

Rise of the MEGACITIES

Large cities are not a new phenomenon. Attracted by work, better facilities and living standards, there have been cities with a population of over a million people for around 2,000 years.¹ This is particularly evident in the Middle East and across Asia, where many cities have swelled to populations in excess of ten million. Places that even just a few decades ago were nothing more than small farming towns or fishing villages now have millions of people living in them.²



Seoul, in South Korea, is a prosperous **urban** area today, but in the 1950s it was a much poorer and smaller place. Once Seoul began to expand, much of the population growth was in the central **commercial** area. This has changed in the last 20 or 30 years, since much of the growth has been in the **suburbs**, where huge **residential** areas have been built on the edge of the city.³ Overpopulation has meant redeveloping traditional **industrial** areas of the city, where vast **housing** projects have expanded the population greatly. Although the growth of Seoul has been extraordinary, it has been a large city for decades. Abu Dhabi, on the other hand, was once not much more than a small village, and has grown immensely in recent times.⁴ It is not the only city to grow at this rapid rate, so what has led to this rapid expansion?

Population growth in general has come about due to falling death rates and improved life expectancy, but city populations are growing for numerous reasons.⁵ High levels of unemployment and a lack of resources have always pushed people away from **rural** areas. There is a perception that life will be better in a city, as the future residents are attracted to the prospect of well-paid jobs, greater opportunities to find work, better health care and education.⁶ All too many cities have illegal **slums** with poor living conditions, little or no electricity and limited access to clean drinking water. Yet this does not seem to deter new residents as both the central area and suburban populations continue to expand.

The trend of urbanization is unlikely to slow down any time soon, with millions of people expected to move to urban areas in the future, no doubt creating more megacities in the process. From Bogota to Chengdu, the march of the megacities shows no signs of stopping across the world.

- a Gyeonggi, on the southern outskirts of the city, has gained more than five million residents in the last 30 years.
- b Today, it is a city of over a million but 60 years ago, its population was under 20,000.
- c However, in recent years, rapid urbanization has been happening at a rate never seen before.
- d Unfortunately, for many people, especially in poorer countries, this has not always been the case.
- e At the heart of this rapid expansion in urban populations are the same factors that have been there for centuries.
- f So, where and why is this happening at such an astounding rate?

Describing a city

scan the words in bold from the article and match them to the possible definition.

- 1 _____ (n) an area where people live that is outside the city
- 2 _____ (adj) relating to industry
- 3 _____ (adj) relating to towns and cities, or happening there
- 4 _____ (n) a poor area of a town where the houses are in very bad condition
- 5 _____ (adj) relating to where people live rather than work
- 6 _____ (n) buildings for people to live in
- 7 _____ (adj) relating to business
- 8 _____ (adj) relating to or in the country

Choose the best option to complete each idea.

- 1 Over half of the world's population live in ___ areas and this is expected to grow.
a urban **b** commercial **c** slums
- 2 Depopulation in ___ areas has led to even less work and fewer facilities.
a commercial **b** suburb **c** rural
- 3 The ___ area is home to some of the largest banks and financial companies in the world.
a industrial **b** commercial **c** residential
- 4 When people have families, they frequently move to the ___ to have more space.
a suburbs **b** housing **c** residential

- 5 ___ areas with good transportation connections are usually more expensive to live in.
a Slum **b** Industrial **c** Residential
- 6 A lack of affordable ___ can lead to people living in poor conditions.
a suburbs **b** housing **c** slums
- 7 When traditionally ___ areas are in decline, many of the old factories are frequently converted to apartments.
a industrial **b** commercial **c** rural
- 8 The biggest ___ in the world has over half a million people living in poor quality housing.
a suburb **b** slum **c** urban