

FACTS & FIGURES

Planning and rehabilitation: Karachi needs its Katchi Abadis, say speakers

Will Karachi be able to survive if all the katchi abadis in the city, which are usually referred to as 'stains on its face', are removed?

This question was raised by NGO Saiban chairperson Tasneem Siddiqui at a seminar titled, 'Karachi: Planning and Rehabilitation for the City', at Szabist on Saturday. The seminar was chaired by local bodies minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah.

Talking about the issues of housing shortage, katchi abadis and low-cost housing, Siddiqui said that every house in Defence Housing Authority (DHA) has at least three servants belonging to those katchi abadis, which are known as stains on the city's beauty. "The city's transport is being run by them," he said. "Zulfikar Ali Bhutto announced the regularisation of these settlements."

He lambasted the government for being adamant on removing all such settlements, in which around 55 per cent of the population lives in, from the city while providing no alternative housing schemes for the low-income class.

Talking about the early days of Karachi, he spoke of how well-planned the city was with housing for everyone. He reminisced about how the city used to be headed by an elected mayor. However, the system was abolished. "Now, the bureaucrats have taken over the city with no knowledge on how to manage it." According to him, planning failure is on the rise and urban sprawl is taking place after a change in administrative system.

Siddiqui said that Karachi was already the port city, which was later made into an industrial city. "The shift of population [from other smaller cities] to [the] industrial hub was natural in such a case," he pointed out. He further said that in order to build factories and infrastructure, labour was required, which came from smaller towns and needed a place to live in. "The government and the so-called entrepreneurship ignored their residence [issue]." He also talked about the large number of empty plots and flats in the city, which are being used for business purposes. According to Siddiqui, people were not buying plots in Bahria Town for residential purpose – they will sell it later in four times higher the price. "This is not housing development but plot development.

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Women giving up jobs due to lack of conveyance, claims Qingqi Association

With claims of a large number of people found waiting for some form of transport to take them back home to women giving up their jobs in the absence of conveyance, Qingqi association is unhappy they have been driven off the roads. Participants of a discussion forum at the Urban Resource Centre (URC) on Wednesday, spoke about the various issues being faced by the commuters in the aftermath of the province-wide ban on Qingqi rickshaws on Wednesday 19th Aug 2015.

The All Karachi Qingqi Welfare Association (AKQWA) president Syed Safdar Shah Qadri said that the association is aware of the hardships of the citizens of Karachi, especially the women, elderly and students, in the aftermath of the ban. "The Qingqis were able to fill the vacuum of transport dilemma in the city, as a result of which, it gained massive preference by the public," said Qadri. According to Qadri, ever since June 2010 when Qingqis were brought in huge numbers in the city, the owners have been trying hard to earn it a mini-transport status like that of mini-buses and coaches. "The rule of one-plus-four [one driver and four passengers] was introduced in 2011 by the government itself," he said. "We accepted all violations and came up with an improved model in 2012 with proper hydraulic brakes and reverse gears. Even this is a problem for them now."

AKQWA coordinator Ourangzaib Ahmed Wahidi said that the government of 1998 under Pervez Musharraf introduced Qingqi rickshaws countrywide as a replacement of cycle rickshaws.

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Creek View and Creek Terraces to destroy environment

Let's begin by trying to understand the role of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) which was earlier known as the Pakistan Environment Protection Agency prior to the 18th Amendment. The Ministry of Environment, Local Government and Rural Development had delegated functions and powers of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency under section 26 of the Act to the provincial governments. The provincial governments have further delegated these powers and functions to provincial Environmental Protection Agencies.

The environmental concerns have directly become a provincial matter and the likes of many matters of the province of Sindh, SEPA has also fallen in line with the operating rules of the province.

Pak-EPA in compliance to its mandatory requirement under the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act's section 6 sub-section (2) clause (a) which is reproduced as below: "Undertake inquiries or investigation into environmental issues, either of its own accord or upon complaint from any person or organization."

