

CITY PLUS

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Karachi 16th biggest world city

By Gul Nasreen

Migration is as old as the history of human beings. In fact, life and migration go together, as the world's inhabitants continue to move from one place to another. Global migration however, in some places and cities reveals amazing statistics when the impact of migrants on those cities are analysed. Karachi is one such place. Going by sheer statistics one wonders how this megalopolis has attracted people from all classes, religions and regions over decades and absorbed them into its folds.

Interestingly, the people from all origins who have settled here acquire a common identity - Karachiites- an all engulfing and uniting term, not in conflict with the individual identity of the settlers indeed.



Yes, Karachi has become a major center for migrants and the organisations that work with them. Migration has had its impact on Karachi in all its manifestations, i.e. social, demographic, fiscal, environmental, political and cultural etc. According to available estimates some 30.1% of Karachi's population is of migrants from other places. These include intra-country (from the provinces and the interior of Sindh) as well those from India, Bangladesh, Burma, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and of course, a large number of Afghanis too.

The cosmopolitan nature of the city reflects the increase in the number of minorities like Hindus, Christians and Zoroastrians. It is considered to be the 16th biggest city of the world. Karachi began to grow even more diverse with workers from all over South Asia arriving. Karachi is also home to a large population of Bangladeshis and Burmese sometimes estimated to be over a million.



All these migrants contribute to the city positively as well as negatively. However, the positive impacts outweigh the negative ones. The positive social impact is very much in tune with globalisation, because the people from different origins come together, interact and provide framework for better understanding of their communities.

"Economically, skilled labour is available at comparatively cheaper rates. For example, the Bengalis working in the



fishing sector are not only skilled fishermen, but also work at lower salaries. While the migrants on one hand bring expertise with them, on the other they also offer cheaper labour.

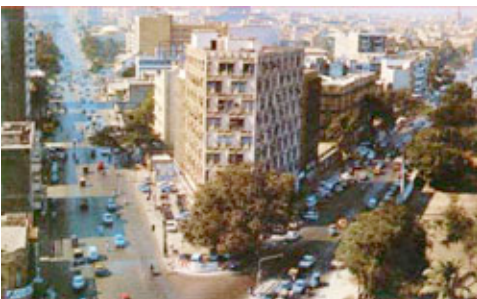
Chairman, KCCI Women's Entrepreneurs Committee, Mian Abrar Ahmed, said the world's all biggest cities are going through the process of urbanisation, people continue to migrate to big cities like Beijing, Tokyo, New York etc., so Karachi is not alone in this regard. It's all over the world. One positive impact of the migrants is with cheap labour available, productivity is increased. Besides, the domestic servants, bus conductors, cooks, contract labour is available at less cost. They also work efficiently and seriously since they have come to earn a livelihood. In terms of age, intra-country migrant workers from provinces and interior of Sindh are mostly young, at economically productive ages. The negative impact is an example of what happened with the earthquake in Kashmir in October when people had to rush back to the northern areas creating a vacuum in various industries, particularly construction where things ground to halt and the cost of labour shot up.



Crime is another negative aspect, since the civic infrastructure and amenities like education, water etc. did not develop at the same pace as urbanization. Access to education, primary healthcare, drinking water, sanitation, and shelter becomes a challenge for the poor migrant. As deprivation sets in, it usually boosts criminal activities.

IG Sindh Asad Jahangir said that another negative aspect is the identity crisis that develops when those from different ethnic and religious groups safeguard their rights. That's why we see an increase in the graph of violence and crimes in Karachi. Ethnic violence as well as religious conflicts continues to mar the city's happy-to-go together look.

"Problems like overpopulation, overcrowding, traffic jams and crimes, particularly the ethnic conflict can be attributed to the negative impact of migrants to some extent", said the IG. He further added that the fact that the large area of Karachi has also led many terrorists to make their home here and attacks by militant groups could also be attributed to illegal migrants living here.



