

Panel Discussion on

"Urbanization in Pakistan: Challenge or Opportunity?"

BRIEF:

30 May 2019, Islamabad— ‘The benefits of urbanization can be fully reaped if well-researched national policies and plans are put into place,’ finds the latest issue of Development Advocate Pakistan on ‘Sustainable Urbanization’. The report was released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The event was hosted by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) in collaboration with the UNDP.

Pakistan is urbanizing at a rate of 3 percent per annum, the fastest in South Asia. Since 1951 to 2017, the percentage of population living in urban areas has increased manifold-17.7 percent to 36.4 percent. Urban centers have also grown more rapidly in terms of population size compared to rural areas. Growing urbanization has transformed and placed cities at the center of the development agenda. Economic growth, in large part, is fueled by rapid urbanization in cities. This has opened avenues of employment, social development and revenue generation. However, the growth of cities has come at the cost of increasing inequalities and negative impacts upon the environment. Unequal service provision, congested roads, absent municipal services, water shortages etc. are hallmarks of several ‘poor’ sections or urban settlements.

The report launch was followed by a panel discussion on challenges and opportunities that urbanization brings to Pakistan, including social, economic, environmental and governance related solutions, in an effort to identify gaps and develop a way forward. The discussion was moderated by Umer Malik, Policy Analyst, UNDP while the panelists included Jehangir Khan Sherpao, renowned architect and head of Asian Architects Association, Hina Lotia, Director Programmes LEAD Pakistan and Aniqah Arshad, Research Economist, PRIME Institute. Dr. Durr-e-Nayab, Joint Director, PIDE and a renowned demographer and an expert in the field also enlightened the audience regarding challenges and opportunities in the trends of urbanization in Pakistan.