We are yet to see SEPA wake up and take any sort of proactive actions against environmental destruction taking place. Climate and environment impact has never really been a priority in the country despite the wide ranging measures that are being implemented across the globe to curb global warming such as the recent most ambitious plans ever set forth in North America to safeguard its long term interests especially the impact on the health of its citizens. Environmentalists have also repeatedly urged the Sindh government to focus on the prevailing environmental threat as it has the highest number of concerns of all the provinces.

Experts have said that Pakistan is also likely to face the brunt of the environmental, social and economic impacts of climate change. These raise major challenges for current and future decision-making and have multifaceted impact on the economy, agriculture, water resources and urban management. Experts estimate the country incurs financial nearly \$5 billion loss annually as a result of environmental degradation.

The prevailing situation has also resulted in the Sindh High Court (SHC) taking action by directing the provincial environmental protection agency's director to file a report on the enforcement of penal provisions of the environmental protection laws by February 16 this year.

As we all are aware of some of the very recent cases highlighted by the concerned citizens of Sindh in regard to the building of the twin nuclear power plants close to the city, the Malir bund realignment/construction project, Clifton flyover project and two linking underpasses, safeguarding Keenjhar Lake which is one of the major water resources for Karachi and Thatta to domestic and industrial effluent dumping by private contractors/city district government on the sea shores of Karachi.

The role of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) has been heavily criticized in these cases: "We find it very disconcerting that the SEPA is running its affairs in a manner that

is contrary to the letter and spirit of its own regulations," said physicist Dr AH Nayyar.

Because of weak enforcement of the environmental law, we can expect another environmental crisis to occur in the near future within posh area of DHA Phase VIII of Karachi due to the illegal and unsafe construction of over 20 towers being built by the name of Creek View and Creek Terraces project (Arkadian Towers). Again there has been no SEPA hearing of such a huge public project being undertaken which is a mandatory requirement of section 17 of the SEPA Act, 2014 and surely the impact on the environment has not been taken into account either which would result in complete system failure especially for the residents of that area. This would result in an excess of traffic congestion when approximately an extra 20,000 vehicles ply the roads to transport about 50,000 people in absence of any traffic feasibility having been undertaken, not to mention the human and solid waste that will have to be disposed for which no environmental study has been undertaken, electrical and gas management etc...

A mega project such as Arkadian Towers has physical, biological, environmental, socio-economical consequences for the overall vicinity and all its residents yet no steps have been taken so far by the developer of the project ie AKD Capital Limited for conducting an IEE and/or EIA in relation to the Arkadian Towers. The sinister plan of AKD Capital Limited behind hastily completing the construction of towers appears to countenance deviations, any subsequently pointed out by SEPA, and also use the same as an excuse of delay in raising objection by any stake holder. The boundless greed of developers have already destroyed many peaceful neighborhoods of

Karachi and this Arkadian Project may do the same — destroy the development and planning of Phase VIII, DHA, as well as disturb the present peace and substitute the same with noise and pollution. Needless to add that the traffic management system of the area will also be completely destroyed while the same is still in its nascent stage.

It is more distressing to witness that DHA being the Authority and custodian of the planning and development policies of the area where the Arkadian project is being constructed and where the major impact of adverse environmental effects would occur have however failed to protect the larger public interest and is seemingly neither concerned about the environment and/ or the residents of Phase VIII, DHA.

The director of Sindh Environmental Protection Agency Naeem Mughal said that the two high rise buildings being constructed in Defence Society Phase 8 namely Creek View and Creek Terrace didn't fulfil the requirement of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) after the approval of plan which should be done according to the Act of 2014 passed by SEPA. When the project started a notice was issued and the work was stopped and in return they asked for a time period of two months. After that they submitted the EIA of the projects which at present with SEPA for the process of reviewing. After the issuance of public notice regarding the projects their public hearing will be held.

