density - even a plot can be declared as high density. And so certain corridors have been identified for high density construction, certain plots have been identified. So you have 20 story buildings, there is one 50 story building coming up soon. In the old city as well you have permissions for a very large number of buildings that have been given permission under this

act. This is the other trend.

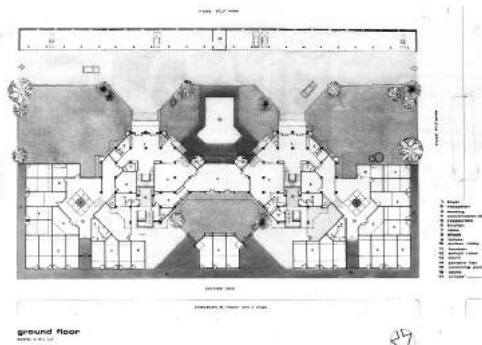
I'm not bothered about water and sanitation and electricity. These can come with reasonable planning. If not today, they can come let's say seven, eight, ten years. The question is: what do you do with the cars? I think that is the major issue in this form of development. And we are going to become like Bangkok, Bombay or Delhi. We are already almost there - where there are so many cars that we do not know how to manage them. They registered last year in Delhi 1400 vehicles per day. In Karachi they registered 900 plus vehicles per day. So this is going to be an issue and no mass transit can solve this issue, because this is all about a very powerful nexus between the oil, automobile and banking lobbies, which are able to produce this number of cars. Even in the west they have not been able to prevent the manufacturing of cars, but through other means they have been able to restrict circulation of cars. I don't think we are in that position as yet.

3. The Building of the Bus Rapid Transits (BRTs). Green Line, Blue Line, Red Line, Orange Line etc. These, when they are complete, will serve about 8% of the total trips generated in Karachi - if they are built. So what happens about the rest? How will people come from their homes to these BRTs? That remains a question mark. For that we have not so far moved towards designing a comprehensive program. I think that will be very necessary, otherwise these BRTs will not really fulfill the needs of the city. One way of doing it is you can regularize your Qings all over again. By removing them we removed 360,000 seats per day from the transport sector in Karachi.

4. The Changing Sociology and its Demands. The most important age group in a census is the age group between 15 and 24, because that is both your Present and it is your Future. In this age group in the 1961 census 63% women were married and 28% men were married. If I extrapolate that to 1998 and from 1998 census to 2006, then today only 17% women in that age group are married, and only 8% men. As any sociologist will tell you, this is enough to



Twin Towers Modarba, Karachi



change gender relations, which is enough to change family structures, and that has happened. And it has happened very fast. Secondly, today 90+ percent men and women in this age group are literate, if I extrapolate the 1998 census (as opposed to around 60% in the 1960s). So naturally, you have different aspirations. And that is obvious by the fact that we now have so many NGOs, so many Citizen's Groups, all trying to do something - you have an explosion of art, of painting walls, you have drama clubs that have come up, you have films being made on all sorts of social issues.

So the aspirations are different. How do you design for this changing environment? How do you mitigate its negative physical and social aspects and how do you promote this? Also in our elite now there is an interest in the city - apart from their own areas - there are more and more young people, they are interested in the city. The number of films that are made on Karachi is incredible. Previously no one cared, now there is interest.

5. The Changing Nature of Migration. We are going to have much more migration than we have ever had before to Karachi. But it's going to be a different type of migration. Previously, who migrated? Anyone who wanted a better life for his or her children, they migrated; anyone who wanted to send money home...and that migration was to a welcoming city, because you could go and get a place in a katchiabadi and live there, by paying the middleman and by paying the police. So the migration was of enterprising people. What has happened in the rural areas of Sindh and southern Punjab is that the old subsistence feudal economy has broken down because of the introduction of cash as a means of exchange rather than barter, which is what existed before. And also the relationship of caste and profession has broken down. Now the son of a Raj is not a Raj; the son of a sonaar (goldsmith) is not a sonaar. And in this process, the old caste and barter economy has been replaced by a cash economy. So the village is no longer self-sufficient, as it used to be. It depends entirely on urban manufactured

goods, which it cannot afford. So this migration is not because you want to migrate, but because you have no option but to migrate. Because you cannot live there anymore.

So the people who are coming now are mainly people who have a low level of skills. They have a low level of entrepreneurship. And they have come to a city where it is difficult for them to get a piece of land to live on, so they squat, or they live on the street, or they live under the bridges. This did not used to happen in Karachi before, but now it is increasing at a fast pace. So this is a very different sort of migration, and much of it is seasonal, which wasn't so before. When harvest time comes they return to their villages; when it is time to plough the fields they return to their villages. So the period between sowing and harvesting is when a lot of people come into Karachi. The problem is that if the architect is not even aware of these five trends which I have told you, how is he/she going to design for it?

AT: But in our context the architect is least concerned with these issues.

AH: But he should be concerned with these issues. For instance, this Labor Square, which was made on the other side of Gulshan-e-Mimar, I don't know how many thousands of units they made. This will never work. They were made in the (Zulfiqar Ali) Bhutto era and at that time their density was at 5 persons per room. Now their densities are more than 12 persons per room. This will never work. And this is what we argued with them that they should have built cored individual houses and left this matter to the people themselves - whether they want to build another story or not. But it should be such that they can build on top of it if they want to - the foundations should be such. They would have achieved the same densities. Then there would not have been issues with maintenance. Who is going to maintain them? Go and have a look at the square. If they were individual houses, they would have been maintained. Even middle-class estates are not maintained collectively so how will these be?



