dwellers will be managed. The under-resourcing of city governments aching underneath the burdens of burgeoning populations is well known and routinely mourned. So is the deplorable state of the country's judicial system, whose backlog of cases, inadequate capacities for enforcement of judgments and morass of parallel jurisdictions create a maze that is just as daunting (if in different ways) as the implacability of a jirga of elders to the pleadings of a single supplicant.

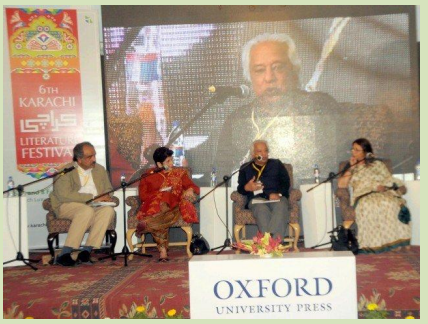
The inadequacies of these two mechanisms, urban governance and judicial ineptitude, thus stand in the way of Pakistan taking advantage of its impending rural to urban transformation.

The tension between what was and what will be is palpable everywhere in Pakistan. Norms and mores are changing and the movement of people means groups that spent generations never interacting with those not like them are now brought together. The proximity of life in urban slums, the logistics of shared spaces and competitive employment are all posing large questions regarding the relationship between identity and achievement.

To truly harness the possibilities requires an acknowledgment of the fact that just when it seems they seem to be at their weakest, the instruments of the state, from city governments to courts, are needed more than ever. If they cannot be revitalised, revamped and prepared for the changes under way and the challenges to come, then an urban Pakistan could become a very terrifying Pakistan.
(By Rafiz Zakaria, Daily Dawn, 04/02/2015)

Land is responsible for great injustices in Karachi: Arif Hasan

Architect and urban planner Arif Hasan certainly does not mince his words. "Karachi has become an extremely ugly city in the last 25 years — and it is becoming progressively worse."
He pulled no punches while speaking at a panel discussion titled 'Vitality and Violence: The Chaos that is Karachi' at the sixth Karachi Literature Festival on Sunday, where his book *Karachi: The Land Issue* was also being launched.



"Karachi's very major issue is land," he went on. "Land is responsible for great injustices here. I will go further and say that it is responsible for cruelty and barbarism."

He added that the problem of land connected closely to ethnic and religious violence as well as the killings of activists. "Under their own laws, Israel's occupation of Palestine is legal and South Africa's apartheid was legal. What happens here is also legal, but is it moral?"

According to Hasan, land is simply not affordable in the sprawling metropolis anymore — a fact that affects the poor more than anyone else. "Sixty-two per cent of the people here live in informal housing but they only occupy 12 per cent of the land," he said, hammering his point home with numbers. "The density of the inner city settlements is 6,000 persons per hectare: that means 18 people to a room, 20 people sharing a toilet."

For Hasan, recent laws passed by the provincial government — what he called "an antithesis to planning" — spell nothing short of disaster. While he proposed steps, such as land ceiling acts and ending land speculation, he added that it was impossible to discuss such matters with those in charge anymore. "If you can't talk, how will you bring about change?" he asked.
Meanwhile, short story writer Maniza Naqvi remarked that maps of the city's sprawl reminded her of the shrinking of Palestine, but in reverse. She added that the city may be chaotic but the chaos was "ordered disorder, planned chaos."

When writer Rumana Husain talked about Karachi's diversity, she focused on the lack of understanding of it. Recounting how a school principal stood up at a conference to ask, "But aren't the Parsis Christian?", she wondered how one could live amid such diverse communities and not know about them. "Karachi is largely a migrant city and we need to know where the migrants come from and how they live," she stressed.

Moderator Kamran Asdar Ali, the director of the University of Texas at Austin's South Asia Institute, summed up 'the chaos that is Karachi'. "Different people from all over the country coexist here – and sometimes, they coexist in harmony."
(By Yumna Fatima, The Express Tribune, 09/02/2015)

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Karachi's roads serve up recipe for traffic disasters

Karachi's traffic is fast and impatient. Figures of the biannual study by the Road Traffic Injury and Prevention Center (RTIR & PC) of Jinnah Postgraduate Centre (JPMC) showed that every single day, at least one person dies on the road in this city, and on an average some 83 people are wounded daily.

Danger zones
The RTIR & PC monitors the casualties from road accidents at five hospitals including JPMC, Agha Khan, Civil Hospital, Abbasi Shaheed and Liaquat National Hospital.