"Environmental issues of Sindh are not being addressed seriously," criticized writer and environmentalist, Nasir Ali Panhwar. "Not a single wetland in Sindh has been secured. There is no landfill site in any city. Nothing is being done for urban and rural environment. Nothing is being done for freshwater lakes, including Keenjhar and Manchar."

Panhwar also said that the industries in Hyderabad and Karachi and sugar mills in rural areas are threatening lives by polluting the environment. "What is the environment ministry doing for these issues?" he questioned on the recent budget allocated, saying that the provincial government is responsible for addressing Sindh's issues seriously after the 18th Amendment.

Knowledge of the health impacts associated with climate change will have limited value without effective communication and education strategies to increase public awareness and understanding of the specific risks involved and the complexity of the issues. Communication with particularly vulnerable individuals and populations, as well as with health care professionals and public health officials tasked with protecting communities is itself deserving of further research to tackle this issue effectively.

For now let's hope that the reluctance of SEPA to take action in DHA against the builders of the public "Arkadian" Project does not result in the social fabric of DHA Karachi being completely destroyed resulting in a collapse of the already unstable infrastructure.

(By Syed Minhaj ur Rab, The News, 10/08/2015)

Citizens keep waiting for rides as Chingchis banned

Pasban-e-Pakistan has said that the ban on Chingchi rickshaws has further increased the problems of commuters and the government should bring the Chingchi rickshaw system into the ambit of law.

According to a press release, Pasban-e-Pakistan Vice President Abdul Hakim Quaid said that Chingchi rickshaw system is a handy and cost-effective public transport system, serving millions of commuters in the largest city of Pakistan.

He said that until the government brings its promised mass transit system to Karachi or revives the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR), the citizens should not be deprived of this cost-effective public transport system. He said the Chingchi rickshaws are running successfully in all the cities and towns of Pakistan and serving the people.

He said that sadly, in Karachi, the Chingchi system was marred by political extortion. He said that to get votes of a particular community, a huge number of these rickshaws were allowed in the city and extortion on a daily basis was also collected from them, which resulted in problems in the public transport system.

Abdul Hakim Quaid said that while banning the Chingchis, the negative role of the Sindh transport department, the KMC and the extortion mafia was not taken into consideration.

He said the main reason behind the problem was that the extortion mafia had assured full protection to Chingchi owners, provided they continued to pay them regularly. He suggested that in the larger interest of

public, the Chingchi rickshaw system should be regularised by giving them small route permits, fitness certificates, training and proper driving licences. He said the Pasban-e-Pakistan would file an appeal in the court against the decision of banning Chingchis and nine-seat rickshaws.

Meanwhile, Pakistan People's Party Sindh General Secretary Senator Taj Haider has decided to move the Sindh High Court (SHC), asking it to reconsider the decision regarding ban on Chingchi rickshaws across the province. In a statement issued on Sunday, the PPP leader said that thousands of people had been deprived of their source of earning, while citizens in general were also faced with great difficulties due to absence of an "otherwise easily accessible" transport facility.

Agreeing that manufacturers or assemblers of these vehicles ignored safety measures, and that drivers of these rickshaws also used to transport optimum number of passengers from one place to another, he said that safety measures needed to be suggested and imposed.

"It was rightly pointed out that overloaded Chingchis had become unsafe means of transport because of drivers' negligence, but an abrupt ban was perhaps not the solution, as it has created new and complicated problems for the common people," Senator Taj Haider said.

He mentioned that the transport department with the help of the NED Engineering University had already recommended safety measure tools for these vehicles and that the Sindh government had also received a legal draft for implementation of safety measures.

"Instead of banning them completely, it would be better to give six months' time to drivers and their owners to adopt tools recommended as safety measures," he suggested.