Piler Complex, Karachi



One thing is for certain - according to the Neo-Liberal World Class City concept which has been adopted in our city, at least in theory if not in practice, there will be only projects, no planning. And these projects are not even aware of each other! For instance, recently the CM identified roads which he said would be repaired - an architect, Samar Ali Khan, was also involved in that - and one of these roads is University Road, although there is a BRT project to be built on University Road. So what is the use of repairing it now when it will be dug up again? So there is no coordination between these projects. Four principles which I argued for when they were making this Strategic Development Plan. I said we will make projects, because that will bring in money for the city, but we will stick to these 4 principles:

1. The project will not damage the ecology of the region in which Karachi is located;
2. The project will determine land use on sociological and environmental considerations and not on the basis of land value alone. Land value is important - we do not say it is not important - but a matrix should be developed to see if it works out.
3. The project, as a priority, will serve the interest of the majority, which are low and lower-middle income groups.
4. The project will not damage the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the communities that live in the city.

So these were the four things that I suggested to be implemented. In reply to this a consultant of the Asian Development Bank said to me, "Arif, with these four criteria, you will never have any projects".

AT: If these trends continue, what kind of future do you foresee for the city of Karachi?

AH: It is difficult to answer this question, because it all depends on the institutional arrangements that are developed for the city. The biggest problem of this city is that it is a non-Sindhi speaking city of a Sindhi-speaking



Hypothetical remodeling of Paposh Nagar for Karachi, density study in partnership with NED-URDC



Arif Hasan's First House, designed in 1969



Arif Hasan's Own House

province. This is the crux of Karachi's problems. On top of that, it is a rich city - revenue rich, job rich. It is said that 78% of all formal sector jobs in Sindh are in Karachi. The best medical, educational facilities are in Karachi. Media is in Karachi. Majority of the revenue of Sindh is also generated in Karachi. And to make matters worse, it is also has 35% of the urban population of Sindh - that is what is said, by Sindhis as well as Mohajirs. This enormous wealth of Karachi can only be controlled by the Sindhi speaking political parties through a highly centralized system of governance. Otherwise they cannot control it. And the MQM which is not in a majority anywhere in Sindh - not even in Karachi, Urdu-speakers are not in a majority - they cannot control it through a highly decentralized system of governance. This is a big contradiction. And it is because of this that we have changed local body systems since Musharraf left.

Now a lot depends on the shape the institutions take. At present the institutional arrangements are not working. The KMC is not getting money. The KDA is almost non-existent. Karachi Water and Sewerage Board has serious problems - one hears that it is going to be turned into a company. The Solid Waste Management system now has been given over to a company - The

Sindh Solid Waste Management Company. Much of KDA's functions have been given to another company - The Karachi Infrastructure Development Company. So slowly we are handing over the city to these companies, for two reasons: I think one main reason is that the Sindh Government, wishes to control Karachi's enormous wealth and jobs; and second reason that the Sindh Government has decided that it is incompetent and it cannot run these institutions - maybe there is an element of both of them, I don't know.

Examples from other countries where privatization of this sort has taken place, and also in the case of Karachi Electric here, suggests that they can easily serve the interests of the elite and middle-class areas, but they are unable to serve the interests of the poorer sections of the population - same with KE now, they don't give them electricity - they shut it down for many days at a stretch, and they have taken a lot of money from them. So it depends on the institutional arrangements. Centralization is not the best way of governing a city, but since the People's Party is in the majority in the Sindh Assembly, I think we will be going in for more and more centralization. So what becomes of the efficiency of these institutions? What



Orangi Research Training Institute (OPP-RTI), Karachi





Nagarparkar Cottages and Museum, Nagarparkar

is necessary are three things, apart from education and health: Housing, Transport and Jobs.

Housing - there is no plan for it at all, except to access the market, and the poor cannot access the market - it is too expensive for them. They cannot get a loan for buying a piece of land, so how will they build a house? Because they can only get a loan after they get a piece of land. They are not loan-worthy because they don't have formal sector jobs and they don't have assets that can be used as collateral. And finally, even if we do solve this problem with loans, the loan portfolio with the House Building Finance Corporation and the other banks is so small that it will be a drop in the ocean. This is the problem with housing.

Transport - if they build the BRTs I think it will be a great achievement, but they will have to supplement it some form of para-transit.

Jobs - you will have to develop industry, and increase the services sector - in both cases you need peace, you need freedom of investment without bribes and corruption, and more than anything else you need a roadmap for the future - growth management and promotion, which we don't have.

AT: This housing problem has persisted for very long. In some Far-eastern countries, like Malaysia, they have a program for providing free housing to the poor. Is it possible to implement such schemes here?

AH: First of all, I don't think we need to provide free housing. Among the poor there are categories. You have the "rich poor"; you have the "potentially rich poor" and you have the "marginalized poor". You can provide housing through loans for the first two categories of poor people - it is possible, as NGOs have demonstrated that it can be done. And the poor are extremely good borrowers - they pay back. The rich don't, but they do, because they are afraid of losing their homes, so they pay. So for these two there is possibility. The problem is land.

In this city you have, in my understanding of things, about 4000 hectares of state land available. It belongs to Railways, Port Trusts, Central Board of Revenue and Cantonment Boards. This can be brought into the market, if these agencies want, for low income housing. It can be done but for that you need political will. And also, you need to control speculation on land. At present it is estimated, so I have been told, that there are 300,000 empty developed plots in Karachi, and there are 68,000 apartments that are empty.

If you want this land to be built on, or if you want future land to be used for building purposes for the poor then you will have to impose a heavy non-utilization fee on land and property. You impose a fine of 10 percent and you will see all these lands come into the market.

These lands can come into the market but they won't because all these agencies use them for the benefit of their employees and ex-employees. We have land. I have even identified in my books where these lands are available.



Nagarparkar Cottages and Museum, Nagarparkar



AT: In Europe and America, they have well-developed small towns, which have all the facilities needed for people to live there. Why don't we have this trend here, so that small towns are developed in interior Sindh where people can be settled to reduce the burden on Karachi?

AH: This problem does not exist in Punjab. In Punjab, small towns have indeed developed, especially in central and northern Punjab. Lahore's population is 7% of the total population of Punjab. And it is 12% of the urban population of Punjab. Karachi is more than 50% of the urban population and about 35% of the total population of Sindh.