According to their research, streets in Karachi have become extremely dangerous for motorcyclists, pedestrians and for passengers of public buses. "Shahrah-e-Faisal has proved to be the most fatal road, followed by the Korangi industrial Area street, Shahrah-e-Orangi and Mauripur Road," commented the head of RTIR & PC Dr Juma Khan.

Why so many accidents?
Dr Khan says the installation of too many sign boards, lack of knowledge about traffic by-laws, easily acquired driving licenses, inefficient public transport and no enforcement of the law are the main causes behind the accidents.

"Errors in a driver's judgment, distraction, visual obstruction, physical limitations or the condition of roads and vehicles also cause these accidents," he said.

"Last year, we recorded 20,000 motorcyclist injuries," he added.

"The second largest victims of road accidents are pedestrians due to encroachment on footpaths, lack of pedestrian bridges and erasing of zebra crossings."
(The Express Tribune, 09/02/2015)

Karachi could submerge by 2060 due to global warming

Pakistan's largest city and financial capital Karachi could submerge into the sea by 2060 due to global warming, a top oceanographer has warned lawmakers amid reports of escalating threat of sea intrusion along the coasts of Balochistan and Sindh provinces.

"Some parts of Karachi's Malir area have already gone under water while Sindh's Thatta and Badin districts will also sink into the water by 2050," Asif Inam, director general of the National Institute of Oceanography has briefed the Senate Standing Committee on Science and Technology yesterday.

As some coastal parts of Sindh province's Thatta and Badin districts could submerge by 2050, there are apprehensions that entire Karachi city could go under water by 2060.

The meeting was called to discuss the escalating threat of sea intrusion along the coasts of Balochistan and Sindh, as well as the post and pre-partition status of islands, The Express Tribune reported.

"During the last 35 years, almost two kilometres of coastline near Sindh and Balochistan has submerged into the sea as well as 200,000 acres of land in Sindh," Inam said.

The United Nations Environment Programme and its programme on regional oceans in 1989 had included Pakistan in the list of the countries that could be affected due to rising sea levels, Senate panel members were told.

Inam cited "abrupt environmental changes, severity in monsoon and increased flooding" as prime causes of soil erosion and change in coastline near Badin and Thatta.

"This abrupt change has disturbed the oceanic lifecycle for which data from many areas is unavailable," he added.

Speaking before the panel, Sindh University's Professor Sarfraz Hussain Solangi discussed the issues of global warming, climate change and its impact on people.

"We have to prepare for climate change as the temperature of Karachi will rise by three degrees and northern areas are to witness five degrees increase in temperature," he said.

Solangi also shared World Wildlife Federation's report which stated that one kilometre area along the 770 kilometre coastline had already gone under the sea.

"There is a need to counter these threats on a war footing. We should ban the cutting of mangroves trees," he added.

Science and Technology Secretary Kamran Ali Qureshi said it was an issue of grave significance.

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Karachi, located on the Arabian Sea coastline, is the capital of Sindh province and the main seaport and financial centre of the country. It has an estimated population of over 23.5 million people as of 2013.
(http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com, 10/02/2015)

What traffic regulations? Karachi roads safer for pedestrians

The fifth floor of the Institute of Engineers Pakistan (IEP) seemed to ring out with laughter as soon as the word 'seatbelts' was uttered by the speaker.

The audience, comprising representatives of the transport department and bus drivers of educational institutions, seemed to find the simple safety device most laughable. The comic relief at the expense of safety methods took place ironically at a workshop, titled 'Defining the roles of stakeholders in delivering road safety and security education', being held in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, under the Pakistan Sustainable Transport (Pakstran) project of the Component Implementation Unit, Sindh.

As soon as the chairperson of the NED University's department of architecture and town planning, Dr Raza Mehdi, spoke the words, the audience could not hold back their laughter. Dr Mehdi simply attempted to show the stark reality of the traffic situation in the port city, compared to other mega cities in the world. His emphasis on the use of seatbelts in public transport, however, drew a lot of cynicism from the audience.

With the aid of a power point presentation, titled 'School Zone Safety: Local and International Scenario,' Mehdi attempted to explore the stark differences between the safety measures accorded to academic institutions in Pakistan and in other countries. Before he began the comparative analysis, however, he made a shocking revelation: "Forget the safety of school zones, Karachi does not even have properly marked zones for schools," he said. "Schools are functioning in narrow streets, over nullahs and sometimes besides mechanics' workshops."

Dr Mehdi added that between school hours, the streets were clogged with school vans, pushcart vendors and among them, the students who were desperately trying to reach home as soon as possible. "This causes accidents and increases the risk for students in view of the prevailing security condition in the city.