The senator said that overloading by drivers must be banned, while rules related to speed limit, stops and routes must urgently be developed with provision for their strict implementation. (DailyTimes, 10/08/2015)

Katchi abadis: The backstage of the city

The eviction of the Islamabad I-11 *katchi abadi* residents has drawn two extreme responses from the Pakistani lettered classes — empathy and blatant contempt. The more disturbing of these has, of course, been the latter, where sentiments reinforcing the dividing line between 'us' and 'them' abound. 'These people are illegal; they should be thrown out,' 'they are criminals', have been some typical phrases.

Contrary to what these derogatory attitudes suggest, the slum-dweller is not an innately different species. If anything, the incident and the discussions surrounding it demonstrate that the problem lies in our minds, and in our belief that the poor have a lesser right to a slice of life in the city than the 'rest of us'.

Whether Islamabad chooses to accept it or not, the *katchi abadi* is the back-stage of the city; it is the entity that produces, supports, and houses the very people who are our providers, doers, and caretakers.

The *katchi abadi* dweller's wife cradles his child in the same way a mother in an F-6 home does. His daughter wants to run free in a grassy playground just like the children we call ours do. The slum dweller has the same longing for lasting contentment, the same aspirations for a better future, and the same desire for a life of dignity, as the white collar worker. And most of all, however small, however deficient — 'home' is a sacred sanctuary to the slum dweller, just like it is to those cushioned in the lap of luxury and security.

The following is an effort to clarify some of the resounding myths surrounding what has become the ill-famed *katchi abadi* of Pakistan, and its misunderstood dweller.

Shelter is a basic human right. Both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights declare 'the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing, and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions'. Pakistan is a signatory to both these covenants.

Whether the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, the JJ (Jhuggi Jhompri) clusters of Delhi, or the *katchi abadi* of Pakistan, the informal settlement is a product of government failure.

The dweller of the non-regularised *katchi abadi* does not live in 'illegality' because he wants to, nor is he by some fluke of nature inclined to ways that are below the law. The *katchi abadi* only becomes an

option for the poor because neither the system nor the law are on their side. It is the low-income family's housing in a country which neither understands housing to be a right, nor sees its provision as one of the duties of the State.

People do not live in katchi abadis free of cost. A katchi abadi is operated by informal sector operators who charge residents for all amenities and services provided by them, including land, electricity, water, and so on.

Pakistan has had a National Katchi Abadi Policy since 1985 that defines a katchi abadi as a settlement of 40 or more dwelling units on government land, and entitles katchi abadi residents to place a plea for regularisation leading to official land title, followed by legitimate government investment in development works, such as water and sanitation.

The legal tool for the enactment of Pakistan's National Katchi Abadi regularisation policy, are provincial 'acts'. The Sindh Katchi Abadi Authority (SKAA), which has the mandate of regularising and developing katchi abadis, has regularised 258 out of 564 to date in Karachi, among other cities in Sindh.

The Punjab Directorate General of Katchi Abadis was set up by LDA and has been responsible for regularisation of more than 140 katchi abadis under the Punjab Katchi Abadi Act in Lahore alone. Because Islamabad lies in the federal territory, the CDA has a 'Katchi Abadi Cell' and through its own policy, has recognised a small number out of the nearly 50 katchi abadis in the capital.

According to international law, forced evictions, such as those carried out on the I-11 basti, are illegal. In the case that a forced eviction is deemed 'necessary', such as for road-widening projects or the construction of dams and other public interest developments, the law requires the State to provide due compensation and/or resettlement in the form of alternate housing.

It was in the 1960s and 1970s that research exploring the phenomenon of the informal settlement peculiar to the developing world started to emerge. One of the more celebrated of these was a series of paradigm-transforming writings by British architect John F.C. Turner, in particular the book *Housing by People: Towards Autonomy in Building Environments*.

In the late 1970s, Dutch anthropologist John van den Linden studied extensively and wrote about Karachi's katchi abadis, concluding that these are not places to be shunned, but a parallel housing phenomenon that emerges in the absence of State-developed social housing. Pakistan's change in government policy in the 1980s was in part a result of this new rhetoric, which gradually transformed the concept of 'slum clearance' to slum 'upgrading' and 'improvement'.

