

Economic factors –

a) Agriculture

- The economic condition of the Islamic world, during medieval period was very prosperous.
- Agriculture was the principal occupation of the settled populations in the newly conquered territories
- The lands conquered by the Arabs that remained in the hands of the owners were subject to a tax (kharaj), which varied from half to a fifth of the produce, according to the conditions of cultivation.
- When non-Muslims started to convert to Islam to pay lower taxes, this reduced the income of the state. To address the shortfall, the caliphs first discouraged conversions and later adopted a uniform policy of taxation.
- Agricultural prosperity went hand in hand with political stability
- Islamic law gave tax concessions to people who brought land under cultivation.

b) Urbanisation

- Islamic civilisation flourished as the number of cities grew phenomenally.
- Among this class of garrison-cities, called misr (the Arabic name for Egypt), were Kufa and Basra in Iraq, and Fustat and Cairo in Egypt.
- Their size and population surged, supported by an expansion in the production of foodgrains and raw materials such as cotton and sugar for urban manufactures
- A vast urban network developed, linking one town with another and forming a circuit.

c) Commerce

- Political unification and urban demand for foodstuffs and luxuries enlarged the circuit of exchange.

- **Geography favoured the Muslim empire, which spread between the trading zones of the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean**
- **For five centuries, Arab and Iranian traders monopolised the maritime trade between China, India and Europe.**
- **This trade passed through two major routes, namely, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.**
- **High-value goods suitable for long-distance trade, such as spices, textile, porcelain and gunpowder, were shipped from India and China to the Red Sea ports of Aden and Aydhab and the Gulf ports of Siraf and Basra.**