

Disaster Disguised as Development

News:

Pakistan: The word is that the (new) capital is going to resemble a mix of Manhattan and Shanghai, even while it retains the scenic splendour of the Margalla Hills. But will there even be any Margalla Hills to speak of after they have been subjected to the current regime's delusions of grandeur? (*Dawn*)

Comment:

The vision of a possible makeover of Islamabad, as shared by government officials, and the steps taken toward achieving it are concerning. Pakistan's elite seem to be bored of living their dream alongside the working class. In the last few weeks we have witnessed eviction of working families from historically established settlements, including areas near Bari Imam and various *katchi abadis* (Informal settlements). The cities were already following a silent infrastructure of segregation, where elite zones were connected and marginalised communities were carefully excluded and now it is owned and announced by the State. 40,000 people have already been displaced only in the Bari Imam area and another 50,000 are scheduled to be displaced soon. There are no compensation or relocation plans for the evicted residents who have been living there for decades. Most of the development work in Pakistan is based on the whims or fancies of the government elite rather than any planning, as a result of which we see waste of money and haphazard construction. Sometimes the roads are decorated with flowers worth millions of rupees, or the motorcycle tracks are painted in their favorite colors. But this passion to become Shanghai and Manhattan will now ruin Islamabad as well as the tax payer's money. The floods of 2025 in Islamabad already disclosed the planning and strategy of the Government. The devastation was a direct result of poor urban development, unchecked construction and blocked natural drains. These are the direct result of desiring material progress while ignoring its social and environmental consequences. People of Pakistan will not achieve any relief as long as they focus on the solitary events and injustices. We must reach to the root cause of the problem. The eviction of people from their homes in Islamabad is not a single act of injustice, but rather it goes back to the fundamental disobedience that has been adopted as slavery to the West, abandoning the Islamic way of ruling. The birth of Islamabad is a perfect example of the style of governance in Pakistan, i.e. neglect of the present resources and spending on new developments. A city that was named as the land of Islam, since has been used to serve anything but Islam and Muslims.

Islamic history is full of examples of urban development. In fact, the Islamic State started from the city of Madinah and it helped Madinah develop into the central economic hub of the State. The first lesson taught and practiced there was of sacrifice for their brothers in Islam who came from Mecca empty handed and were helped generously by their brothers in Medina. This was all done to fulfill the pact they made with Rasool Allah (saw) to help and protect him in obedience of Allah (swt). Soon the world witnessed Islam emerging as a political power and economic stability came after political stability. The lesson for Muslims is that progress comes as a fruit of obedience, and what better example for this than the Battle of Uhud, when Muslims strayed and fell prey to the greed of wealth, earning the displeasure of Allah and His Messenger. Islamic history is full of Muslim caliphs who built architectural masterpieces and magnificent cities, but it is important to know that when the fundamental belief was weakened, no architectural masterpiece could save a state spread over three continents. Today, Muslims do not need cities, but a ruler who will enforce the laws of Allah upon them, under whose patronage no Muslim can be thrown out of his home. Until then, all buildings, roads and cities are the entertainment of the rich in this world.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَسْمَعُونَ * وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ * إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصَّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ﴾

“O believers! Obey Allah and His Messenger and do not turn away from him while you hear ‘his call’. Do not be like those who say, “We hear,” but in fact they are not listening. Indeed, the worst of all beings in the sight of Allah are the ‘willfully’ deaf and dumb, who do not understand.” [Al-Anfal: 20-22]

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