**RRUDP as a Game-Changer**

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As rapid urbanisation took place, people poured into megacities to seek better opportunities and Lahore was no exception! The population of Lahore skyrocketed from 3.9 million in 1990 to 13 million in 2021.

The city absorbed the population at the cost of resources, environment and peace. Natural resources depleted at an unprecedented pace. Groundwater, for instance, is falling at the rate of one meter annually.

The city is engulfed in a thick blanket of smog in the second half of each year; disrupting the ecosystem. Industrial effluents ruined our freshwater sources. A 72-km stretch from Lahore Siphon to Baloki headworks indicates heavy contamination, sedimented with heavy metals and municipal and industrial sewage. The erstwhile roaring Ravi has dried up except for the monsoon season.

The civic and municipal infrastructure also failed to cope with this population explosion. Urban planning intervention was the need of the hour to save the burgeoning provincial capital from unruly population and environmental degradation.

Realising the demons of overpopulation, failing civic amenities and ecological disequilibrium, Ravi Urban Development Authority (RUDA) was established in August 2020. Over six decades, a master-planned city will be developed in line with international standards to release the mounting pressure on old Lahore. The step is being hailed as a great leap towards clean green and secure future.

Lahore is all set to become the cynosure of the local and international investors.

Under RUDA, one hundred thousand acres of land will be converted to a state-of-the-art master-planned city, equipped with countless environmental benefits and a plethora of economic opportunities. This first but effective step will help reverse environmental degradation. Groundwater will be replenished by establishing a 46-km-long and one-km-wide lake, which will help the earth absorb one billion litres of water daily. It will also purge Ravi of domestic and industrial waste and provide two billion litres of clean water to Lahore; fulfilling at least 50 per cent of the city’s water demand. Well-thought-out urban forestry has also been made a part of the plan. Not only are the existing forests being preserved, but a 100-acre knowledge park is also being set. World-class universities will set up their precincts in the park; making it a hub of knowledge and research. Interestingly, the income generated through the knowledge park will be spent on forest maintenance. Moreover, six million trees will be planted across the city, which will not only purify the atmosphere but also play a part in maintaining groundwater levels. Besides, eco-ponds, wetlands, wildlife sanctuaries, theme parks, botanical gardens and algae ponds will preserve nature and add to the beauty of the place.

The city is all set to become the cynosure of the local and international investors with the provision of financing, technical assistance, training, business tax incentives and workforce programs. Nearly five thousand small and large-scale industries will be established in Pakistan’s first renewable energy industrial zone expanding over two thousand acres. Moreover, to provide a platform to IT, media, local and international sectors, the RRUDP innovation city will provide an ecosystem for technological and media businesses promotion to the benefit of local and global markets. On a larger scale, the development of the high-rise buildings with 18 hundred thousand housing units will also help in boosting the national economy by mobilizing the construction engine, which will, in turn, boost 40 related industries. Besides wealth creation, it will offer a myriad of job opportunities, thus improving the economic climate of Lahore in particular and the country in general.

The city has been mapped out to offer world-class infrastructure, civic and municipal facilities, including sewage, drainage and solid and liquid waste management facilities. Wastewater Treatment Plants will be installed at the municipal levels for the first time in Pakistan. The project, therefore, offers a chance to enjoy modern-day facilities without disturbing the environment or alienating from the natural setting.

As the project enters the execution phase, everyone pins mounting hopes with the prospect that the project will revolutionize the environmental and economic landscape of the country. We keep our fingers crossed!

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