If you do not give special concessions to investors, they will not invest. Or else the government should invest. In Ayub's era Kotri was developed as an industrial estate. People went and settled there and they are still settled there. A lot of industries were established in Sukkur - especially biscuit manufacturers. The industries that were taken over by the private sector continued to function, whereas those that remained with the government phased out eventually and today they are ghost factories.

The investor wants to invest in Karachi. That is his priority. Firstly he is settled in Karachi, and then he finds the banking systems to be better here, as well as the infrastructure. The second reason is that we have lived since 1982-83 through a period of planning anarchy. It was an insurgency in Sindh and the institutions could not sustain themselves after that. And I think they did not even try to do it - because they were so busy in looting the wealth that they did not bother. Otherwise Larkana, Sukkur, Khairpur are 3 cities, and you can add Dadu to the list also, that have a lot of potential. After the floods of 2010 they took me there to Khairpur-Nathan-Shah.

I also made a proposal for the DCO - I don't know if he read it or not, although he himself had asked for it but he never got back to me after that - in that proposal I had stated that this city has been destroyed and now it should be resurrected in such a way that we generate at least 20,000 jobs, which can multiply in the future. So this should happen, and it can happen - it is happening in Punjab - Gujranwala, Sheikhupura, Faisalabad, Multan, Lodhran are examples of cities that are booming with investment, with industry.



Hasan Square, Karachi



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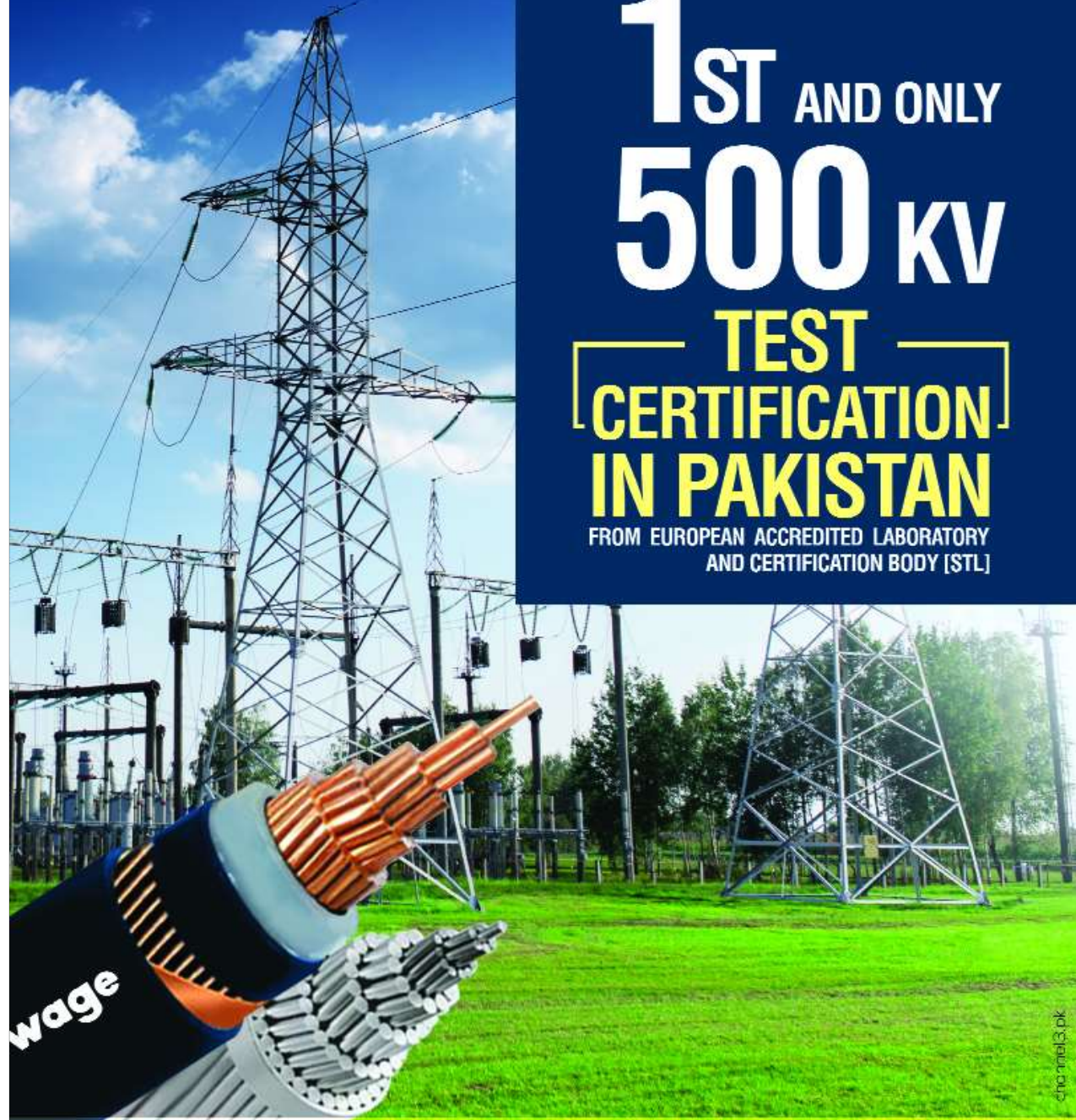
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E N G I N E E R

FIRDOUS SHAMIM NAQVI



“ I think, there are certain cities that are bound to expand. Karachi for example is a port city, there is industry here and therefore it provides employment. So, it keeps on attracting population. To manage its growth, we need a Master Plan. There are many solutions for this. The centre of the city must be for the poor, and the periphery of the city is for the rich because they can afford transport. Look at the planning that has been done in Karachi. KDA Scheme-1 was made in the heart of the city. DIHA is also almost the middle of the city though on one end. What is left for the poor in the central city, except for the old town areas. The building control authority is responsible for most of the current problems of the city. All the localities have been destroyed. Nazimabad 2 no., used to have 200 yard houses of Ground plus one floor. Now there are ground plus five buildings. Now Gulshan-e-Iqbal and Gulistan-e-Johar will face a similar fate.

