

# FACTS & FIGURES

## Solid matter: A better way to manage your waste

The solid waste management programme is being designed in the best interests of the common man, said the Sindh Solid Waste Management Programme managing director Roshan Ali Sheikh. "The huge piles of garbage burning in almost every street are making the whole society sick," he said. Sheikh was speaking at a discussion with representatives of various NGOs at the Urban Resource Centre on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

Citing a report of the Asian Development Bank, he said that poisonous fumes emanating from the burning debris were causing serious health problems for the citizens. Children were the most vulnerable as a large number were now suffering from asthmatic symptoms. "I saw garbage burning in five different places on the way from Clifton Block 2 to the URC office today," he exclaimed. "This is in spite of the government's claims of having stated a cleanliness campaign in the city."

According to Shiekh, only around 30 per cent of the solid waste is currently being transferred to landfill sites, while another 40 per cent is being dumped in storm nullahs, the Malir River and into the sea. The remaining is collected at random sites and burnt. "Would you believe the government is spending Rs3.5 billion on solid waste management in the city each year?" he questioned.

For Sheikh, it is time to revolutionise the system of garbage collection and disposal by incorporating the latest technological methods. Highlighting the salient features of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Programme, he said that Karachi produced around 11,000 tons of garbage daily while the private sector earned Rs250 million by recycling the waste. "Waste recycling generates so much revenue in spite of the fact that only around 27 per cent of the waste is recycled in Karachi," he reasoned. "It is worth noting how much the sector has to offer when it attracts investors from the private sector." He added that apart from recycling, the waste could also be used to generate energy by various methods such as plasma gasification, anaerobic digestion and composting for bio-processing.

The programme will also make the functioning of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) more efficient as the municipality will be able to rid itself of almost 70 per cent of the ghost employees. "We will also increase the salaries of KMC employees," he said.

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## What the Hitchhiking Women of Moach Goth Can Teach the Sindh Government

For as little as 10 rupees you can pick up a woman from Moach Goth off the RCD Highway. But as long as you take her, you will also have to take the four women she is with. They will each pay you 10 rupees. All they ask in return is for you to drop them near Tariq Road in the centre of the city. The women hitchhike each day to neighbourhoods such as Bahadurabad, PECHS and beyond where they work as maids. They make a choice to hitchhike – but not for a lack of buses on these routes. The Star Line and X8 run reasonably regularly. The women don't like taking the buses because there is never enough space, it costs more, and most importantly, it takes too long for them to get into town.

"Wo das jagah se rukti hui jati he," says Nazia, a 40-year-old woman who is going to Tariq Road with three other women. The bus stops multiple times. If she leaves home in Moach Goth at 7am and takes the bus, it will take her at least two hours to get to work. The return during rush hour is worse. "Char ghantay aise gae to kaam kya karega?" she asks. If she spends four hours commuting each day what work will get done? The women often get stuck in traffic jams and worry about young children they have left at home unattended.

The Urban Resource Centre found that some women were hitchhiking in empty shipping containers headed down from the RCD Highway to the Karachi port. Their predicament is understandable. Time is money. The women are paid as little as Rs1,000 to wash dishes, Rs1,000 to wash clothes and Rs1,500 to sweep and wash floors at a house.

*Continue Page07*

## In 2014-15, utilization of development funds remains abysmally low

The oft-repeated excuse of the paucity of funds by ministers and officials fell null and void on Wednesday when the chief minister was presented a detailed account of the expenditure of various departments of the provincial government on uplift schemes.

The lack of utilisation of development funds, rather than their scarcity, was what incurred the wrath of Sindh chief minister Qaim Ali Shah when he was briefed on how much of the allocated funds were used by government departments during the current financial year.

None of the government departments used more than 50 percent of the funds allocated for development. The highest expenditure in this regard was of the works and service department which used 51 percent of the development funds. On the other hand, the lowest utilisation was reported from the mines and minerals department which only used four percent of the funds earmarked for development schemes.

