

The New Capital

Karachi as the First Capital

At the time of independence, Karachi was chosen as the first capital of Pakistan. It was the largest city, had a port, and was the commercial hub. However, with the passage of time, Karachi became overcrowded, noisy, and less suitable for government administration. The city lacked enough space for new government buildings, and security concerns also increased due to its coastal location.

Decision to Shift the Capital

President Ayub Khan decided in the 1960s to establish a new capital. The aim was to reduce the pressure on Karachi and to create a neutral place that would be accessible to all provinces. Islamabad was chosen because of its central location on the Potohar Plateau, its better climate, and its security advantages. This decision also helped in reducing provincial bias and encouraged national unity.

Planning and Design of Islamabad

Islamabad was designed as a modern, well-planned city by the Greek architect Constantinos Doxiadis. The city was divided into sectors with wide roads, green belts, and residential areas. Separate zones were made for administration, residence, and foreign embassies. Important national buildings like the Parliament House, Supreme Court, and President House were constructed. Rawalpindi supported Islamabad as a twin city during its early development.

Features and Symbolism of the New Capital

Islamabad was not just an administrative center but also a symbol of Pakistan's progress and discipline. The construction of Faisal Mosque later added great importance as it became a global symbol of Islamic architecture. The diplomatic enclave gave Islamabad an international image by housing embassies and foreign missions. The city's natural beauty, surrounded by Margalla Hills, added to its importance as a healthy and peaceful environment.

Impact on Pakistan

The new capital improved governance by providing a well-organized environment for decision-making. It created new job opportunities and boosted the construction industry during its development. Educated people, government officers, and diplomats were attracted to settle there. Islamabad represented a balance between modern development and Islamic identity, strengthening national unity and pride.

Challenges Faced

Although Islamabad was carefully planned, it faced criticism at the beginning. The construction cost was very high, and many people felt government resources were wasted. Karachi's people also felt neglected after losing their city's status as capital. In the early years, Islamabad grew slowly in terms of population and economic activity compared to other big cities.

Present Importance of Islamabad

Despite the challenges, Islamabad has become Pakistan's most modern and developed city. It is the center of government, politics, and diplomacy. Today, it hosts major government offices, foreign embassies, and international organizations. The city represents Pakistan's national identity, discipline, and vision for progress. It stands as a living example of planning, development, and the dream of a modern nation.