It is important to work under the framework of the constitution. Our constitution creates a three tier government system and the problems we are talking about are at the lowest tier which is the local government. The local government has not been empowered to be able to deal with these challenges. Solid waste disposal cannot be a provincial responsibility. It is a municipal service and must be given to the relevant municipal body. In summary, Karachi's issues can only be resolved effectively when the Central, Provincial and Local governments are all with one party. Only then will this problem be resolved. So Karachiites should vote for which ever party they want but it should be present at the Federal, Provincial and Local levels. ”

- Firdous Shamim Naqvi

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FIRDOUS SHAMIM NAQVI

Syed Firdous Shamim Naqvi is a well know real estate developer who has a diverse set of experiences in the building and construction industry as well as the energy sector. He has been associated with the Habib Group for a significant part of his professional life. He is also a politician and was elected as MPA on the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf ticket and is currently serving as the leader of the opposition in Sindh Assembly. In this interview Engineer Firdous S. Naqvi spoke to ARCHI TIMES about his professional as well as political pursuits and experiences.



THE LARGEST CABLE/CONDUCTOR MANUFACTURER IN PAKISTAN



ARCHI TIMES (AT): Let us start by knowing a bit about your educational background. Where was your schooling done and where and in what discipline did you acquire higher education?

Firdous Shamim Naqvi (FSN): To start from the very early years, I am a product of the Habib Public School, a 'Habibian'. I did my Matric in 1971 and then Intermediate in 1973 from DJ Science College. I joined NED in 1974 and finished my degree in 6 years instead of the normal 4 years. In December 1979, having graduated from NED, I enrolled at the University of Michigan Ann-Arbor. I completed two master's degrees from there, one in Construction Management. I am one of the two individuals in Pakistan who at the time did such a degree and University of Michigan was the highest ranked university at that time. The second master's I did was as part of my PhD program in Highway Design and Materials. But I did not pursue my PhD because the supervisor assigned to me would not award a PhD before at least five years, while I had intended to acquire the doctorate in two years as was the norm with many professors in the construction field. The supervisor could not be changed so I just completed the masters.

AT: You have had very diverse experiences ranging from construction and real estate development to manufacturing and power sector and then retail. How did your career begin in the construction sector? And how did it evolve later into real estate development and the other fields?

FSN: My career in the construction industry began in USA where I worked for an underpinning firm after having completed my education. Thereafter I moved to the Middle East where I worked for a road building company. In November 1983, my father passed away

and I moved back to Pakistan. Since that time, I have been associated with the Habib Group. When I began working in Pakistan I started with pre-casting. I also introduced the hollow-block in Pakistan. It was my company, Balochistan Concrete and Block Limited, that introduced the machine-made hollow block which began to be called the 'Hub-block'. We also introduced the pre-stressed hollow roof. The double-Ts had come into use in Punjab and we manufactured those as well. We also produced concrete poles and pre-cast walls. We continued doing this until 1997 when the company shut down.

In 1998 I started venturing into real estate development and created the Noble Project Management company through which we did real estate development. When the 1994 Power Policy was announced, Habib Group decided to venture into power sector and we tried to put up a project at Port Qasim by the name of Tractebel Khaleej which was a 460 MW Propane based Combined-Cycle unit, which at the time was the best of what was on offer. Unfortunately, the project fell victim to the political discrimination by the government of the time. So, we couldn't carry out the project and it wasted about three to four years of my life.

The sectarian violence of the 1990s in Karachi took a very personal toll on us. In 1992, my father in law was shot dead and then my cousin was assassinated and then in 1994-95 there was an attempt on my life as well. So then in 1996 I decided to move to Canada and tried to acquire a business there. Alongside there was another issue that I faced on the personal front. My daughter was born with renal failure and her treatment could have only taken place in Toronto. Initially I used to spend half the year in Canada and the other half in Pakistan. But when I had to take her for treatment in 1998, I started spending the greater part of my time in Canada and I then set up a real estate company in Canada too. I completed two projects there as well. I was on a business visa, and in 2003 I returned to Pakistan and then started again to look for something



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big and different to do. Then in 2004, we formed a partnership with Macro and we brought Macro Stores to Pakistan. In 2011 Macro was also merged with Metro. When the merger had been completed and the management was taken over by Metro, I began looking for further new ventures in my capacity as the Director of Business Development and Strategy for the group. As a habit, I keep looking for new opportunities. We identified one at the Thar Coal project which was facing some problems at the time. Engro, which controlled the project at the time wanted to move out of it and so we expressed the willingness to move in. Seeing our willingness, Hussain Dawood also thought to remain part of it. And therefore, Engro and Habib Group entered a partnership in the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company. And then we created Pakistan's first open pit mining project. Alongside we also put up a power project by the name of Thal Nova.

AT: So, you did not ever create a construction company. Although you did get involved in the business of building materials?

FSN: Well the Noble Project Management company was not purely real estate development. It was also a construction company. Primarily it was created or real estate development, but I think that construction should be done by every real estate developer. They should all get a taste of contracting. Why should they do it? Because this enables them to sharpen their pricing. Because he has to win tenders. That skill set to keep prices competitive and you cost low, comes from an experience in contracting. Most of the times what happens is, in order to cut costs, the developer reduces their quality. In construction contracting, the owner takes the entire pound of flesh that you have promised to them. They want exactly what has been promised in terms of quality and features of a project. But I don't do construction contracting much in Pakistan. There are two reasons for that: 1) the public sector is rife with corruption and bribery and 2) the private sector also has become corrupt in that they consider it necessary to take discounts in retention money and they make payments difficult and you have to resort to fights and quarrels. And it is in my nature to stand up against injustice and dishonesty. And that is not good for contracting. That nature is not suitable for contracting. In my opinion, in real estate development, the principle should be to deliver more than you have promised. I have carried out 18 projects and if you look at the last, I delivered was Sohni Golf View, which is just off Jinnah Avenue. I have five ongoing projects at Jinnah Avenue. I cater to the middle-income group. In fact, my first project was for low-income category and it was with KDA. But the KDA made a such a mess out of it that I don't even mention that project. We made the houses in Surjani Town but even after 20 years after completion, the services were not delivered. So, people couldn't live there and then we bore the brunt of that.