According to the additional chief secretary of development, Mohammad Waseem, who provided details of expenditures of various departments, the Sindh government for the financial year 2014-2015 (which is about end in June) earmarked a total of Rs168 billion for 2937 development schemes.

The sum of Rs168 billion for annual development schemes included Rs143 billion for the schemes being implemented by the Sindh government while Rs25 billion were earmarked for projects being carried out by district administrations.

“Out of the total 2937 development schemes, 1658 were ongoing while 1279 were new projects,” said Waseem. “A total of Rs90.1 billion were earmarked for the ongoing schemes while Rs52.9 billion were allocated for new projects.”

Elaborating on the overall financial outlay, Waseem said the largest share, 34 percent of the total development budget was reserved for medium and small development schemes. Meanwhile, he said,

15 percent of the budget was reserved for local government, 14 for energy, nine for health, eight for education, seven for special initiatives, seven for roads’ construction and six percent was earmarked for irrigation purposes.

Giving details of the expenditure of specific departments, Waseem said the Auqaf, Zakat and Religious Affairs Department used only 20 percent of its development budget.

“A sum of more than Rs266 million was allocated for related uplifts schemes out of which Rs161.5 million was released till April 4. However, even out of the total funds released, only Rs32.7 million were spent on development schemes.”

Moving on to health, he said the department had at its disposal Rs13.2 billion to spend on development schemes, out of which Rs7.2 billion were released while only Rs2.7 billion were utilised.

“This means the department only used 39 percent of the development funds available at its disposal.”

Next was the industries department which used around 46 percent of the available funds. “A total of Rs125.5 million had been reserved for the uplift schemes being carried out by the department against which Rs38.5 million were released till April 4,” said Waseem. “Out of them, Rs17.8 million were used.”

A sum of Rs103.7 was allocated for development projects of the labour department out of which the finance department had released Rs9.4 million. However, the department used only Rs1.5 million of the available funds, which means that only 16 percent of the total funds were utilised.

Talking about the livestock and fisheries department, Waseem said their allocation amounted to Rs2,070 million against which Rs599 million were released. “However, the department utilised only Rs111.7 million, 19 percent of the available funds.

After hearing this, the chief minister asked Waseem if he had taken up the issue with the relevant department. The additional chief secretary replied that he had sent a number of letters.

Moreover, he continued, Rs279.4 million were allocated for development schemes of the mines and minerals department out of which Rs85.6 were released while only Rs3.4 million, a paltry four percent, were used.

Moving on, the population welfare department used 12 percent of the available development funds. “The department had Rs1760 at its disposal out of which it used

only Rs91 million," said Waseem.

"Meanwhile, the transport department had a allocation of Rs3,216 out of which around Rs72 million were released. But the department only utilised only Rs7.6 of the funds released, using only 11 percent of the amount available to them."

After hearing this the chief minister too couldn't help saying that there were a number of transport-related issued in the province and the department, despite having initiated several schemes, hadn't performed well.

Similarly, the works and services department used 31 percent of the development funds. A sum of Rs313 million had been allocated out of which Rs94 million were released while Rs29.3 million were used.

The highest utilisation was development funds was by the works and services department which used 51 percent of the earmarked funds. "Out of the Rs9,744.5 million allocated, Rs9,594 million were released while Rs4,915 million were used," said Waseem.

The chief minister decided to chair a joint meeting of the finance, and, planning and development departments to ask the officials the reason for the poor utilisation of allocated development funds.

The meeting held on Wednesday was also attended by development secretary Rehana Memon, secretary planning and development Dr Shireen Narejo, chief economist Abdul Fatah Marri and other high officials of the planning and development department.

(By Azeem Samar, The News, 09/04/2015)

## Pakistan fights groping with first women-only auto-rickshaw

**A** Pakistani woman, fed up with being groped and harassed by male auto-rickshaw drivers, has launched her own service exclusively for female passengers and drivers in her home city of Lahore - with just the one rickshaw on the road so far.

Zara Aslam, President of Pakistan's non-profit Environment Protection Fund, said she once narrowly escaped kidnapping by a rickshaw driver when she was a student, which triggered the idea of launching her Pink Rickshaw service.



