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**Q: What are the effects of urbanization on Peshawar citizens, land and environment. Is development good or bad? Criticise.**

Ans : Urbanization: is the increasing number of people that live in urban areas. Peshawar is the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), a road and rail centre near the famed Khyber Pass, an important military and communications centre, the historical limit of the Grand Trunk Road of Indo-Pak, and the major depot for trade with Afghanistan. It is famous for local handicrafts, fruit farms, Industries that include food processing and the manufacture of steel, cigarettes, firearms, textiles, pharmaceuticals, furniture, shoes, marble, ceramics, match, paper and much more. It is bounded on the North by Charsadda district, on the East by Nowshera district, on the South by the tribal area adjoining Peshawar and Kohat districts and on the West by Mohmand and Khyber agencies. Total area of the district is 1257 sq Kms. Peshawar district is almost a fertile plain with small hilly area in the South-East which is a part of the main Khattak Range and its highest point is 1173 feet above the sea level.

Peshawar, a city that has been a victim of rapid and unplanned urbanisation for the past 3 decades, once city of fragrance has turned into a populace and a stained metropolitan. Peshawar has been an important trade hub for Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics. It had been equipping the huge influx of Afghans after Afghan war (1979-1989) and during the period of Taliban government in Afghanistan (1996-2001). Even today as the NATO forces are fighting an unending war against terror in Afghanistan, millions of Afghans are taking refuge in KP as a whole and in Peshawar as particular. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) of Swat and Waziristan operations also migrated to Peshawar during the years 2007-2016, most of them retuned following successful military operations, but the well-off settled permanently in Peshawar.

A study on the process of urbanisation and urban growth in Peshawar since the beginning of the 20th century reveals a steady increase in the size of urban population and the degree of urbanisation. But the tempo of increase became faster from 1981 onward. From 1981 to 1998, Peshawar’s urban population was more than three times. Urban population of Peshawar is growing at a rapid pace from 8 percent (1981) to 14 percent (2017) and approaching 18 percent by 2030. With its considerable advantages, the technological and industrial boom has also brought enormous problems to urban citizens instigating huge urban influx, degradation of the environment, acute shortage of space for housing, lack of sewage treatment and health facilities, polluted water, increase in the number of slums and transport constraints.

However, unlike the big cities in developed states, Peshawar is not able to take in more and more people because of unplanned and poor urban management and resource constraints. Out of total 4.269 million population, urban population of Peshawar is 1.970 million and it is estimated that the urban population of Peshawar will likely to increase up to 2.80 million by 2030. It is important to point out that most people including many social scientists and journalists believe that rural to urban migration is the prime factor of urbanisation. This myth has already been exploded by demographers. It may also be noted that the data under discussion does not include the Afghan refugees. Technically speaking the latter is not Peshawar population, and their inclusion would make the decennial census data incomparable. But when it comes to analysis and discussion of urban problems, their inclusion and mention in the analyses becomes necessary. This aspect is, therefore, included in analysis and discussion of the problems associated with urban sprawl, especially in the context of Peshawar city in and around where these Afghan refugees live in a large number.

A comparative study of urbanity level of Peshawar vis-à-vis KP as a whole during 1901-1998, 1980-2017 brings out some interesting facts. As early as 1980, the urbanity level in KP was 12.7 percent while for the territories now comprising Peshawar, the corresponding figure was 9.8 percent. Peshawar maintained a higher urbanity level until 1941, but afterwards it lagged behind the KP’s overall averages in census counts of 1951 and onwards. In the year 2017, the urbanity level of Peshawar was 18.9 percent and of KP as a whole was 38.5 percent.

Housing growth-rate in Peshawar has multiplied manifold in the past three decades. Increasing trend of urbanisation in most parts of the country has its impacts on Peshawar as well. In access of improved facilities, people are trying to migrate to urban areas. In order to make them settled in these urban areas, there is unmet demand for more infrastructures in Peshawar. The number of houses are increasing, in wake of these migrations. According to the Housing Census 2015 and data available with the Peshawar development authority (PDA), the total number of houses in Peshawar was 0.167 million in 1981. It went to 0.236 million in 1998 and the number of houses in Peshawar remained 0.897 million in 2015. The projected trend could be much more in the near future.

With an alarming highest population growth rate of 3.99 per annum, the already over-populated Peshawar with massive urban sprawl is confronting allied challenges like traffic congestion, rise in temperature, environmental pollution, shortage of agri-land, lack of sewage-treatment facilities, contaminated drinking water, poor sanitation, law and order situation, and much more. Traffic congestion, as a regular feature, has been affecting every commuter irrespective of holidays, characterised by slower speeds, longer trip times, increased vehicular queueing, high operating costs, and the drivers becoming frustrated and engaging in road rage. The problem becomes more severe in peak hours and credit goes to inefficient land use planning, poor infrastructure, and absence of sound traffic-management system. Adding to the sufferings, the PTI provincial government started Rapid Bus Transit project (BRT) in October 2017 aiming to provide better and cheaper urban transportation but the project succumbed to inefficient supervision and it still cannot provide completion deadline.

Unplanned urban extension and rapid growth in population has resulted in significant rise of temperature of Peshawar. According to Director metrological department Peshawar Mr Liaquat Nazir “Average mean temperature of Peshawar remained 35 °C during summer throughout, but a constant and disturbing shift towards higher side is observed during the past three decade, seeing the temperature of Peshawar has risen from 350C (May-Sept) to 500C (May-Sept)”. Likewise, the directorate of water and sanitation, Peshawar development authority (PDA) admits lack of sewage treatment facilities in Peshawar and denote it budgetary constraints. Visible smoke and dust all around the city is not only posing high threat to human life but has put the environment and beauty of the city at stake.

In 2003-04, a study conducted by Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) in six cities including Peshawar. The study concluded that emissions of all pollutants gases are too high in these cities. The study also showed that concentrations of PM10 in Peshawar is more than 150ug/m3 (micrograms/meter-cubed) which is very alarming fact. The study also indicated that air pollution level in Peshawar is 20 times higher than the actual standard set by of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

These findings are based on a study conducted 15 years ago, today the situation is even worse. According to data available with the Directorate of Water and Sanitation (PDA), they supply water to 0.335 million housing units in Peshawar, whereas, the rest rely on their own sources. According to PDA, water quality survey of River Kabul revealed that concentration of Coliform bacteria in river Kabul water is 1600/100 ml of water as compared to World Health Organisation (WHO) standard of 3/100 ml of water. Three treatment plants were established for Peshawar but the same are not working to their full capacity.

Socio-economic changes in the city are indivisibly linked with alterations in urban policy and active investment processes in construction, engineering, development and urban landscaping. The managerial decisions focused on short-term results are absolutely unacceptable. All factors like natural, historical, social, economic, environmental, cultural etc must be taken into account to address and to restore the magnificence of a city that was once known for its refinement and beauty.