Due to overpopulation, locals are unable to find reasonably rewarding jobs in various professional fields and in order to earn a livelihood many of them resort to gang activity. Gangs develop their own economic interests the variations of which include bank robberies, car-jacking, kidnapping for ransom, and sometimes trade in contraband items such as drugs and liquor. "Machchar Colony (Mauripur) and Zia-ul-Haq Colony (Gulshan-e-Iqbal), where mostly Bengalis and Burmese migrants live, have been virtually turned into criminals' den. About 50 gangs are operating in each of

these localities", he informed.

Positively, it is a city of diverse neighborhoods, ranging from the upscale Clifton and Defence areas to numerous slums that have become home to those who have flocked to Karachi in search of opportunities lending a diverse look to the city.

Saud, a student of Sociology at University of Karachi, said, "Environmentally and demographically, the city is in a state where it has become difficult to cope with problems like pollution from the ever increasing number of vehicles, congested colonies, high-rise buildings and the civic problems like water and electricity shortages."

The cause is almost always rooted in economics. Hundreds of thousands of young people are attracted to the metropolitan areas by the promise of employment that goes largely unfulfilled. Local residents have to compete with the newcomers for scarce jobs and that puts pressure on wages, particularly for unskilled and semi-skilled occupations.

"The impact of migrants is both positive as well as negative. If on one hand manpower is available then on the other hand a large number of migrants are illegal and non-registered. In the later case since there are no demographic statistic so no exact policy can be formed with regard to development and civic amenities," said an official of National Aliens Registration Authority (NARA).

Migration and other factors related to it affect migrating individuals and their families in a number of ways. The types of migration, reasons for it and whether the individual migrates alone or with others affect their mental health. So it has psychological implications on communities as well as individuals as it's a stress-inducing phenomenon. "Most of labourers from NWFP working as drivers and as masons come and live here for months all alone. Similarly, migrants from other countries also leave their families all alone in their native country and come here for employment. So the psychological trauma is invisible", said Dr Mubin Akhtar, MD. Karachi Psychiatric Hospital. "Yet not all migrants go through the same process . So the stressors that affect the migrants make them irritable and restless and less tolerable in behaviour, which in turn affects the people at large.

Despite, of all these impacts Karachi still continues to grow and expand at a very large scale. Policy makers have a challenge in how they plan their urban development strategies as do the legislators.

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Punjabi moments

Karachiites are crazy about eating, in fact it can be said that Karachiites are the people who live to eat rather than eat to live. They love to eat no matter what kind of food is being served; be it the 'chat pata' Pakistani food, mouth watering Chinese food or the less spicy but tasty Italian cuisine.



As winter is here, a Punjabi food festival was held at ' The Pakistan' restaurant at Karachi Sheraton Hotel and Towers from December 9-December 18. The festival boasts of a convincing look at rural Punjabi lifestyle, featuring rural ambience, sumptuous Punjabi specialties, live Punjabi music and mela style stalls offering clothes, accessories, 'khusa' (popular Punjabi footwear) and typical Punjabi craft. The menu has delectable authentic Punjabi specialties such as Mirchan wale jhinge (Jumbo prawn dipped in a pomegranate juice), achaar alli macchi (fish cubes in pickle sauce) chanpan masalay alliyen (tender lamb chops). Tandoori,

dishes originating from Punjab are popular all over the country today. Nans and parathas, make di roti are typical Punjabi breads. All Punjabi favorites have found place in the menu to the delight of those frequenting the restaurant.



Punjabi people are robust people with robust appetites and their food is like the Punjabis themselves, simple, sizeable and hearty. Winter in Punjab brings in the season of the famous makki ki roti (maize flour bread) and sarson ka saag (mustard leaf gravy eaten with plenty of ghee), winter favorite with Punjabis. No meal is complete without a serving of lassi (sweet or salted drink made with curd) or fresh curd and white butter. The festival helped greatly in giving the Karachiites an opportunity to witness the typical Punjabi aura.