Pakistan is notorious for sexual abuse of women, euphemistically known as "Eve-teasing". Offenders often go unpunished within a legal system that can treat the victims as the guilty party.

"Women over here face a lot of harassment when they go out into the public spaces and they want to use public transport. So, its

not really available, and what is available is very risky. So they get harassed when they are waiting for a bus or a rickshaw or a taxi. Taxi is an absolute 'no no' because it is considered even more unsafe," Aslam said at her home in Lahore, showing off her first rickshaw.

Aslam said her Pink Rickshaw service was another step towards the financial and professional empowerment of women, which would also enable them to earn a decent living.

The plan is to have at least 25 up and running by the end of the year and with one vehicle costing 300,000 rupees (about £2,000, \$3,000), Aslam said she is looking out for sponsors.

"So we are reaching out and we are saying, 'Hey guys, this is a great initiative. Please sponsor a few rickshaws so that we can enable these women.' Now then, these women will get the rickshaws and they will have to then (pay) two easy instalments and pay back for the rickshaws so we can re-invest that money and get more women on the road," she said, adding that the government has not offered any assistance.

Aslam said she is optimistic about the future of the women-only transport service in the city.

"The women love it. I mean, I cannot tell you that it has already created, or broken that ice, that whole stigma of a woman driver, because they see me drive a rickshaw, they see her drive a rickshaw, we have another lady with us. They see her drive a rickshaw. Its all over the news," Aslam said.

She added that they will also teach the women how to drive and help them get their driving license.

(By Adam Justice, IB Times, 10/04/2015)

## Karachi's Transport woes

**K**arachi's public transport has literally gone to the dogs as it could be gauged from the fact that only 4.5 percent public transport vehicles carry 42pc of total people travelling in the metropolis as against private cars, which constitutes 36pc of the city's total vehicle population, carry only 21pc people.

As far as motorcycles are concerned which are 47.3pc of the city's total vehicles population carry 19pc of the people travelling in the metropolis.

Innumerable people living below the level of subsistence have no option but to travel in rickety buses, mini buses and coaches. One could even see the commuters travelling on rooftops and footboards of the worn-out buses which often tilt on side and thus poses serious threats to their lives.

Ironically, seats reserved for women in each bus and mini bus are not more than seven or eight, although they are more than half of the population.

According to official statistics gathered by Business Recorder, the number of vehicles registered in Karachi in 2014, include mini buses (16,512), buses (6,299), private vehicles (1,149,312), motorcycles (1,849,025), taxi (46,923), rickshaw (177,095), mini truck (15,536), truck (17,874), van/pick-up (126,753), tanker (3,117), school bus (266) and other types of vehicles (12,295).

Talking about public transport performance in major cities, former director general of Karachi Mass Transit Cell, Malik Zaheer-ul-Islam, said that as the number of public transport was quite meagre in Karachi, 40 persons compete for one bus seat in the city as against 12 persons in Mumbai and eight persons in Hong Kong.

About the road network of Karachi, he said that the city's road network is adequate in terms of total length, although there are still some problems such as the low ratio of arterial roads in the network and lack of the arterial circular roads.

However, there are few red sections where traffic volume significantly exceeds the capacity, but the current road network has enough capacity to accept the growing traffic volume, he added. Meanwhile, former journalist and mayor of Bogota (Columbia), Enrique Penalosa, who is now associated with Institute for Transportation & Development Policy (ITDP), an NGO seeking to improve urban life quality by advancing sustainable transportation in cities across the world, opined that BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) system is the only solution to help resolve Karachi's growing transport problem.

Penalosa, who was in the city in connection with a workshop on transport, said that with a better BRT system, there would be fewer cars on roads and fewer traffic jams as people would be able to travel through public transport and reach their destinations easily and quickly.

"In fact, a developed city was not where more people had cars but where a great number of rich people used public transport," Penalosa aptly remarked.

The nexus between transport mafia and transport department has

gravely affected the overall transport system, a senior citizen remarked, saying that it seems there is a lobby in the government which is least interested in getting Karachi Circular Railway revived and in improving the city's transport system.