AT: When did you formally enter politics and what was the motivation behind it?

FSN: I joined the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf right when it was formed. I used to be active in student politics in my university years. I was the general secretary of the NED student organization and had been leading the leftist student organizations of Karachi for a long time. In 2018 the national elections were held, and I contested from

the PTI platform and won. It is a matter of pride for me that I was the Karachi president for PTI and had joined politics with the explicit goal of defeating forces of ethnic hate and sectarianism. I wanted to rid this city of violence and repression. And by the grace of God, the people of Karachi enabled me to fulfil this dream and Karachi was delivered from ethnic discrimination, extortion, illegal land subdivision, violence and fear. And then when we won the elections, I was a candidate for the NA-243 constituency but as an election strategy, people would say that no one takes ownership of Karachi, so we asked Imran Khan to contest from Karachi. And our slogan was 'Wazeer-e-Azam Karachi Se'. So, I offered my seat for Imran Khan to contest from. And so the Prime Minister won the national assembly seat from the same constituency that I won the provincial seat in. And then I was nominated the leader of the joint opposition in Sindh Assembly.

AT: As a real estate developer, how do you think low-cost housing can be provided in Pakistan?

FSN: The commonly held view of low-cost housing is not actually low-cost but low-spec housing. In that project we had done only one thing different from what is normally done in a conventionally built house and that was providing pre-cast roof. Though it was more expensive, but we still provided it. In Pakistan, whenever there is an involvement of machinery, crainage or transportation, the product becomes expensive. Crainage and transportation are both expensive and here, crainage comes on both ends, the factory and the site. When you bring crains to the site, for short span roofs those are not economically viable. So that is why, even after us, nobody did anything about it. You can't compete with brick walls using pre-cast walls in Pakistan because it is not economically viable, you put 1:2:4 concrete in RCC walls no matter what the thickness. The better concept is 'Incremental Housing'. It should not be called 'low-cost housing'. What happens in incremental housing is that for instance you made a house, you created its structure. Today you put a few elements of low specs just to enable habitation. And then as you go along, you keep improving upon it. This is what is incremental housing. At least it pushes forth the housing production and delivery. I am a firm believer of incremental housing and I think the Orangi Pilot Project of Akhtar Hameed Khan and the Khuda Ki Basti projects of Tasneem Siddiqui are really good examples of how housing should be delivered in Pakistan.

AT: What is the current government doing to resolve the housing crisis in Pakistan?

FSN: Keeping these examples in view, when we were writing the manifesto for PTI, we brought a concept which people criticize these days. We thought that housing provision to those who need shelter, was of utmost importance. The construction industry supports almost 70 other industries and it provides employment to a variety of kinds of labor, skilled, semi-skilled and even unskilled. So, in order to jump start the economy, it is vital to put utmost emphasis and focus on providing housing. However, the problem that we encountered in it was that due to the economic crisis that the country is facing and the new governor of the State Bank when he took the interest rate to 13%, then housing was no longer possible. You see, what is the concept? The loans that were provided for a 15-year term, we

decided to change the banking policy and make it 20 years plus 5 years of grace period. So now the repayment will be over 25 years and that reduced the installment amount. Then we decided to subsidize the housing sector on the interest rates applicable for housing finance. Because that can then be cross subsidized by taxing increased economic activity due to the construction boom. The concept was rentability. Now what is rentability? If someone is today paying a rent of about 15,000 to 20,000 rupees for a two-room house, then tomorrow in the same amount of money, he would become the owner of that house. Also, as the housing stock increases, the rents are going to fall as well because of supply and demand. But the other problem is that we have no control over the population. And therefore, there is no hope for the demand to slow down anytime soon. But our efforts are directed at improving the lot of our people. The emphasis of this project is not just on the urban areas but also includes the rural areas. And in rural areas if someone gets a loan of about 10 to 12 lacs and if they can get a 'pakka' house built or get a roof over their head, then that would be the singular most important achievement of this current government. The project took a long time to start, convincing the banks to provide facilities also took a lot of time, but now as a policy, all banks have to provide 5% loans for housing purposes under this program and this loan will be provided to companies as well as individuals. Tax was another problem for developers and builders, the way it was calculated. We have made it at a flat rate. We have brought the developers under a Fixed Tax Regime (FTR), so that demand of theirs was also fulfilled, so that they can perform without fear of harassment by the Tax authorities. We have incentivized them to declare true incomes and profits. We have rationalized the taxation regimes and slabs for them. And along with that we also reduced stamp duties so that property trading can also get a boost. And now only one issue is left. Housing is actually a provincial subject. It's not a federal subject. This initiative is being led by the federation. Now because PTI has a government in KP and Punjab, the program has a lot of support in those provinces. But in Sindh the program is not receiving much support. I did not mention Baluchistan because the population is very dispersed there. It's possible to create housing with services in Quetta, Gawadar and some other places but it might not be feasible in all of the province. Sindh, which has about 44% population that is urban, has not been very supportive of this initiative. The most important issue is expediting of approvals. Both KP and Punjab governments have committed to provide support in that regard, but Sindh has not been forthcoming on it. At the moment, it takes 1.5 to 2 years in getting approvals, and bribery is rife in the process. The other issue, on which work needs to be done is about the legality of land titles. Land titles have become a major issue. There is no institution in Pakistan that can vouch with authority for the legal standing of land and sort out the matter. What happens here is that someone has bought land a long time ago and today the title gets challenged that the land was wrongly bought or sold. Various agencies come and raise issues in the land title. So, the security of title is not ensured. And that makes it difficult to create a viable mortgage system. So, these are the hurdles in the way of the housing scheme project. At the moment the government has also incentivized that whoever invests in property until December, no questions will be asked to them about the money. So





hopefully this is going to be the last amnesty and I hope people will gain full advantage from it. But in general, I can say with confidence that the construction and real estate development industry has not received greater support in the history of this country than it has received from the current government. So, hats off to Imran Khan. People say that he has not delivered on the promise of 10 million jobs. But the promise wasn't for public sector jobs. It was for jobs that would be created as a result of increased economic activity. And the government is working towards that goal.

