

# Karachi needs

# a master plan - I

Atiq ul Hassan

*Cities & Regions*

Once it was called 'A City of Lights'. For Europeans it was mini-London and for the others - A City of Opportunities'. Karachi - A city of the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, embraced everyone, indiscriminately. From labourers to businessmen; students to professionals or visitors to migrants, Karachi welcomed everyone. Today, it holds 14 million people came from various parts of Pakistan. It feeds the entire country. Both seaports of Karachi deal with 90% of imports and exports of Pakistan. It earns 60% revenue of the state yet Karachi has never been given the status it deserved.

The multicultural city of Karachi is a symbol of ethnic diversity of Pakistan. The people from every town and city of Pakistan can be seen here making money to feed their families back home. Almost every political leader of Pakistan exploited this generous land to flourish their political streams. Its parks, playgrounds and road have been used for anti-government movements and in marketing the political manifestos and religious demonstrations. Yet, Karachi behaves everyone like a mother who always opens her arms for their children generously and indiscriminately doesn't matter how children treat her.

Located at the Arabian coastline, Karachi, that was declared the capital of the state upon creation of Pakistan, used to be neat, clean, quite and a place of interest for tourists. There was a time when the downtown of Karachi like Sadar, Tower and then Bohri Bazar reflected a wonderful image of an international city as the market places were found to be busy with foreign tourists. Even Iranis, Bahais, Chinese and Afghanis were running the businesses side by side with locals. The environment, transport, roads and other basic necessities were incredible. The neat and clean parks, dirt-free water, uninterrupted electricity, wide gleaming roads, excellent public transport facilities like trams, beautifully decorated buggies, old style American & European taxis, colourful double-decker buses had kept this city at par with any modern city in the world. The friendly and pleasant shop-keepers, drivers and workers communicating in local and English languages found serving locals and tourists in a well professional manner.

Even weather used to be cloudy like Europe. No political fighting, no ethnic violence, no sectarian killings, no bomb blasts, no looting and shooting. Thus, Karachi used to be a best and beautiful place to live in Asia. I never forget my childhood days when I used to visit Karachi with my mother from Hyderabad (Sindh) to spend school holidays. That was a golden time when I with my cousins used to walk around Sadar, Cantt Station, Ferere Road and Bohri Bazaar spending hours on the roads, at the parks and shopping areas without any fear. The beaches, Clifton, Ferere Hall and Cantt areas were the best places for people for outings and picnics. People used to spend hours with their families in the evening watching movies on the big television and film screens placed in public parks by the local authorities and private companies.

Many foreigners could also be seen mixing and gossiping with locals at the public places especially at parks, restaurants and shopping areas. Frequent theatres, beautiful cinemas and social clubs kept people busy at night activities. The people were very cultured, friendly and helpful.

As the time passed by; the

**The multicultural**

in facilities for their citizens and visitors are the central attraction for local and foreign investors and are the symbols of pride for their respective states, whereas Karachi instead of moving forward went backward. The city which supposed to be the most modern and advanced city is the most apprehensive city to live or visit. The negligence, mismanagement and corruption have ruined almost every institution as well as the social environment of Karachi. Smoke discharging transport, pollution, undrinkable water, missing electricity, boiling gutters, busted roads and law and order situation transformed Karachi into an unreliable place to live.

Today, Karachi possesses a depressing disposition in the world. No international celebrity, artists or players willing to visit Karachi. A city that produced world-class superstar cricketers like Hanif Mohammad, Asif Iqbal, Zaheer Abbas, Javed Miadad, Mohsin Khan is now thirsting to have a single game. Most of the Western teams refuse to play in Karachi. In the last 40 years almost every politician and religious leader used Karachi as a campaign ground for anti-government and other political and religious movements.

In 1960s, Gohar Ayub a national celebrity, today, spent a rakish life in Karachi. Surrounded by model girls, he was involved in disgraceful activities during his father

Ayub Khan's rule. His unavoidable acts eventually resulted with a bloody Mohajir-Pathan ethnic conflict in early 1960s. Many innocent people were killed in that first ethnic violence in Karachi. When Ayub Khan rewarded Karachi by shifting the capital from Karachi to Islamabad.

In 1970s, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his buddies inflamed Sindhi-Mohajir issue by trying to implement Sindhi as an official provincial language in Sindh and then quota system was also introduced by his government. In fact, Quota System was the first step in dividing Sindh in Sindh-Urban and Sindh-Rural which actually reflected as the division of Sindh between Sindhi-speaking and Urdu-speaking. The people of Sindh which had been living peacefully since the creation of Pakistan and gradually accommodating and absorbing each other were divided. Replacing merit in the government jobs and admissions in professional colleges by quota system brought a discrimination and hatred between two strong ethnic identities of Sindh. Quota system provided opportunities for underserved students possessing lowest marks to get admissions in highly reputed professional colleges. Since then the educational level in Karachi particularly in professional fields which used to be the best in Pakistan started falling and eventually and regrettably reached to its worst. The admissions based on quota system and favouritism also brought the political, anti-Pakistan nationalist violent elements in the educational professional colleges and universities. The healthy and productive social and union activities of students became the centre for confrontations, demonstrations, bloody clashes and other un-civilised activities. Karachi was again the centre of anti-government agitations.

Sindhi-Mohajir ethnic violence and ongoing strikes again badly affected the businesses of Karachi and Karachi was again pushed behind. Most of the senior ministers of Bhutto government found involved in corrupting the major institutes of Karachi. The then Minister for Communication, Mumtaz Ali Bhutto, a senior minister and cousin of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, bungled the National Shipping Corporation which used to be one of the most profitable and financially strong department in Karachi. Most of the highly reputed and major institutes like Ministry of communication, Karachi Port Trust, Shipyard, Custom, Fisheries, Pakistan Steel Mill, Pakistan International Airlines which were the backbone of Karachi were damaged by corruption, bribery and incompetent appointments and promotions. The religious cum political parties formed national alliance against Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1977. This anti-Bhutto campaign was also launched and operated from Karachi which cost many hundred lives and industrial losses by everyday strikes jamming almost entire industry of Karachi including seaports and airport.

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