Music is integral to all occasions in Punjab, be it birth, marriage, even celebration of monsoon, harvest and so forth. The same environment was offered to the Karachiites through live Punjabi music.

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Doors within doors

Mohatta Palace

By Filza Baig and Sidra Siddiqui



Karachi has its bag full of history. It is a historical city, which marked its importance tremendously after the



partition in 1947. Mohatta Palace is one landmark that not only has historical significance but is an example of specifically Anglo-Mughal architecture. Named after its founder, the Mohatta Palace was built between 1933 and 1935 by Shivratan Chandratan Mohatta. Currently the palace turned museum is itself a uniquely dynamic exhibition of a wide variety of period exhibits ranging from sculpture to personalities.

In the late 1920's Shivratan Mohatta, an ambitious self-made businessman from Marwar commissioned the architect, Ahmed Hussein Agha, to design a Rajput palace. The palace was to be located in the prestigious locale of Clifton on the Arabian Sea and serve as a summer home for the Mohatta family. Agha built a spectacular summer palace in the tradition of stone palaces in Rajasthan, using pink Jodhpur stone in combination with the local yellow stone from Gizri. The amalgam gave the palace a distinctive presence in an elegant neighbourhood, characterised by British colonial architecture which was located not far from the sea.

The palace has an area of 18,500 sq. feet and its facade is trimmed with windows, stone brackets, spandrels, domes, balustrades with floral motifs and exquisite railings. There are nine domes, with a centre dome in the middle; while the windows in the front portion opening out into the garden are of blue colour and those in the rear area are arched windows with stained glass. The palace has large stately rooms designed for entertainment on the ground floor and more private facilities on the first floor, where there is a terrace provided with a shade from intense sunlight. The palace is solely made up of teak wood with a polished staircase, long corridors and doors opening within doors.

After Mohatta's departure to India, the Government of Pakistan caused controversy requisitioning the building. They used it for the offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but soon it was handed over to Fatima Jinnah. In the '60s Mohatta Palace was dubbed Qasre-e Fatima, becoming the hub of her presidential campaign against Field Marshal, Ayub Khan. After her questionable sudden death, her sister Shireen Bai moved in to occupy the ground floor for many years. The palace was sealed and left to decay for years, after her demise.

In 1995, at the request of the Government of Sindh, Benazir Bhutto's government assigned Rs.70 million to the Culture Department of Sindh to purchase and restore the derelict palace and convert it into a museum. The Culture Department spent Rs.61 million to buy the property and the rest was set aside for renovation. An independent board of trustees was set up and a curator was appointed. The building was sandblasted back to its original colour. Layers of soil and grime that had accumulated over the decades were removed to reveal the original aura of the predominant pink stone. The roof, doors and windows that had fallen to disrepair were carefully conserved, as were the stunning Frescoes on the ceilings. The museum was restored to its original glory and the eloquent 1920's, cross-cultural masterpiece of Ahmed Hussein Agha won a new lease on life.

The museum opened its doors to the public on September 15, 1999, with the exhibition Treasures of the Talpurs: Collections from the imperial courts of Sindh. Today the Mohatta Palace Museum is attracting visitors and connoisseurs from around the world with its magnificence.

The palace is well maintained, with everything still in its original form, except a slight touch of renovation. Since Mohatta Palace is the place, where Fatima Jinnah lived, it has a reverential position in our hearts. As one of the finest museums in Karachi, the

Mohatta Palace is

a must-visit attraction.

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Rhapsodic Renditions

By Anil Datta



Karachi's large enthusiasts of classical western music were in for a treat recently at the Alliance Francaise, which hosted a performance featuring a trio from France. The Trio Quark, comprising Manuel Schweizer (pianist), Gael Rassaert



(violinist), and Richard Malblanc (clarinet) was certainly a group of highly adept musicians. Playing to a packed patio, the artistes really captivated the audience with their skilled handling of their instruments and masterly renditions. Even though their presentations were not classical in the strict sense of the word, they did have the desired result of entralling the audience.

