

Karachi is Pakistan's largest city and its only international port. It has a population of 8.2 million, which means that 6 per cent of the total and 22 per cent of the urban population of the country live in this

merchants were thus forced to search for

کراچی انڈسٹریل

another port. In 1729, they chose the bay of Karachi, 18 miles east of Kharak Bunder, and established a

KARACHI'S POSITION IN PAKISTAN



city. Its rate of growth is 5.6 per cent per year, 3 per cent due to natural growth and 2 to 3 per cent due to migration from other parts of the country. This is much higher than the 3.2 per cent growth rate for the whole of Pakistan. Karachi provides 25 per cent of the federal revenues and 15 per cent of the gross domestic produce of Pakistan. In addition, 50 per cent of the country's bank deposits and 72 per cent of all issued capital is from Karachi (1). Given these statistics, it is easy to understand the importance of the city in the political and economic life of the country.

In 1728, the estuary of the Hub River, which then formed the port of Kharak Bunder, silted up due to heavy rains. Its

small town in its vicinity. This town came to be known as Karachi. Although the city of Karachi was established in the early eighteenth century, its bay has been mentioned in historical accounts, and in its immediate vicinity are ancient places of pilgrimage. Thus, the temple of Mahadeva, now in a suburb of the city, is mentioned in the Hindu epic, Ramayana (1000 BC). The heroes of the epic, Ram and Sita, are supposed to have spent a night in the Ram Bagh gardens, which are now in the city centre. The bay of Krokala, where the navy of Alexander the Great of Macedonia sought refuge from a storm on its journey home in October 326 BC, has been identified with the Karachi bay by a number of historians. The bay is also mentioned in medieval Arabic works on navigation in the Arabian sea, as a port of refuge from storms in the region. In addition, the shrines of Abdullah Shah Ghazi





(763 AD), Yousef Shah (768 AD) and Pir Mango (1221 AD) are now within the city's metropolitan area and continue to be important places of pilgrimage both for the Muslims and Hindus of Sindh province.

The anarchic conditions in northern India in the 18th century made the traditional trade routes from India to Central Asia unsafe. Thus, goods were sent to Karachi by sea from the Indian peninsula, and then overland through Baluchistan and Kabul to Herat, Samarkand and Bukhara. Due to this Central Asian trade, Karachi became an important port and its merchants expanded their zone of operations as far as China in the east, Zanzibar in the south, and Kiev in the west. The Russian expansion towards the Arabian Sea in the early 19th century threatened British interests in the region, and so, in 1839, the British occupied Karachi and used it for landing troops and armour for their Afghanistan campaigns to contain the Russians. In 1843, they annexed the kingdom of Sindh to their empire, and made Karachi the administrative centre of Sindh.

administrative centre of Sindh, new buildings were added to it and its population increased from 15,000 in 1843 to 56,000 in 1870. The establishment of the railway network in the 1870s linked Karachi to the agricultural areas of the Punjab. In the 1890s, when perennial irrigation was established in that province, Karachi became the export route for an enormous amount of agricultural surplus, and by 1922 its population had increased to 203,000. In addition, Czarist, and then Soviet pressure on the western frontier of British India increased Karachi's importance, and it became a strategic naval base and military cantonment. During the Second World War, it was used again as a landing place for troops and materials for the eastern front, and expanded as a result. In 1941, its population was 435,887. In August 1947, the British Indian empire was partitioned and as a result, the new state of Pakistan was created. Karachi was made its first capital.