AT: What is the real estate development work like in Pakistan? What are its dynamics?

FSN: I think that anything that has a relation to population and in a country whose population is increasing, that industry is profitable. From maternity homes, to schools to homebuilding businesses and even marriage bureaus, all businesses are profitable since they are tied to a rising population. Among these, real estate development is the most capital intensive. There was a developer by the name of Seth Abid who was prominent in the industry but also known for Pakistan's nuclear program. When I came to Pakistan after having studied and worked abroad and would speak more English than Urdu, he found it to be unusual for a person like me to be in the real estate development industry. Because at that time the figure of 'builder' was not someone who was highly educated. When I told Seth Abid that I intended to work in real estate development he said it required four things: Khabar (Information), Nazar (Intelligence), Sabar (Patience) and Zar (Wealth). These four things are essential to have if one intends to work in the real estate development sector. I consider that to be a remarkably accurate and good advice. Seth Abid was not formally educated but he had a vast experience in the field. But even today, all those who are interested in real estate development, I give them the same advice. Because it is capital intensive, patience is necessary because sometimes the information is wrong. We have been hearing about the Malir Expressway for such a long time, but it hasn't been built, and the land around that area hasn't appreciated in value so people will have to wait on that. Many times what happens is let's say people bought land near the Super Highway thinking that Karachi and Hyderabad would become one big city-region, but the Afghans came and settle there and all the development in that part got stalled, so you need patience for that also. Okay so even intelligence varies. There are two dominant theories in real estate development. One is the Donald Trump theory which emphasizes location, and the other is Bob Hope theory which says that wherever the last development ends, the next plot after that is the one to be developed next. I am personally inclined towards development on empty lot where no one else has come. This enables the developer to set the pattern for the entire area where future development will take place. The most important thing though in development is integrity. A developer's reputation and record has to be impeccable and only then can they succeed in this business. Unfortunately, in high-rise projects, the builder is very much dependent upon whether he receives the installments on time or not. In our country, there was no facilitation for bridge-financing, even now it is in infancy. The banks haven't yet given a clear policy on this and because of that, projects get delayed. The developer

promises three years, but possession is given in five years. Even a large developer like Malik Riaz was not able to deliver some of the plots for almost twelve years having over committed. The large developer in this country is too powerful and no one can do much about it. The laws in this country are not people friendly. For example, there is inflation which is a reality. And no one can deny it. We have had about 10 to 12% inflation over the past decade on average. Now if a project lasts about 3 to 4 years, the cost increases between 24% to 30%. Now how is it possible for a builder to sell his project but without charging for the inflation. It's not possible. So the only way he has left is to resort to unfair practices such as cancelling bookings for late installments and returns the booking money only after deducting inflation on the total price. In many cases the buyers can also get united to form a group and then harass the developer for asking for more money, which is also unfair. In a similar way I think, the homeowners should understand and realize that the building, once it has been delivered and inhabited, still requires maintenance. To assume that the building is a lifelong product that will not require any servicing is just not reasonable. Best of the best plumbing even doesn't last more than 30 years. The life for electrical products and systems can stretch to a maximum of 45 years. The structure itself is good for about 75-80 years. Wooden products last for 15 years, electrical switches 15 years, locks could last for 5 years. Now what is the most vulnerable and most commonly affected part of housing projects here? It is plumbing and the leakage that occurs because of it. Nobody until now has investigated the reasons for it. We need to regulate the systems for disposal of waste and distribution and usage of water. Another issue pertains to the conflict that happens between occupants of a building related to blocked drainage and leakages. In my project what we have done is that we have provided open plumbing to all flats, they are now accessible.

AT: Apart from these issues of the business of development itself, could you shed some light on its impact on the urban environment on a larger scale?

FSN: In my opinion, the developer sector is being wrongfully blamed for the condition of our cities. But the ones blaming are also not wrong. For example, if you consider Shahrah-e-Faisal, a few decades ago there used to be 2000-yard plots on either side of this road. Only rarely would one find a 1000-yard plot perhaps at Sindh Muslim. But the rest of the road had 2000-yard plots. Now what could be the maximum number of people living in those 2000-yard houses, maximum 8? And today if you put a 20-floor building with 100 flats in place of that bungalow, how many people occupy that site? About 600. That is about 75-fold increase in density. So, when the occupancy increased by 75 times, did the services also increase in tandem? No. Did the waste disposal, water provision, transport etc. increase by that amount? It didn't. And whose responsibility is all this? It is the government's responsibility. The government doesn't provide all this for free. It charges fees for commercialization. But where is that money spent? It is not being spent on infrastructure. When the infrastructure is not upgraded, it gives rise to the issues of urban deterioration and other problems. And the blame is laid on the developer. What is overlooked is that the developer has done his bit and cleared

his dues. So, this is the prime reason for the destruction we see around. Every technocrat that has been responsible for Karachi is now not to be seen here. All these ex-officials of KMC, KDA, KBCA are seen to have moved abroad.

AT: What do you see as the future of our cities?

FSN: I think, there are certain cities that are bound to expand. Karachi for example is a port city, there is industry here and therefore it provides employment. So, it keeps on attracting population. To manage its growth, we need a Master Plan. There are many solutions for this. The centre of the city must be for the poor, and the periphery of the city is for the rich because they can afford transport. Look at the planning that has been done in Karachi. KDA Scheme-1 was made in the heart of the city. DHA is also almost the middle of the city though on one end. What is left for the poor in the central city, except for the old town areas. The building control authority is responsible for most of the current problems of the city. All the localities have been destroyed. Nazimabad 2 no., used to have 200 yard houses of Ground plus one floor. Now there are ground plus five buildings. Now Gulshan-e-Iqbal and Gulistan-e-Johar will face a similar fate.