There were two pieces by the legendary French composer, Claude Debussy. This actually was post-classical, hovering in between the Romantic and Contemporary periods in music. The first Debussy piece they presented was Rhapsody for clarinet and piano, very deftly interpreted. A rhapsody is an enthusiastic, vivacious composition, emotional in character. True to this definition the trio was able to hold away in a really vivacious yet profound way. Then there were four preludes by Debussy. These for a change were more sedate, lilting compositions, often dragging at moments.

An abrupt variation was 'Constrastes' for piano, violin, and clarinet by the Hungarian composer, Bella Bartok. Bartok again was not a classical composer but a mix of Romantic and Contemporary (1881-1945). His compositions carry a marked element of folk music of the day, gregarious and at times sprightly. So was the third movement of the piece, the Allegro Vivace, marked by brisk tempo and liveliness. Allegro, is a fast, lively movement. The element of folk music was so very discernible here with that toe-tapping rhythm and energy characteristic of folk music, neatly rendered by the artistes. Another composition embodying the element of folk music was the trio for piano, violin, and clarinet, by Armenian composer Aram Khatchaturian. It was in three movements, the Andante (a slow, lilting composition), Allegro (a quick, brisk movement), and Moderato (a movement of a moderate pace). The rendition made the folk element of the composition so very profound.

However, the masterpiece of the evening and the only classical piece in the true sense of the word was the opening performance, Schubert's sonata for violin and piano in E-Major. Never mind his distracting hairdo which was more of a thick, bushy horse's tail variety rather than a ponytail, reaching the lower part of the torso, violinist Gael Rassaert' deft finger work at the strings was fantastic. It lent so much of poignance and meaning to the piece. It was melody par excellence, the kind that lifts the soul from the mundane earthly plane to higher, more sublime and more beautiful planes of existence, the kind that makes the soul waft above celestial pastures. There was such a lot of meaning in the beautiful melody made all the more so by the adroit rendition of violinist Rassaert and pianist Manuel Schweizer. This certainly was the best of the evening.

One would hope that such performances were not so few and far between and also that future-visiting ensembles would give audiences here a chance to pick out the best from their selections.

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Charity begins at home...



When it comes to assisting the needy and downtrodden, the nuns of the renowned institution St. Joseph Convent School (S.J.C), are always on the go, ever inspiring the youth to love and care for the unfortunate. Francis Balfour once said, "The best thing to give to your enemy is forgiveness; to an opponent, tolerance; to a friend, your heart; to your child, a good example; to a father, deference; to your mother, conduct that will make her proud of you; to yourself, respect; to all men, charity." This is the ethical basis on which the school is run. Always 'Forward God Helping' and enthusiastic, the staff of the school reflect the epitome of goodwill. The generous girls of S.J.C organised and contributed open-heartedly towards the charity for the recent earthquake victims.



The school organised a spectacular Christmas Fete. This was the first time that the school hockey field was ever used for such a grand event. The colourful aura of the fair attracted many people including ex-students who were delighted to witness developments at their old school. While chatting to head girls in the Student Council Zara Farooqi and Maria Haqquee alongside their colleagues, the girls said, "This is the first time our tiresome hard work is getting recognised. We have been planning for this



event since December 3 when our exams finished." Another girl added on, "We felt that there was no conflict at all this time between the Matric and Cambridge students. Everything was coordinated beautifully." This definitely proves that unity can work wonders when people support each other to prepare in a limited amount of time. More than fifty stalls were set up and included homemade wares, handicrafts made by the nuns, games etc. . The massive turnout of this event was greatly owed to the cricket holiday!

The proceedings of this fair will go to the tragic earthquake victims. S.J.C has participated in many charity drives in the past as well. despite the fact that their weary efforts seldom go acknowledged. The efforts of the minority communities in our country are not celebrated as they should and the spirit of unity displayed in the fund raising are to be saluted.

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