(By Azizullah Sharif, Business Recorder, 04/04/2015)

## Water pollution in Pakistan

**W**ater pollution is one of the major threats to public health in Pakistan. Quality of drinking water is poorly managed and monitored. Pakistan ranks at number 80 among 122 nations regarding drinking water quality. Drinking water sources, both surface and groundwater are contaminated with toxic metals and pesticides throughout the country. Various drinking water quality parameters set by WHO are frequently violated. Improper disposal of municipal and industrial effluents and indiscriminate applications of agrochemicals in agriculture are the main factors contributing to the deterioration of water quality. Microbial and chemical pollutants are the main factors responsible exclusively or in combination for various public health problems.

According to a study conducted in UN states that more than 3.5 Million children are at high risk of death because of constant use of contaminated water. 20-40% of beds occupied in hospitals by those who are affected by the use of polluted water, more than 100 Million cases of diarrhoea are registered in the country. Polluted water is the main reason of more than 40% deaths annually in the country. More than 1.6 Million disability cases are recorded in the country because of water pollution. In terms of financial loss Pakistani government is

spending Rs.112 billion per year on sanitation and hygiene related diseases, but because of increasing population, lack of planning, uneducated people and due to mal governance, water pollution is increasing day after day in Pakistan. Water is essential for living things and a free gift from nature, but due to advancement and changing life styles people are not willing to value the valuable resource. Government should take concrete steps to ensure provision of clean and healthy water as it is basic right of people to drink clean water.

(By Wasim Gondal, Pakistan Observer, 04/04/2015)

## Justice for Perween

The text message is still saved in my mobile phone. It was sent at 9.30 am on Wednesday March 13, 2013. It was signed "Thanks n Cheers PR". That was the last time I heard from Perween Rahman, director of the OPP-RTI. For years she had made it a habit when in Karachi to read my column in the morning when it appeared in this paper and would send a comment by sms/email or call me up for a brief chat on her way to work. On that fateful day in 2013, less than 12 hours later, she was dead. The following week I wrote, 'Rest in peace little sister'.

But two years on, it is we — her family, friends and colleagues — who cannot be at peace. We still wait for justice to be done. Two weeks ago, on March 19 a man was arrested in Mansehra who the police alleged was Perween's killer. Are the wheels of justice moving again? It is premature to say what the police investigation will lead to. In some way this is progress. Something is happening. I still remember how despondent we were when the day after Perween was slain, the police shot dead a man in an 'encounter' and proclaimed him to be the killer. Since dead men do not speak, they declared the case to be a "blind one, difficult to solve". It was therefore closed. And that is what it would have been had it not been for the Supreme Court which was approached by nine individual petitioners and three organisations in December 2013. Nearly 8,000 applications from all over the world calling for justice were also filed and hearings began in January 2014. A one-man judicial commission was set up and it gave its report in April.

The court was not satisfied and appointed a joint investigation team comprising not just the officials from the Sindh Police but also the ISI, MI, IB, FIA, Special Branch, CID and Pakistan Rangers. One doesn't have to elaborate why functionaries of the federal agencies had to be drawn in. Ten hearings have been held. Perhaps even the judiciary is wary of any cover-up which is nothing unheard of in Pakistan. On one occasion, the court even asked the investigating team members "to report in confidentiality rather than filing documents because it might be thwarted by powerful elements".

The latest arrest is indicative of the fact that Perween's memory still haunts those in the corridors of power. In her innocence, she reminds them that they are accountable to the millions of poor Pakistanis whose cause she was serving. It appears that hers was a premeditated murder — not committed out of personal enmity. Whose orders was the killer carrying out is something that has yet to be determined. When justice is done it will not be justice for Perween Rahman alone. It will be justice for all the marginalised communities she worked for. There were people who came from as far afield as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to pay

tributes to her at her funeral. She had been at their side when they needed support. Now she needed them to strengthen her case. And they were present. This was not just the case of one life cruelly snuffed out but thousands being denied the benefit of her guidance and courageous leadership. The absence of equity and social justice in Pakistan makes our Perween Rahmans so important. The basic tenet of a civilised society governed by the rule of law is that any citizen who is wronged must receive redress. In this case one can well ask what were the stakes? It was basically an attack on the spirit and will to lift the entire marginalised population out of poverty and show it the way to lead a life of dignity.