Forced evictions are on the rise worldwide, and are currently a trend in the less developed countries, or those where the gap between the rich and the poor is vast, and where a sterile, glamorous 'city image' has become the development mantra. Examples include Brazil, South Africa, and India. Whether the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, the JJ (Jhuggi Jhompri) clusters of Delhi, or the katchi abadi of Pakistan, the informal settlement is a product of government failure. Take the example of the low-income migrant from Fata, who out of duress and a worsening politico-economic situation decides to migrate to the big city. He

neither has the income, nor education, exposure, or wherewithal to access the formal job and housing markets. Outside of this, he is lost. It is this profile that the informal sector operator serves.

Enabled by a combination of knowhow, collusion with State actors, and opportunism, the informal sector creates a crafty system of amenity and service delivery, from guaranteed access to land and employment, to transport and credit facilities.

Another misconception to note is that the I-11 abadi known by the name 'Afghan Basti' isn't all that Afghan after all. Out of the total of 864 families, only 141 or 16 per cent are Afghan. 47 families (or 5 per cent) are from Punjab, 324 families (or 37 per cent) are from Mohmand and Bajaur agencies of Fata, while 352 families (or 40 per cent) are from KP and Gilgit-Baltistan. Also of the weaker arguments that the I-11 eviction has been justified by, is that of criminality. The katchi abadi is deemed a place where thieves, drug dealers, and smugglers abound. The typical katchi abadi profile is, however, no more endowed in this regard than the cross section of an upper income housing locality.

Human nature, and in particular the human instinct for survival, compels us to do the needed in the absence of viable options. Where there are no legitimate models of affordable housing, the katchi abadi becomes the only workable dwelling for a life in the city; a life the low-income citizen pursues only in his need for livelihood and the dream of a better future for his children. And it is only once the State agrees to see him as its own, and decides to take on his well-being as its own responsibility, that the poor man will be afforded his most basic right of all — the right to dignity. (By Rabia Ezdi, The News, 09/08/2015)

The Legacy of Perween Rehman

Perween Rahman's soft voice echoed through Karachi University's Arts Auditorium as the organisers of a talk titled 'The Legacy of Perween Rahman — Development for the Poor' did a last minute sound-check.

For a few minutes it felt like Ms Rahman was sitting in the auditorium discussing the sea, land reclamation, importance of proper sewage and where the government was dumping industrial waste.

This was part of a documentary being made on her and her work — a collection of interviews done before her death in March 2013.

The talk was organised by the KU's Teachers Against War and Oppression as part of a series of events to remember the late Orangi Pilot Project director.

The first of these events was an art workshop on development and violence — mapping the dispossessed and the second was a field trip to observe effects of modern development on Karachi's indigenous land. Thursday's session started with Fazal Noor, an architect and planner who was taught by the late OPP director.

"We learnt a lot from her," he said. "She was our teacher but told us to call her by her first name. Her message was simple. There are three roles we are here to play — as a professional, a shehri and a human. She played her part with grace."

According to Mr Noor, it was Perween Rahman who introduced him to the city. "What I know about Karachi and those who care for the city. I know and understand because of her," he said. "She was an institution."

Sadia Fazli, one of Ms Rahman's university friends, also spoke about her. "I knew her since 1972. When we graduated we ended up working together on a few projects but on different sides of the table," she said. "I saw a lot of men from boards mock her and what she was doing but in the end her research paid off and she left everyone surprised." From Dawood University of Engineering and Technology, Prof Rabia Siddiqui recalled the time she had the opportunity to work at the OPP. "After working on the project for a month I told her I wanted to leave as I didn't understand what was going on," she said. "Instead of letting me go, Perween took me to sites with her and taught me how to understand the city and what she was trying to do."