It is important to work under the framework of the constitution. Our constitution creates a three tier government system and the problems we are talking about are at the lowest tier which is the local government. The local government has not been empowered to be able to deal with these challenges. Solid waste disposal cannot be a provincial responsibility. It is a municipal service and must be given to the relevant municipal body. In summary, Karachi's issues can only be resolved effectively when the Central, Provincial and Local governments are all with one party. Only then will this problem be resolved. So Karachiites should vote for which ever party they want but it should be present at the Federal, Provincial and Local levels.

AT: What is the role of architecture or design in the shaping of our cities and environment?

FSN: I am a great believer of architectural control. Unless architects are given a greater say in the administrative affairs of the city, we would keep creating ugly and unlivable spaces. By architectural control I mean the building's color and scheme, the window styles, unless there is coherence in those things it will not create a healthy livable environment. All these unfinished buildings without any architectural involvement will give rise to an ugly place to live.

AT: ARCHI TIMES & NEWAGE Cables has taken this new initiative of promoting and highlighting the work of engineers in Pakistan. Would you like to say a few words about that?

FSN: I congratulate you and Newage Cables on taking this important step. Architecture and engineering have a symbiotic relationship. You should promote other professions that have a relation to the built environment. The biggest asset of this country is its population. The day this population is skilled and educated, they will become an asset. And if they are left uneducated, they will become a liability. So your contribution in promoting these professionals is commendable and it will provide inspiration to the younger lot to follow in the footsteps of the pioneers so that they become an asset to this country.

THE FUTURE OF KARACHI'S “PUBLIC’ SPACES”



Bin Qasim Park

WHERE DO THE YOUTH GO?

Next to the lane, the Bin Qasim Park has been developed within which is the listed heritage site of the Jehangir Kothari Parade. When the park was inaugurated, my office made a small investigation as to what the visitors thought about the park. The survey results showed that the people who visited it and the people of the area in which it is located simply adored it. However, males without an accompanied female could not enter the park and this objection surfaced quite strongly. The other group that was unhappy were children and young men who used this space for playing cricket and football. As a result of the park, they were forced to play on the streets surrounding it and were often censured by government agencies for doing so. The park consists of 150 acres; the young men argued that 10 to 15 acres of it could have been set aside for sports activities and benefitted hundreds of children and young men.

The trees in both the Beach View Park and the Bin Qasim Park had matured and by last year they were almost fully grown and they provided shade and a lush green environment. However, earlier this year, their size was reduced to about 12 feet and their stumps were pruned into a round shape. The shade they provided was eliminated. The reason given for this was that because of the trees, the visitors, especially young people engaging in 'shameless acts' could

not be seen. There could not have been a more ridiculous reason. If authorities wanted to keep an eye on people under the trees, an appropriate lighting system could have been installed instead.

Not far from the Bin Qasim Park is Old Clifton. It got its name after the Jehangir Kothari Parade was built in 1919 and which came to be known as New Clifton. So Old Clifton is at least 100 years old. It was an open maidaan [ground] at a height and overlooked the sea and a part of Defence Housing Society. This was a place where young people played cricket and families and young couples came for an outing. Today, in the centre of this space, there is a concrete paved park with a steel fence around it. Its gates have been locked for the past many years. One reason is that someone in the neighbourhood has filed a petition saying that 'anti-social' people would come into this space in a 'decent' neighbourhood. According to another source, real estate development has been planned for this area. Whatever the reason, this space too in an elite neighbourhood, has been lost to the public. Fatima Jinnah's house stands on the border of this space and legend has it that the Quaid used to sit at the edge of this ridge and watch the sunset.

With developments such as the Dolmen Mall, and related offices and car parking requirements, accessing the beach is becoming progressively difficult for low-income visitors.

Driving Out The Poor

Yet another case is Port Grand. It was developed on the first bridge that linked Keamari to mainland Karachi in 1854. It is a very positive addition as a place of recreation and food for the middle class. It is also beautifully designed. However, a very important activity on the bridge, before Port Grand was developed, was the performance of water-related traditional and religious rituals which consisted of feeding fish and birds, and depositing talismans into the sea. All this was accompanied by prayers and recitations from holy texts.

The activity also generated colourful economic activity apart from spiritual satisfaction and it brought people and groups from different classes and religions together. This activity - which according to Karachiites who are now 90 years old - has been going on for more than a hundred years and could have been easily integrated into the design of Port Grand in a way that did not adversely affect middle-class sensitivities. However, this activity is now performed in environmentally degraded conditions. Because of the unhygienic conditions under the bridge, the upper classes no longer visit the area. In addition, the eating space developed under the bridge which served the public was also demolished in the recent anti-encroachment drive. So, Port Grand has been developed to cater



to the middle class at the expense of lower-income groups and communities.

Forgetting History:

The city also contains a number of heritage parks, of which at least nine have heritage buildings or built components in them. In many of them, children play cricket and football against park rules, and hawkers sell food and sports-related items. Their case is illustrated by the rehabilitation of Jehangir Park. Loved by everyone from hawkers to transporters, the park has brought relief to the area and completely alleviated the environmental suffocation that the people in the area felt earlier. From a few of them, there are still some complaints. One is that food in the park restaurant is far too expensive for them and the second, that a space in the park should have been left for children and young men to play cricket and football.

But there are other objections from conservationists. They feel that Jehangir Park is not only a historic park that has a close relationship with the political history of Karachi but it is also the first and only designed gravel park in the city. In addition, it is also the space where well-known pre-Partition cricketers played and, after Independence, many well-known Pakistani cricketers also practiced in this park. For these reasons, conservationists feel that the design of the park should have reflected its history and

that the aviary and the dinosaur park that it houses today are inappropriate. Similar objections by conservationists have also been raised on the work carried out by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) in Burnes Garden which is listed as heritage site under the Sindh Conservation Act 1994.

