

Stipulating nothing to the trivial

MUHAMMAD RAFIQUE DOGAR says that the growth of Katchi abadis is a direct result of the shortcoming delivery system and lack of access to affordable tenure by the poor

General Pervez Musharraf granted proprietary rights to over 3000 residents of katchi abadis at Shorkot on 16th August, 2001. This reflected the degree of commitment of the Chief Executive in solving the issue of Katchi Abadis. Besides tackling the difficulties involved, the Provincial governments are slowly, but surely preparing upgradation plans for those katchi abadis to be regularised at existing sites and re-settlement plans for the abadis to be relocated owing to operational and practical reasons. With the finalisation of both re-settlement and upgradations plans, the work for the provision of physical infrastructure will begin.

The present Government inherited the Katchi Abadis problems with its severity. It has resulted as the consequence of unprecedented growth of population, rural-urban migration and non-provision of built houses/serviced plots for the low income. The estimates for the urban population living in Katchi Abadis and in unserviced plots range from 35-50 per cent. The growth of Katchi abadis in the past is the direct result of the shortcoming in the housing delivery system and lack of access to affordable tenure by the poor. In metropolitan cities of Karachi, Lahore, Hyderabad, Peshawar and Quetta, 40 per cent to the population are compelled to live in Katchi Abadis.

The *Economic Survey of Pakistan* for the year 2000-2001 estimates that there exists a backlog of 4.3 million houses in the country. This gap has been widening with time. The country requires construction of an additional 0.9 million houses every year. The formal public and private sector in total provide 0.3 million houses only, which means an annual deficit of 0.6 million houses.

The rapidly growing cities



are marked by shrinking space, declining employment opportunities and chronic shortages of essential civic amenities. The non-availability of new housing units and the deterioration of old urban settlement have led to the appearance of slums, shanty towns and squatter settlement. Low income groups, forced to live in such abysmal conditions fully, alienated and excluded from the mainstream of larger cities.

Considering Katchi Abadis as a reality and the fact that over past 50 years inappropriate planning and weak provision of services intensified the problem, General Pervez Musharraf directed Omar Asghar Khan, Minister for Environment, Local Government and Rural Development to formulate a pragmatic and feasible policy to deal with the issue in a comprehensive manner. In pursuit, a committee was formed in April, 2000 comprising representatives of all federal provincial and other concerned agencies and

experts. The committee studied emergence of Katchi Abadis in the context of urbanisation and framed National Policy on Katchi Abadis, Urban Renewal and Slums Upgradation in November, 2000. The Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf approved in a presentation to him on January 15, 2001, policy decisions for Katchi Abadis which among others stipulates that the residents of all Katchi Abadis consisting of at least 40 dwellings, who were in occupation up to 23rd March, 1985, were entitled to be granted proprietary rights in those Katchi Abadis, through a process called 'Regularisation of Katchi Abadis'. For those Katchi Abadis which have to be relocated due to practical reasons, the residents will be shifted after preparing resettlement plans for such settlements.

7. The government has also made it compulsory for all government housing schemes to include plots for low income

people which shall be offered to them at affordable prices. These decisions will help check mushrooming of the slums along with protection against *ad hoc* evictions of Katchi Abadis.

8. Pakistan participated in the recently concluded Special Session of United Nations General Assembly held at New York from 6-8 June, 2001 to review among others, the progress made by Pakistan in the implementation of Habitat Agenda. In particular, the session was intimated about the efforts of Government has now been initiated in the framework of policy guidelines approved by the Chief Executive of Pakistan. These efforts aim at accelerating the process of granting proprietary rights in Katchi Abadis and improving delivery of urban services in under serviced areas.

9. As a follow-up, the Minister for Environment, Local Government and Rural Development held series of meetings with the respective

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100 acres to provide shelter to shelterless specially to the emigrants of the Quetta City. The same will act as model to replicate in other cities later on.

Out of 11 Katchi Abadis existing in Islamabad, 5 Abadis are to be removed/relocated owing to their locations in right of way of roads and sensitive areas. The CDA has finalised the Model Urban Shelter

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Provincial Governor, Chief Secretary's and concerned officials impressed upon them the need to deal with the issue in totality and initiate necessary measures to implement the decisions of Chief Executive in letter and spirit and within the defined time frame. The Minister also held three inter-provincial meetings of all the concerned provincial governments/Land Owning Agencies at Islamabad to review the progress. A brief account of the progress made by provincial governments/Land Owning Agencies is as under:

In Punjab, according to latest report, there were 913 katchi abadis to be regularised. Out of it 595 katchi abadis have already been regularised leaving a balance of 318 katchi abadis which are at present in the process of regularisation. Against 318 katchi abadis, NOCs of 143 katchi abadis have been received (111 complete and 24 partial. Further more 59 katchi abadis have so far been identified by various LOAs for shifting/relocation. The resettlement plan for these Abadis are being prepared. Moreover, formal to grant proprietary rights to 87 Development Authorities/Local rough cost estimates for undertaking main development works on felt need basis for 178 Katchi Abadis.

In Sindh, moreover Minister for Environment and Rural Development had a meeting with the Government of Sindh and Chief Secretary Sindh on May 5, 2001 and various decisions were taken. So far Government of Sindh has finalised detailed regularisation and re-settlement plans other than Katchi Abadis located on Pak-Railway, Civil Aviation Authority and Evacuee Trust Property Board lands. Necessary negotiation with these agencies in on-going.

Government of Balochistan has prepared a Model Urban Shelter Project over an area of

Project for re-location of Muslim Colony Imam Bari to new site at Farash. The land levelling work is in progress. Moreover, Survey of Katchi Abadis dwellers has also been completed.

Ministry of Railways has identified 196 Katchi Abadis on the Railways lands. Out of this, they have granted NOCs in respect of 18 Katchi Abadis completely and 25 Katchi Abadis partially.

In a review meeting chaired by the Minister for Environment, Local Government and Rural Development held on June 25, 2001, it was observed that there has been some progress with regard to issuance of NOCs by land-owning agencies, verification of beneficiaries, up-gradation work and preparatory work for resettlement of Abadis in dangerous/operational areas. However, a number of issues have also emerged that require resolution for the smooth implementation of the decisions taken in the January 15, 2001 meeting. The main problem being encountered relates to the responsibility for provision of alternate land for preparing resettlement plans. As a result of resettlement plans, as had been decided in the meeting, have not been received by the Ministry as were required to be done by the end of June.

Accordingly, the Minister for Environment, Local Government and Rural Development requested the President of Pakistan to extend 30-06-2001 deadline for resettlement plans by another three months period from end June onward up to September 30, 2001. During this period, land owning agencies and Provincial governments will prepare inventories for all the pre-1985 and post-1985 Katchi Abadis as well as preparation of regularisation and up-gradation plans. There will be no summary evictions except of commercial buildings. However, this will be done through the Committees comprising of land owning agencies, District Administration and the representatives of Army Monitoring Team. - The author is a Senior Joint Secretary (Urban Affairs.) ■