Urban development

Continued from PV

four, there are very few professionals who could service the vast majority of the building stock on the terms and conditions of their choice. Hence, the violations!

10. Over the past half a century, Pakistani cities have grown in physical sizes, population and enterprises. The inner city areas of these cities have become extremely dense leading to various complex problems. The land use has changed from residential to warehousing/industrial and/or commercial. Transport related activities have intensified due to rapid transaction of goods. Due to interaction of different types of people/interest groups, land use control has weakened. Family activities decline and commercial activities supersede. Infrastructure and services come under pressure due to increasing loads. Often the inner cities are burdened with the communal and industrial functions since no appropriate options of land are available to entrepreneurs.

11. Public transport in all the cities is run by informal transporters. Only marginal regulatory role is played by the government. No public-sector transportation project has succeeded to the satisfaction of the people/users. Operating conditions are generally dismal. Passengers' rights are violated. Credit support to transporters is only available from informal money lenders in violation of state rules and regulations.

12. These findings and analyses are neither new nor alien to the decision-makers. However, their general disregard throughout the routines of urban governance is leading to social and physical decay of the cities. Denying realities and ignoring the validity of information, while living in an information age can only prove disastrous. The following recommendations may be considered by the decision-makers in this respect:-

* The findings of the research by individual researchers and institutions, no matter how bitter it may appear, should be gauged for its merit leading to appropriate decisions on development. Whether it is the decision to demolish illegally and shoddily constructed high-rises in inner cities or the re-settlement shifting of an existing market from the dense inner city. reliance on information and its analysis should remain the centre piece of setting the criteria and taking a decision.

* Medium of communication of research findings needs to be re-aligned. Worldwide, the research periodicals and journals perform this task. However, in Pakistan the decision-makers take little notice of the serious findings of the research which is published in journals. At best, newspaper articles, comments or analyses are considered a sufficient means to form an opinion leading to making some kind of decision in the end. The culture of sharing research findings through periodicals and publications has vet to take its roots. However, in order to discharge the vital responsibility, the academic and research institutions should initiate a regular publication of their research work. A common ground of interaction between the decision-makers and researchers should be created. The journals must go a step ahead of the vellow journalism.

Only well-researched information which is authenticated must be allowed for publication. It will also set up an encouraging space for the honest and hard working breed of researchers who seldom find an avenue to share their wisdom with others through appropriate means.

* It must be remembered that in a market economy practice, information will become an enterprise with fears of its monopolisation. To a great extent this is already happening.

* Information and knowledge needs to be spread around to build up opinions on key developmental issues. People carry views about developmental issues mostly based on hearsay and assumptions. This often leads to incorrect choices and view points. For example, people carry obtuse views about Mass Karachi Transit Programme which is held in abeyance. However, a vast majority forms these views on skin deep analysis without any

Few decision-makers are conscious of the fact that Pakistan is fast heading to become an urban country. The urban population has grown from 17 per cent in 1947 to more than 40 per cent in the year 1998.

High profile donor-funded research institutions obtain control of the information. Whether satellite images of the urban sprawl or the disasters in the making, most of the information cannot be accessed without the award of consultancy packages. This often leads to stereotypical analysis and non-representative trends. Information and its interpretation is a useful enterprise but it becomes the responsibility of the state to oversee that it remains an equal opportunity enterprise without biases. Key role is desired from public-sector universities and institutes to carry out research into information collection and dissemination.

supporting evidence or figures. Options are, therefore, needed to feed the people with information along simple formats. Similarly, the modus operandi of real estate developers is a grey area. As a general perception, the projects of developers are regarded as substandard and their management and financial practices ruthless and shady. This perception adversely affects those few but professional developers who have earned a reputation for themselves after years of honest construction practice. Ways and means of generating information and analyses are, therefore, needed to help people distinguish right from wrong!