The World Bank Neighbourhood Improvement Project is developing the space between D.J. College and S.M. Law College in Saddar. We do not know what the design of this space is since it has not been shared with the residents of Karachi. However, it has to be noted that, on Sundays and public holidays, this space was used by 10-15 cricket teams at one given time. If this space is lost to the young cricketers, they will have no option but to find other traffic-free streets to play on. Unfortunately, there are no traffic-free streets in the immediate area. I wonder if the planners of the space have thought of and catered to it by re-routing traffic on Sundays and holidays.

By re-routing traffic, such traffic-free streets can be created.

Towards Gentrification?

The worst example of a takeover of public space from the people of Karachi is Empress Market, where over 1,000 shops of over 40 years old have been razed to the ground and about 4,500 hawkers have been displaced without being provided any alternative space for rehabilitating their businesses.



Aaram Bagh





Through a thorough reorganisation of space, these shops and hawkers could have been rehabilitated, overcoming the objections of their blocking vehicular and pedestrian traffic. In the process, Empress Market could have retained a number of markets that were closely linked to it economically, socially and culturally. The take-over of Empress Market and its adjoining areas has raised the cost of properties around it and the rents of shops as well. It has also raised bhatta (protection money) that hawkers pay to the authorities so that they can continue to occupy a small space on the streets around the markets. Since no project for the rehabilitation of the demolished shops and dislocated hawkers has so far been presented to them, there is a feeling of considerable uncertainty for the future.

The situation in Saddar seems to point to a beginning of gentrification of certain parts of Saddar which will drive the poor out of the area. Again, we do not know the future of Empress Market and its surrounding areas because this information has not been shared with the people of Karachi nor with the hawkers and the owners of the shops in the demolished markets.

Another manner of driving out the poor and lower-middle classes is by creating conditions which are inappropriate to their socio-economic conditions, such as the

absence of affordable food, as was attempted by the Defence Housing Society when it removed all hawkers from Seaview and the only food available after this was in expensive kiosks and container outlets.

More recently, the shamianas (marquees) which accommodated the book market at Frere Hall were banned because their pegs damaged the tarmac on which they were installed. As a result, booksellers had to set up their shops under the sun, and due to the heat, booksellers and customers declined considerably. If this continues over time, it is possible that the book market at Frere Hall will disappear altogether. The proper solution would have been to create metal slots in the tarmac which could receive the marquee pegs. Similarly, the Sunday book market at Regal Chowk, which has a history of over 50 years, has periodically been disallowed instead of being promoted.

Parks and open spaces serve many other purposes which need to be understood. When there are power cuts in the summer, entire families come and sleep under the open sky in public spaces to keep cool. Also, after parks are closed as per regulations, homeless people, in large numbers, come and sleep in them. People living in the neighbourhood of such parks are not unsympathetic to the homeless; in fact, they feel that if the people are disallowed from sleeping in the parks, they would be forced to sleep

on the streets in the neighbourhood and this would create greater social problems. How one deals with this is important. New public spaces are also developing under the flyovers that have been built. How does one make use of these spaces for public good, especially for the young, who desperately need space for sports and recreation?

Where do we go from here?

A few recommendations emerge from the discussions above. One, where informal development has created public space which has served socio-economic functions for a long period of time, it should be regularised and, if necessary, reorganised. Second, for the redesigning of existing public spaces, their existing functions need to be understood and catered to. Meanwhile, in the designing of new spaces, what people want should be understood through surveys and meetings of the stakeholders. A very important aspect of design is related to the future administration and maintenance of space. It is necessary that the design remain minimalist and that maintenance costs are also reduced to the bare minimum. The designing or redesigning of public space should also accommodate hawkers and performers who, at present, usually hang around at the gates of parks and playgrounds by paying bhatta to the relevant authorities. Heritage parks should be designed by conservationists or at least their

advice in the designing of such parks should be solicited.

But how can one do all this in the face of a strong anti-poor bias in planning and policy, the cultural insensitivity of politicians and the megalomania and unethical practices of architects and planners? That is the real question.

Fewer visitors at the Mazaar than there used to be. Khurram, a seashell vendor at the gate of Beach View Park, says, "We sold seashells in the street market, we had a fixed space. It was like home. My father also sold seashells before me. I grew up here. Because of the street bazaar, business was good. It continued till two or three at night. Now at eight o'clock, we are asked to leave the area. If we do not, then we are pressurised." There is a marked change in business activity in the area. Khurram recalls, "Business continued till late because from the mazaar all the visitors used to go to the sea through the street. This is not possible anymore. Most of them came because they wanted to go to the sea. Some went to the Play Land, some went to the aquarium which is now a ruin. It has no fish and it has been crumbling for many years. They say that there is a budget of two crores for its maintenance and there are 45 employees. I do not know what they spend it on or what the employees do. Now it is difficult for us [to] walk from place to place looking for buyers. Before, [buyers]

came to us. The end of the market and the inaccessibility of the sea have also affected visitors of the Urs. They are now much less [in number] than they used to be."

'All of the people who sleep in parks are not homeless'

Mohammad Ashraf, is a painter, about 35-40 year old, who lives in Aaram Bagh (previously Ram Bagh). He says, "Yes, people do come and sleep in the park at night but all of them are not homeless. Some of them work in this area but their home is far away - say in Malir. So they save on time and transport cost. The park darogha [caretaker], sometimes with the help of the police, throws them out of the park. In which case, they sleep on the pavements in our neighbourhood."

The presence of unknown people outside our houses has sometimes created serious social problems. This is a serious problem for we do not like the homeless people to be around in our neighbourhood. But they are also helpless, and some of them are quite mohazzab [civilised]. I feel bad but we cannot do anything about it, the government should tackle this problem. Maybe they could arrange for some space which is reserved for these people and which could be used for sports in the daytime. I must also tell you about the renovation work currently going on. It is normal, it happens every two years for no reason - maybe you understand the reason."



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