Siraj, who heads the Technical Training Resource Centre, worked with the project's director when she started research in Orangi. "I lived in Orangi then and am still living there," he said. Perween worked with us. Taught us about community and how important planning was. We focused on education, training and mapping the city." The keynote speaker of the session was urban planner and architect Arif Hasan — one of Perween Rahman's mentors.

Mr Hasan had prepared a detailed presentation to explain to the audience why Ms Rahman did what she was doing. He used figures from 1998 to explain the annual housing demand (80,000 units), which has increased drastically in 2015. He said migration would increase the demand not just in Karachi but also in all major cities of India and Bangladesh. The reason behind this, he added, was the rural dependence on urban manufactured goods.

He discussed all the storm-water drains documented and mapped by the OPP and Ms Rahman; and why it had been important to work with the people of an area to understand their problems. "She learnt administration and technology from me and planning from Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan, her second mentor," he said.

(By Tooba Masood, Dawn, 07/08/2015)

Why did so many die in Karachi's heatwave?

Days after a heatwave in Pakistan killed about 1,300 people, many are still puzzled by the unusually high number of deaths in the port city of Karachi, reports Shahzeb Jillani.

In his 25 years working as a charity worker transporting casualties, Mohammed Bilal has never seen so many people die of heat.

"The bodies just kept coming from all over the city," he says.

Mr Bilal is in charge of the Edhi Foundation's main office in Karachi's congested commercial district near the country's main seaport.

Founded by Abdul Sattar Edhi, for decades the international charity has provided essential social welfare services in Pakistan and beyond.

In a city of 20 million people, Edhi's ambulance service usually transports 40 to 50 bodies a day. There have been times during the city's violent past when that number has gone up with a rise in shootings and killings.

But Mr Bilal can't remember having to deal with so many heat-related deaths.

"On Sunday, 21 June, we were the first ones to ring alarm bells when an unusually high number

of dead bodies started arriving at our morgue," he recalls.

The Edhi morgue in Karachi is considered the biggest in the city, with capacity for 100 to 150 bodies. But even they couldn't cope.

"Over the next eight days, we received 900 bodies," says Mr Bilal. "We had to turn away so many families. Cemeteries ran out of spaces to bury the dead."

Up to 260 bodies were never identified. Officials believe many of them were either homeless people sleeping rough on the streets or drug addicts. Unclaimed and often nameless, they were later buried by the charity at the Edhi graveyard. Temperatures above 40C (104F) affected large parts of Sindh and Balochistan province, so why was it Karachi, which bore the brunt of most deaths? Was it because it happened in the month of Ramadan when many people fast from dawn to dusk? Or did prolonged electricity shortages and chronic water shortages exacerbate the problem? Still others wonder if pollution and climate change are to blame for the extreme weather. The answer isn't entirely clear; though officials insist that it was perhaps the cumulative effect of all these factors, which led to hundreds of deaths. The weakest and the most vulnerable were the worst hit, among them a large number of elderly people, many of who were already unwell.

"I have seen many hot summers in Karachi, but this was a suffocating heat I have never experienced before," says Shareef Ali, a 65-year-old resident of a low-income neighbourhood in Baldia Town who lost his ailing wife to heatstroke.

"It was difficult to breathe, as if the air had no oxygen."

'Angry and distraught'

What is clear is that most people, including the authorities, were caught unaware by the deadly impact of the heatwave. Pakistan's meteorological department was criticised for failing to forecast the calamity or issue any warnings.

Medics in government-run hospitals were overwhelmed and struggled to cope.

"We are used to a bit of chaos, but the scale of this calamity was too big," says Dr Seemi Jamali, who was on the frontline battling the crisis at Karachi's Jinnah Hospital.

With thousands of angry and distraught people outside the hospital, the situation could have turned violent, she says.

"If the army hadn't showed up in time to restore order, we wouldn't have been able to help thousands of heatstroke patients."

'Callous attitude'

Critics blame the provincial government in Sindh, run by former President Asif Ali Zardari's PPP party, for moving too slowly to address public misery.

