

Published: 01:21 AM, 03 October 2022

World Habitat Day 2022 and Cox's Bazar



Commodore (Retd) MN Absar

Background of the World Habitat Day and Urban October:

World Habitat Day was introduced in 1985 by the UN General Assembly through Resolution 40/202. The United Nations declared the first Monday of every October to be observed as World Habitat Day. The world Habitat day is dedicated to the annual global observance, which takes place in a different country each year and features keynote speakers and roundtable discussions on a designated theme. Countries throughout the world commemorate World Habitat Day in order to draw attention to the challenges caused by the rapid rise of urbanization and its direct or indirect effects on the environment and the state of human poverty. The purpose is to consider the condition of our cities and the fundamental right of all people to adequate shelter. It also aims to remind the global community of its shared responsibility for the future of the human habitat.

The United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11-"to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable"- identifies sustainable urbanization as one of the most important goals for global development. The first World Habitat Day was observed in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1986 under the theme "Shelter is my right." Since that time, a total of 36 occasions of the day's observance have taken place in various countries around the world.

World Habitat Day 2022: Aims and Objectives:

This year, the observance of the day with the theme "Mind the Gap. Leave No One and Place Behind" will take place in Balikesir, Turkey. Under this theme the day will look at the problem of growing inequality and challenges in cities and human settlements and draw attention to growing inequalities and vulnerabilities that have been exacerbated by the triple 'C' crises - COVID-19, climate and conflict.

The first of the three priorities of 2022 is to provide adequate housing for all. Adequate housing is central to UN-Habitat's mandate and is contained in the 'Leave None Behind' commitment in the Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda" report. The second priority addresses the key role of cities as contributors to climate solutions. With increased local climate finance, cities could make significant progress towards implementing adaptation priorities and the third priority for 2022- 2023 is localizing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Urbanization: Opportunities and Challenges:

Cities and metropolitan regions are where the effects of change are felt acutely in a passive manner. The economic and social vulnerability of our urban way of life was also highlighted by COVID-19. With two-thirds of the world's population predicted to reside in urban areas by 2050, according to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, sustainable urban development has thus never been more challenging. This task will only get harder and more daunting in the upcoming days if unplanned urbanizations are not tackled systematically.

Urbanization brings some of the greatest opportunities and challenges in the world today. Cities are hubs for economic growth and development, but they also have demographic, environmental, economic, and social difficulties. With the adoption of the new Urban Agenda in 2016 by the UN, national and municipal governments across the world have embarked on a transformative route towards achieving SDG11. By involving all stakeholders, cities may harness transformative change and enhance the lives of their residents. In many instances, however, cities lack the capacity to implement this transformation. It has become a serious global problem to ensure that cities have the capacity, capability, and tools to face the difficulties posed by urbanization.

Opportunities in Cox's Bazar towards accomplishing the Objectives of World Habitat Day 2022:

As one of the most crucial coastal cities in Bangladesh, Cox's Bazar has a lot of potential to successfully address this year's World Habitat Day goals. The three main goals for 2022 are to provide adequate housing, demonstrate how important cities are to climate solutions, and localizing the Sustainable Development Goals. Cox's bazar is the site of the largest refugee camp in the world. More than 1.1 million Rohingya refugees who fled persecution in their home country of Myanmar have placed a great deal of strain on the already fragile ecosystems in the region. Cox's Bazar is also one of the most vulnerable coastal cities in Bangladesh, therefore it may effectively contribute to climate solutions by addressing the challenges and local ways of confronting those challenges. The city also has the potential to localize the sustainable development goals by using its numerous resources in a sustainable manner, such as through utilization of the blue economy, fishing, and ecotourism sectors. Here, the local government of Cox's Bazar, especially the Cox's Bazar Development Authority, can play an essential part in making sure that the objectives of World Habitat Day are met and that they function properly together. By collaborating with this particular local authority, it will be possible to effectively confront growing inequality, close the

gap between urban poor, bring out possible solutions to tackle the climate crises and make the SDGs more localized to the area.

MN Absar is a retired Commodore of Bangladesh Navy and Chairman, Cox's Bazar Development Authority.