

# Planning missing

The 20-year master plan for the city prepared by the district government has failed to take into account very basic issues like population growth, migration of people to Lahore from rural areas, unemployment and increase in traffic

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By Hamid Ali

**T**he Lahore Master Plan 2000-2021, announced by the National Engineering Services Pakistan (Nespak) last week, has raised doubts about the capabilities of local civic authorities in handling serious matters of urban planning.

The sources in the government departments say the master plan does not address all the problems which Lahore might face in future. This fresh plan is very similar to the master plan prepared by the Nespak in 1998 on the instructions of former chief minister Punjab Shahbaz Sharif.

"The Mater Plan 2000-2021, which the authorities claim to have prepared for the next 20 years, is actually a document comprising confusing statistical data obtained from different civic agencies and departments. It is unlikely to resolve even basic problems in the provincial metropolis," observed a senior

LDA official. He sees planning missing from the plan. "It is just a composition of projects which different civic agencies submitted to the Nespak and LDA authorities on their demand. The total estimated cost of the plan does not commensurate with the heads of resource generation the city government has under its control," he said. He, however, appreciated the decision regarding the reconstruction of Multan Road, GT Road and Ring Road.

A senior Wasa official told *The News on Sunday*, "We need to improve water supply, sewer and drainage arrangements. We forwarded the schemes which the Nespak authorities made a part of the master plan. We do not know how the district government is going to execute these schemes as the Wasa does not have funds to carry out these expensive projects," he added.

Meanwhile, an official of the Transport Engineering and Planning Agency (Tepa) said important factors such as poverty alleviation and job opportunities

were ignored in the master plan. "You cannot address urban problems if there aren't job opportunities. The small scale industries (cottage industry) has been a fundamental part of urban life in almost every country but the authorities ignored the promotion of this vital sector in the master plan," he observed.

The authorities failed to identify the real issues and their solutions in the master plan. Giving the number of schools and health units to be built in 20 years is not enough. There should have been a comparative analysis of at least population growth, migration of people to Lahore from rural areas, unemployment and traffic growth rate before finalising the master plan. The availability of jobs, education, health and housing facilities to low income group should have been top priorities in the master plan. The schools should be built according to the population of a particular area. But the important thing is to consider how many people can afford education for their chil-



Small scale industries, nowhere in the plan. Photos: Rahat Dar

dren, the official said.

According to the master plan, the government has planned to execute development projects of Rs 51 billion in 11 different fields of civic life. It comprised development and improvement works in water supply, sewerage, drainage system, solid waste management, flood protection, environment protection, transportation, education, parks, data base system and health sectors.

The officials claimed Rs 18 billion would be contributed by private sector whereas remaining Rs 33 billion would be generated through government resources. The plan is supposed to be implemented in two phases. The projects on priority would be taken up during the first five years. These are meant to improve quality of life in the provincial metropolis.

Under the proposed master plan, Rs 644 million have been allocated for the improvement of

Ravi bridge, Rs 351 million for G.T. Road (from Yadgar Chowk to Cooperative Store), Rs 320 million for Multan Road, Rs 16000 million for Ring Road, Rs 245 million for approach roads to airport, Rs 160 million for area traffic management, Rs 1200 million for public transport terminals, Rs 82 million for supplementary works and Rs 4000 million on operation and maintenance.

For the improvement of water supply, Rs 1400 million have been proposed for the construction of main grid, laying down of distribution lines and tube-wells installation. Rs 2100 million were allocated for the improvement of existing drains and construction of secondary drains.

In order to improve the sanitary conditions, the authorities recommended Rs 1000 million for sanitation sector. The amount would be spent on the acquisition and development of land at

Mahmood Booti and Kahna Kachha, construction of structures and procurement of vehicles, machinery and equipment.

Out of total Rs 3,270 million proposed for education sector, Rs 1385 have been allocated for the construction of 277 primary schools, Rs 1045 for construction of 55 high schools and Rs 840 million for construction of 15 colleges.

Rs 763 million have been earmarked for the construction of 44 primary health centres, five polyclinics, three general hospitals and provision of beds in the existing health centres and general hospitals.

For recreational purposes, Rs 1200 million have been proposed for acquisition of land and development of parks and playgrounds. The authorities hoped that 80 per cent of the amount would be contributed by private sector.

The master plan has also pro-

posed the establishment of a new business centre on Defence Road, shifting of polluting industrial units out of residential areas, creation of recreational points near parks, stadiums and river and establishment of new industrial areas near commercial centres in the city outskirts.

The difficult part of the master plan seems to be its implementation. Earlier, the civic agencies could not implement the master plan prepared by Nespak in 1998. The objective of the plan was to execute sustainable development works. The LDA, Wasa, MCL, Tepa, Sui Gas, Pakistan Telecommunication Corporation (PTC) and other city departments which helped Nespak in the preparation of the plan for one and half year did not practice their own guidelines later. For example, the roads constructed under the Lahore Roads Rehabilitation Project (LRRP) were supposed to remain untouched for at least next 10 years but different agencies made cuts on majority of the roads. The government instruction to lay down service lines before the execution work was useless.

While the LDA, Wasa and Tepa are going through great financial crisis, the implementation on the master plan is uncertain. From where will the district government get the required funds, how will it manage private sector contribution and how will it handle issues like shifting of the polluting industrial units out of city limits, are some of the questions which the authorities have to answer in the master plan.