One needs clout for that and Perween was providing that through her deep knowledge and understanding of the conditions in Karachi. She was fully in the know of the wrongdoings of the mafias that rule Karachi and the conniving role of the civic agencies, the police and the political parties. It was this knowledge and her own integrity that prevented her from being bought over. In that lay her strength. That was also the reason why she was feared. She knew too much and could expose the dirty game of all those who were collectively robbing Karachi of what belonged to the people — the land, water and 'commons' that cannot be stolen by private individuals. Perween's strategy was based on a self-help approach that made it financially feasible, appropriate for local conditions and environmentally sustainable. It had to be indigenous in its structure and performance and did not turn to foreign donors. That is why it can be enduring and effective. But that is what makes it dangerous for those who thrive on stolen wealth.

(By Zubieda Mustafa, Daily Dawn, 03/04/2015)

## Continue from Page 1 Solid matter: A better way to manage your waste

Sheikh revealed that the Sindh government plans to outsource the various functions of waste management such as collection, transport, treatment and disposal in Karachi to private operators after inviting bids from international firms. "This will not only make the programme cost-effective but the private firms will be able to fill the existing gap in capacity and infrastructure."

URC director Zahid Farooq lauded the programme, hoping that its implementation will provide much-needed relief for the citizens of Karachi.

(The Express Tribune, 26/03/2015)

## Continue from Page 1 What the Hitchhiking Women of Moach Goth Can Teach the Sindh Government

They need to work at two houses at least to be able to make about Rs7,000 a month which is still less than the minimum wage. If they take the bus each day to work that eats away roughly Rs1,000 (if you go by the Rs20 fare one way). It is small wonder they prefer to hitchhike, mostly for free or for as little as five rupees.

The women travel in groups for safety and are covered from head to toe in burqas if they are young or chadors if they are older. "If we see the driver isn't good we don't get in," explains Nazia's younger sister Shazia. Nazia chimes in though with maternal wisdom: "*Sab aurtaun ek jaisi nahi hoti. Mard mard hota he.*" Not all women are alike, she says, indicating she is from the 'you asked for it' school of thought. Men are going to be men after all. But there is something about Nazia's wide-hipped heft and carriage that makes it clear that she is not shy when it comes to giving a frisky boy a tongue-lashing.

Mass transit plans have been made since 1952 but none have materialised. The network map everyone is using is based on a plan the Japanese International Cooperation Agency made in 2010

### Karachi Transport Timeline

1952 Karachi's first master plan with mass transit systems is designed by the Swedish firm Merz Rendel Vatten but is never used.

1958 Ayub Khan decides to push refugees and working classes out of the city. Greek planner Doxiades develops Landhi-Korangi and New Karachi. Plan flops as factories too slow to emerge. Slums and sprawl follow.

1964 Karachi Circular Railway opens from Drigh Road to Wazir Mansion. Grows to 83 km track.

1972 The World Bank works with the Karachi Development Authority and proposes seven elevated transit ways through the heart of Karachi. Arif Hasan and other activists shoot it down.

1974 Curitiba (Brazil) introduces a high quality bus service system, which is now recognized as the first successful case of BRT in the world. ?

1977 Army takes over.

1980s KCR operates 24 trains per day and the main line operates 80 trains per day, providing transportation to more than 6 million passengers per year.

1988 The Karachi Mass Transit Cell starts work but struggles to bring donors and government on the same page.

1995 Government makes official Karachi Mass Transit Corridors on which city government promotes light rail.

1999 KCR operation stops due to lack of finances and rolling stock.

2000 Bogota (Columbia) opens an innovative BRT system (TransMillenio), which has a great impact on transit planners and decision makers in the world.

