

# Urban unrest

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As desperate attempts to squat for survival evolved into a profitable development enterprise. First generation katchi abadis are now becoming dense in a haphazard manner. In the absence of development control and thrust of informal developers, neighbourhoods of poor quality have developed. Khadda in Lyari, an informal settlement, has as high as 10-storey apartment blocks on 60sq.yds plots. Liaquatabad has stretched into Gujjar Nallah as a consequence of a totally haphazard land settlement.

Unprecedented densification is a first step towards ghettoization of a locality. White-collar families tend to leave such areas which become infested with hooligans, shady characters and outlaws. After this exodus, such localities become criminals' permanent abode.

Persisting defects in settlement patterns are another potential cause for breeding terrorism. In urban planning convention, the rich reside in the outer ring of the city. Due to better means of commuting, overall affluence and reasonable affordability, the rich can move around freely to all parts of the city, including the city centre. Lower middle and lower income groups either reside close to their places of work or inside the inner ring of the city. A better means of public transport and less expenditure on commuting provide relief to such classes.

Karachi represents a bizarre scenario. Affluent localities lie in the inner zone of the city — not beyond a five-kilometre radius. The poor live as far away as 30 kilometres from the city centre and major locations of employment. Large scale wholesale markets still remain in the old city centre with virtually no possibility of additional space and smooth operations. As per norm, such market places need to be re-sited in the sub-urban belt. Due to their unwanted presence in the proximity of the city centre, a number of anti-social

activities evolve. Transporters, labourers, accompanying wanderers, middlemen and other kind of 'single-male' intruders roam around unchecked. So, the possibility of entering the city for outlaws/terrorists becomes very high.

In this regard, information and data related to urban activities are also vital and must be built up and periodically updated. This is necessary for multifarious functions. Demographic data, inter and intra-neighbourhood migrations, locational data, maps and plans, density and building profiles, employment and settlement

dealt with precision. The reasonable success of the Citizen Police Liaison Committee in dealing with car snatching and kidnapping for ransom could only be made possible through a skillful use of information. Applying the same to routine policing and local scale urban management is the need of the hour. And in this respect, unwavering political will and continued administrative support are the main pre-requisites.

In dealing with these issues, urban planning as a professional discipline can be of tremendous help. It can act as a support service in combating terrorism and urban violence to a considerable extent. This can be approached in many ways.

Mapping terrorism can help identify the routes and locations where such activities have been taking place. In-depth analysis can certainly lead to the clues behind such dastardly acts. A trend analysis of urban violence and terrorism can also be done through locational studies. It can lead to the patterns and the underlying reasons behind them in a step-by-step manner.

Continuous build-up of an information base pertinent to urban changes is an effective means to prevent violence. Law enforcing agencies can use such information to identify the culprits and nab them before any incident takes place.

In order to involve different communities so that the goal of enhanced security

and sharing of responsibility can be achieved, community policing may be encouraged. At an informal level, it has proved very successful against the bandits in the remote areas of Orangi. It can be applied anywhere.

And in order to mitigate damages, parking must be separated from built structures, at least around sensitive locations. Recent bomb blasts have proved the involvement of stolen cars/motor bikes in such a crime. A car/bike tracking system appears to be a must in the near future. Technology can certainly prevent vehicles from being used for destructive purposes. And above all, conscious urban planning can provide a comprehensive framework to manage existing urban areas and develop future zones in a rational manner. ■



**TRANSPORT ISSUE:** Traffic congestion is a common sight in Lyari

details are important categories of information, both for urban planning and security monitoring. For instance, illegal supply of arms and explosives is the central cause of many acts of terrorism. Suicidal attacks; planted bombs; unprecedented ambushes; sudden ransacking and pillage of public property; target killings and car explosions are the most familiar formats of urban terrorism in Karachi. Obviously, they are committed by human beings, not by angels. Information related to such activities must be gathered.

Bearing the enormity of the city in mind, it appears virtually impossible to locate each and every weapon which is in custody of potential terrorists or the general public. However, if this process starts from the scale of union council, the task can be