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Balochistan's future

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Urbanisation is a serious business

The UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), which recently concluded in Quito, Ecuador, was an important event that underscored the importance of urbanisation as a major economic and social force in the world and sought to address the challenges it poses to governments. Habitat conferences are held once every 20 years and the last one, held in 1996, was attended by 178 countries and it adopted the UN’s New Urban Agenda which is a crucial step towards ensuring urban development is inclusive and sustainable. Urbanisation is especially important for developing countries like India. The Conference estimated that by 2030, two-thirds of the world’s population will live in urban areas. As a result, urbanisation has become a major challenge for urban planning and management in cities all over the world. A large shift in population in a short period poses problems and provides opportunities. The urban poor are the worst affected. They face cheaper and affordable housing to get to various parts of the city and to commute. However, poor urban planning can also enable better transportation available and to ensure social equity and quality of life. Habitat III led to the Paris Agreement on climate change. It is important for cities to move more inclusively and sustainably than they are now. Cities are engines of economic growth but inequality is increasing. Future urbanisation will also have to pay more attention to the needs of women and children, aged people and those with disabilities. Urban governance needs to respond to the changing needs of the urban population. While the concept of sustainable and inclusive urbanisation is gaining ground, we continue to struggle with implementing it.