2001 Taipei introduces BRT.

2004 Seoul and Jakarta introduce BRT.

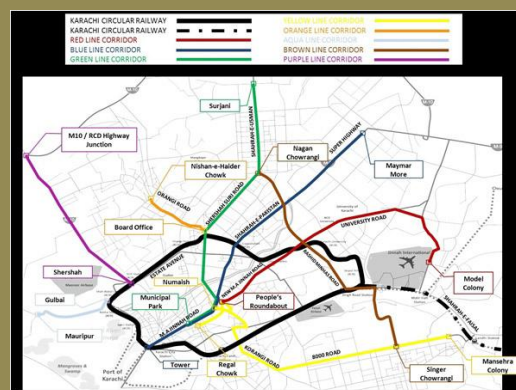
2005 Beijing introduces BRT.

2008 Government starts making a Sindh Mass Transit Authority (still pending before assembly).

2008 The Karachi Urban Transport Corporation is formed as a regulatory authority to revive of the KCR. Nothing happens.

2008 New Delhi introduces BRT, as does Istanbul.

2009 The chingchi appears on Karachi's roads just as buses start switching to CNG.



2010 Lima and Bangkok introduce BRT.

2010 Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) starts work on a Karachi Transportation Improvement Project.

2012 Lahore gets its BRT, called the Metrobus.

2012 Islamabad-Rawalpindi and Multan start working on their BRT.

2013 Japan agrees to give KUTC Rs2.5bn in a loan to redo the KCR. Faisalabad starts on its BRT.

2015 Peshawar starts gearing up for BRT.

Ever since Karachi Circular Railway spluttered to a halt, it has become clear that the city is heading to a transport nightmare. Public transport has not kept up with the needs of the populace or the rapid sprawl of the city as it increasingly absorbs more residents towards the outskirts.

Type of vehicle	2009	2014	% change
Minibus	15,161	16,512	8.91%
Bus	6,452	6,299	-2.37%
Rickshaw	54,647	177,095	224%
Private vehicle	899,121	1,149,312	27%
Motorcycle	997,769	1,849,025	85%
Total no. of vehicles	2,147,231	3,420,971	59%

Source: Motor Vehicle Department, Government of Sindh

The hitchhiking women of Moach Goth are a symptom of Karachi's transport disease. Public transport has not kept up with the needs of the populace or the rapid sprawl of the city as it increasingly absorbs more residents towards the outskirts. The slums are densifying because people living on the periphery are working class but their work is located in the centre of the city. No one wants to live that far away because there is no proper transport to work. The city's only respectable version of mass transit, the Karachi Circular Railway, died a slow death of neglect. Today it only shows up as a black line on planning maps. The tram belonged to a time when Karachi's population wasn't making the headlines. The government has been well aware of this growing crisis and has tried unsuccessfully to apply a Band-Aid in various shapes and sizes. The most recent one was the Green bus line in 2005 but it was inexplicably pulled off the roads. The skeletons of the buses now stand parked at a depot in Surjani town, gutted out by thieves for their parts. ?

### The fight

- Karachi: 40 persons competing for one bus seat
- Mumbai: 12 persons competing for one bus seat
- Hong Kong: 8 persons competing for one bus seat

Source: Malik Zaheer ul Islam, former director-general of the Karachi Mass Transit Cell

Thankfully, though, it was developments in Lahore that have roused the Sindh government from its slumber. Ever since the 'jangla bus' started working, Karachi has been trying to play catch-up. Indeed, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and now Peshawar are all introducing bus rapid transit (BRT), a globally accepted solution to mass transit premised on cordoning off lanes for buses so they can swiftly transport thousands of people without getting snarled up in traffic. Jealousy is a great motivator but that notwithstanding, the government of Sindh's renewed interest in solving its transport crisis is being welcomed by urban planners in Karachi. The slums are densifying because people living on the periphery are working class but their work is located in the centre of Karachi. Mass transit plans have been made for Karachi since 1952 but none have materialised. The network map everyone is using today is based on a plan the Japanese International Cooperation Agency made in 2010.

