

Abuse of residential areas

Lahore

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FEWER problems irritate the Lahorites more than the massive violations of civic laws enacted to regulate life in residential areas. The abuse of residential areas continues to disturb the peace of mind of many citizens in Lahore, especially in the so-called posh areas.

Greedy owners of large houses, planners and developers of new human habitats are to blame for this. In building the cities, or in any programme of urban renewal, we have a sad record of failure to understand, respect and respond to Nature, with disastrous results for the essential qualities of life and cityscape. Ideally, there should have been a deep and abiding emotional involvement in the varied, frequently rich and evocatively beautiful physical results of man's interaction with Nature in building new cities.

However, it has not been witnessed in a majority of our urban development schemes, which have been completed so far.

Every village, town, city and metropolitan area, or man-made edifice, has a potential that stems from its own natural form, its sense of place in history, its spirit and peculiar natural environment. In contradistinction with such natural traits, the quality of the environment in Lahore has deteriorated so much in the past four decades that if immediate remedial measures are not taken, it will perhaps never be possible to reclaim it.

The so-called commercialization of certain residential areas like Jail Road, Gulberg and Model town, is responsible for causing environmental pollution.

The government itself is the institution which has contributed the most to the recent spurt in the violation of civic laws. Totally disregarding existing laws, both the provincial and federal departments and agencies have set up their offices in several residential areas of Lahore. The affected areas include Rivaz Gardens, Shadman, Faisal Town and Allama Iqbal Town. These offices not only create traffic hazards, but also disturb public peace. In such cases both the

government and the landlords (who rent out their houses to government departments) are equally responsible for the violation of MCL/LDA rules and regulations.

Nuisances emanating from this breach of civic laws results in the mushrooming of small restaurants and tuck shops. Besides, owners of these tea stalls play music at such loud volume as to create noise pollution.

Another significant factor is the recent spurt in the number of schools, tuition centres, nurseries and Montessoris. They not only fleece people by charging high fees from their wards, but also create traffic hazards, as a large number of cars, motorbikes and buses are used to transport children to and from these schools.

Who is responsible for creating this mess in the civic affairs of Lahore? The MCL and LDA building inspectors, whose job it is to prevent the violation of civic laws, have failed to do so. For reasons not difficult to fathom, they deliberately look the other ways when violations of municipal laws are committed by the house owners.

A vast majority of residents in the newly developed colonies in Lahore does not want the locality to become unlivable. They are willing to help the municipal and LDA officials in putting an end to these violations.

Change is the natural consequence of progress and development. A city changes constantly like a natural landscape. Whereas Nature takes care of the landscape, the people must take care of their cities. For long, men have found ways of making their habitations harmonize with the landscape. As long as they did not disturb the ecological balance, which Nature has so expertly and assiduously created, there was no trouble between man and his environment.

Both the citizens and the concerned municipal and government departments should cooperate in creating an environment which should be congenial for leading a purposeful and enjoyable life. —
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