While hundreds were dying in Karachi, Mr Zardari and other powerful members of his family chose to fly out of the country. The government was seen as unresponsive to the unfolding tragedy. By then, at least 1,200 people were dead in Pakistan's biggest city.

Mr Bhutto-Zardari and his ministers gave no explanation for their painfully slow response to the crisis. Instead, they blamed the deaths on the federal government and on power cuts they accused Karachi's privately run electricity company, K-Electric, of being responsible for.

Attempts by Pakistani politicians to deflect criticism and indulge in a mutual blame game appeared in bad taste.

As a senior Pakistani commentator, Zahid Hussain, put it: "More than the tyranny of the weather, it was the callous attitude of an inept provincial administration that was responsible for the death and suffering in Karachi."

How the body copes with extreme heat

The body's normal core temperature is 37-38C.

If it heats up to 39-40C, the brain tells the muscles to slow down and fatigue sets in. At 40-41C heat exhaustion is likely - and above 41C the body starts to shut down.

Chemical processes start to be affected; the cells inside the body deteriorate and there is a risk of multiple organ failure. The body cannot even sweat at this point because blood flow to the skin stops, making it feel cold and clammy.

Heatstroke - which can occur at any temperature over 40C - requires professional medical help. If not treated immediately, the chances of survival can be slim.

There are a number of things people can do to help themselves. These include:

- wearing damp clothes which will help lower the body's temperature
- sticking one's hands in cold water

- placing fans next to windows as this will draw air from outside, which should be cooler
- wearing looser clothes
- having a lukewarm shower rather than a cold one
- fanning the face rather than other parts of the body (bbc.com, 02/07/2015)

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As a result of this, there are 200,000 vacant plots in the city and five million empty flats,” he said, adding that this was the reason why the labour force lived in drainage lines, across the railway tracks and around industrial areas.

Urban Resource Centre chairperson Arif Hasan spoke about the city’s expansion and its complications. He said that the nostalgia for ‘old Karachi’ has to end as it was part of the colonial culture. “Even in Bombay it ended and was replaced by [the culture introduced by] Bollywood,” he said. He gave four criteria that must be applied for judging projects as, according to him, planning has been replaced by projects in the city. Firstly, he said, projects should not damage the ecology of the region in which Karachi was located. Second, they must determine the land use on the basis of social and environmental consideration and not on land value alone. “Projects should serve the interests of the majority, which are low-income groups,” he said. “And [they] should respect and enhance the tangible and intangible culture of the communities that live in Karachi.”

He also asked the local bodies minister why only the Gujjar Nullah was being cleared of encroachments and why not Urdu Bazar, MPA Hostel and Defence Phase VII. He pointed out that in the outfall of Mehmoodabad Nullah, Defence Phase VII has been constructed. “I am not sure if the houses of Phase VII will ever be demolished,” he said. To this, Shah responded that only those areas of Gujjar Nullah were being cleared where, due to encroachment, it became impossible to clean the drains. (The Express Tribune, 23/08/2015)

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Talking about the strength of numbers, he said as many as 0.3 million Qingqi rickshaws were running all over Sindh, out of which 65,000 were in Karachi alone. He added that these were operating on approximately 300 different routes. Shah responded, “How is it possible that something that is working fine in the rest of Pakistan is not right for Karachi?”

Replying to a question from an audience member about the influx of stolen motorcycles in the market and their use in Qingqi rickshaws, Shah said that these motorcycles were not bought by Qingqi owners. “We had openly said that if any such case appears on our front, the Qingqi association will not support the culprits,” he said. When asked about underage drivers and traffic jams witnessed in the city, Shah vehemently pointed out, “Now that the Qingqis are off the roads, can you say that there are no traffic jams?” VVIP movements and the red zones, which are off limits to the public, experience the worst of traffic hindrances, he said. “Why does no one question them?” (The Express Tribune, 20/08/2015)

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