Since last year the Sindh government has been in talks. First it signed a Chinese consortium for the Yellow line: The China National Electric Import and Export Corp, Beijing Urban Construction Design and Development Group, Beijing Urban Construction Road & Bridge Group Co. Ltd. The federal government has said it will pay for the Green line. Bahria Town gave an unsolicited proposal to do the Blue line, which serves its new, gated community off the Super Highway. The Asian Development Bank was asked to plan the Red line, for which it enlisted the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy. But now that the Sindh government is taking BRT seriously, experts have questioned how it is going about it. If four different entities undertake the four different lines, there would be no integration. This puts at risk the entire venture in the court of public opinion. For what it is worth, though, the government started creating an overarching regulator, the Sindh



Mass Transit Authority, in 2008. The bill was taken up in 2014 and Transport Secretary Tauha Farooqui has said he hoped it would pass at the next assembly sitting.

Ever since the Karachi Circular Railway spluttered to a halt in the pre-Musharraf years, it has become abundantly clear that the city is heading to a transport nightmare. When Mustafa Kamal became mayor one of the first things he did was concentrate on making life easier for people in cars. While the first flyover was built in 1993, it was Kamal who really pushed them as a solution. The majority were built on Karachi's main arteries during the local government era from 2001 to 2009. Today we have 44 of them – and we are still stuck in traffic. Meanwhile, the rest of the world is tearing down its flyovers and investing in mass transit. Seoul perhaps outdid everyone by ripping out a highway in the middle of the city and creating a 10 km stream called Cheonggyecheon where people now promenade or picnic.



Mustafa Kamal's Dubai-inspired dream and desperation to end traffic jams led to the vision of signal-free corridors. Mustafa Kamal's Dubai-inspired dream and desperation to end traffic jams led to the vision of signal-free corridors. Flyovers would be built so no one ever had to stop at a red light ever again. It would take you 15 minutes to reach Nazimabad from Saddar. The only problem? Experts presented findings in 2010 that pedestrian deaths from trying to cross flyovers had risen by as much as 120% on Signal-free Corridor I. But we had become a society that saw the car as a status symbol and public transport as an act of desperation. Shaukat Aziz ushered in low-cost consumer financing, which exacerbated Karachi's traffic problem because cars became cheaper to acquire. Today they make up for roughly one-third of traffic but carry only 21% of people. Public transport, which makes up 5% of vehicles on the roads, carries 43% of people. More and more people say that buying a motorcycle has changed their lives. Karachi has 1.7 million today. One Eidul Azha the government announced a three-day holiday. On the third day of Eid everyone came out and there were gridlocks reported for hours. On that frightening day it became clear that we were at the precipice. It is costing Karachi \$687 million a year to be stuck in traffic. Simultaneously, the number of buses started to shrink. The fleet had grown old and made the mistake of switching to CNG who supplies eventually dwindled. Today there are only 9,000 buses for a population of 22 million people that makes 24 million trips a day. At the time buses switched to CNG, someone made the incredibly smart move, in 2009, to introduce the Qinqi or Chingchi, a nine-seat rickshaw. It has captured over 60% of passengers in public transport. This amped-up rickshaw is king of the road today because it is safe, charges a flat fare of Rs10 for under 10 km and goes where buses don't. They are also safer; pickpockets and armed snatchings are common on buses. There is a reason men like to sit on the roof—the man with the TT pistol can't operate there. Ironically, as the chingchi is such a new phenomenon, it is not mentioned as a type of vehicle in the law. And so when a chingchi kills someone, the police have to register the FIR at the hands of a 'namaloom vehicle'. There was no denying it, however, and the Sindh government was forced to start acknowledging them as public transport and issue routes and permits much to the chagrin of the bus owners. In 2010, the government allowed 100,000 chingchis to register. But even the chingchis cannot solve the problem of the women of Moach Goth as the route is too long. This is only something a vast bus network can solve. The BRT plans are extensive but arterial services that are affordable must be part of the picture. It seems, however, that finally the sarkar is moving in the right direction.

(By Mahim Maher, Friday Times, 03/04/2015)

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