**World town planning day 2020**

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Year 2020 advances towards end and with that, it brings about 71st anniversary of World Town Planning Day. The concept of world urban planning day has been reformed from a day to a week in which every day, a new aspect of urbanization is marked and pondered upon. One of those days is known as “World Urbanism Day”.

The history of this day goes back to over half a century. The notion was presented in 1949, by late Professor Carlos Merla Della Paolera at University of Buenos Aires, Argentina. At present, it has grown into an annual celebration in more than 30 countries on 4 continents, on 8th of November. Enthusiasm for celebrating this day is to congregate professional planners as well as local people for ideal community planning which is the very basis in order to achieve a better quality life for every individual.

When the notion was first presented, the idea maybe was to just have a one day celebration but with time this became a platform to highlight various urban planning and development issues by means of copious ways, to create awareness about the subject, about how it is a central part of social and economic development of a society and nation, to make attempts to incorporate this in every other field of work. In Pakistan, people are still unaware about the existence and substance of the field so here, one of the main purposes for this annual commemoration is to draw attention, towards importance and need of urban planning. Involvement of both officials and locals to appraise planning and make them all contribute in sound shaping of human settlements and environment is another intention behind commemorating this day.

Acknowledgment of this event will provide worldwide exposure to the principles of town planning for not only planners but also among general public. In different eras of Pakistan’s planning history, different policies and planning strategies are followed according to communal requirements. Considering:

Town planning like other communal needs is also a consumable commodity. It could not be devoid of its prerequisites and also have an expiry date

Pakistan has the history of over 5000 years and having this privilege of some of world’s most ancient and advanced human civilizations makes it a birthing ground of urban planning. Over the span of these millenniums, civilizations of Mehrgarh, Harappa, Mohenjo daro of the Indus Valley and Taxila of the Gandhara appeared in provinces Baluchistan, Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) respectively and the remains of prehistoric settlements portraits the presence of planning culture while one can see the emphasis given to well consolidated and well organized hierarchal settlements.

In pre-colonial era, Mughal Emperors developed a new version of planning and development for their cities and British developed their own planning mechanisms and addressed urban governance issues such as, space control, water provision, sewerage system, roads, street lights and police etc. Canal system (Irrigation system) was established in whole Punjab to get water for cultivation from the rain fed area. Proper nomenclature was given to villages by providing them names corresponding to their irrigation circle chak numbers. In 1855, railway transportation system were installed for the provision of easy access to all over the country. Garden City and City Beautiful movements were followed while planning Dehli as Capital city. Moreover, the Punjab Municipal Act, 1911 was enacted in Punjab to regulate land use and ensure infrastructure provision.

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After partition, it was observed that Pakistan faced more urbanization rate and its associated issues as compare to India. Currently, according to UNDP statistics, 32.8% and 37.6% are the percentages of urbanization in India and Pakistan respectively which are massive considering the land size and resources available in both countries. Since 1947, Pakistani governments over the years endeavored to control population growth and urbanization rate. Five year plans were formulated with First Pakistan Five Year National Development Plan in 1955-60. Till year 2020 twelfth five year plans have been presented. But these five year plans did not provide any worthwhile solution to urban planning problems such as slum formation, irregular and haphazard development, no up-gradation of infrastructure, constant rise in poverty, crime and injustice, perpetual democracy’s uncertainties, poor administration and deceitful behavior of authorized bodies. On top of that, total disregard to already established town planning policies and incompetence in developing new and need based policies has put us in a quandary. The situation has exacerbated to an extent that our metropolitan cities have been branded “one of the worse cities to live” in terms of living standards, safety and security, health and education and overall poor environmental conditions. Halfhearted measures taken by established authorities have resulted community into a complete mess. The absence of essential planning policies and laws are major reasons for raised issues and poor administration.

To overcome present planning issues, town planning as a profession should be given its due regard, planners as professionals should be respected at every platform and should be required at every policy and planning making forum. Furthermore, planners themselves need to show unity and be honest and loyal towards their profession to ensure professional town planner’s appointments for community planning authorized positions. This will automatically help in achieving sustainability in both planning profession and human settlements.

Moreover, formulation and implementation of planning policies, laws and regulations according to our needs are primarily required to mitigate these adverse conditions. By laws for high rise buildings have been updated and improved by LDA and CDA respectively, to refrain from repeating urban planning blunders but is that enough? High rise buildings will encourage mixed land use which will help in development in denser and more compact areas but will also lead to more pollution and more urbanization. If through some way, we develop a pedestrian friendly environment with expectation to reduce pollution, it will need promotion of bicycling, elimination of cars from the roads altogether and development of extensive public transport networks.

In an attempt to improve the overall situation policy wise, a policy named “National Urban Policy Document”, a joint initiative of Iqbal Institute of Policy Studies (IIPS) and Institute of Planners Pakistan (IPP), is developed through support and assistance from various institutions. It is expected to be launched on this world urbanism day. In addition, Both IIPS and IPP together are also preparing Town Planning Act. Alongside, National Urban Planning Regulatory Authority is on the verge of completion which will be useful in mitigation of hurdles coming in the process of policy making and thus, will help in formulation of rule and regulation for land use planning.

World is expeditious in making an allowance for modern planning strategies, concept of Smart city is widely adopted but we are a bit behind in this as the first smart city of Pakistan is still in planning phase while our neighbor India already has multiple smart cities. This concept presents new practices and strategies which are efficient in policy making. It is the matter of fact that smart cities contributes in overall town planning. Smart city concept is provision of optimal solutions to the problems by the integration of Information and communication (ICT) and IoT network. Services provided in smart cities are smart transportation, smart government services, smart democracy, smart business, smart heath facilities, smart security etc.

Development of integrated policies, planning strategies, development practices, new initiatives and smart cities with sustainable development and environment friendly approach incorporated in all is the need of the hour. Gradual steps towards that are being taken but the process needs to be accelerated before it is too late.

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