Speaking about the standards adopted in developed countries, Dr Mehdi said that there should be signboards ahead of schools, warning commuters about the school zone and marking the speed limit during school hours, which should not be more than 30km/h. "Pedestrian walkways and footpaths are a must near schools," he said. "There should also be exclusive lanes and passages, where buses can drop off and pick up students under supervision."

The component manager of Pakstran, Yar Muhammad Khan, shed light on the regulation and control of vehicles by private schools and colleges in Sindh. He warned private schools that no educational institution could provide transport services to its students without obtaining a route permit from the transport department. He added that emergency exit gates, fire extinguishers and breakable glass were mandatory in school buses.For the chairperson of the NED University's department of urban and infrastructure engineering, Dr Noman Ahmed, it was no less than a miracle if you reached home safely once you left your home in the morning. "The deteriorating traffic conditions have put all of our lives at stake," he said. "There is no viable framework for transport in the sprawling city." He added that according to the study of the NED University, the footpaths of the city were rapidly diminishing, mainly because residents felt safer to walk on the roads rather than the footpaths.
(The Express Tribune, 22/02/2015)

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(The Express Tribune, 09/02/2015)

Continue from Page 1 **Can Sydney's transportation system make it way to Karachi?**

Since then, every effort at introducing a public mass transit system has been thwarted by a powerful transport mafia and continuous frictions between the various tiers of governance over the control of services. The Karachi Circular Railway was derailed in the late 1980s and has since been successfully sidelined. In the 1990s, a short-sighted, money generating scam of providing easily accessible car loans resulted in a sky-rocketing number of private automobiles. Now low-priced motorcycles are resulting in the development of a similar phenomenon.

Even infrastructure development focuses on facilitating private automobile users. This is most apparent in the rapid construction of flyovers. Land use violations, lack of parking facilities, and ineffective regulation of vehicular emissions are aggravating this massive crisis even further.

Can Karachi be like Sydney?
A transportation system similar to the one in Sydney can never materialise in Karachi unless, at a larger and more holistic level, there is a realisation of the need to plan for the common man. We need to find a way to break the well-entrenched and debilitating 'nexus' between the corrupt government officials and institutions, the self-servicing elected officials, the informal mafias to name a few of the more important stakeholders involved, who feed unjustifiable excuses such as a lack of finances, management models and access to technology.

While we wait for that nexus to break, for the petty vested interests to disappear, the citizens of Karachi will continue to languish on the top of overflowing, ill-maintained mini and large buses. They will continue to face death every time they cross the road, will continue to consume toxic emissions of adulterated fuels, and will continue to be stuffed in the can of sardines that we call Qingqis Chinquis.

The city administrators of Sydney have not been transported from an alien world. They just happen to have the interests of the people and the environment they serve in their hearts and minds.
(The Express Tribune, 19/01/2015)

Continue from Page 1 **Experts for energy generation through alternative sources**

available for the general public much before the actual hearing so they can study and understand.

He pointed out that some concerned citizens had gone to the court against the nuclear power plants and during the hearing, the PAEC had confessed that earlier it had done the EIA process in a "wrong way," without following the legal process. It had acquired the EIA from Sindh Environmental Protection Agency without holding public hearing.

The government has recently hired a consultation firm for conducting EIA, which has already conducted a scoping meeting in this regard. "We need to have EIA according to international standards," he added.

Dr. Nayyar said the main concern for a nuclear power plant in the world is about storage and disposal of the spent fuel. In the EIA there should be a clear mention about the storage and disposal. Decommissioning of a nuclear power plant is quite difficult. "Decommissioning cost is almost equal to commissioning of a nuclear reactor. "

Ronald de Souza from Shehri – Citizens for Better Environment shared his organisation's experience about EIA of big projects in the past. He said mostly citizens do not take interest in the public hearing for any EIA. There is need to mobilize citizens to attend public hearing for EIA in a large numbers.

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He pointed out that Pakistan Environmental Protection Act was enacted in 1997 and after 18th Amendment the Sindh Environmental Protection Act 2014 has been evolved, he added.

He quoted the 2006 report by World Bank, which indicated that there was ecological degradation in Pakistan by 6 percent, when at that time the economic growth was also at the rate of 6%. “Today Pakistan is actually walking backward because GDP growth is less than 4%, but environmental degradation can be much high.” The cost of environment threats is not included the nuclear power production cost.

Gap between rich and poor has increased because of environmental degradation, he said adding that crimes, terrorism and social instability are increasing because of ecological disaster.

Karamat Ali, Executive Director of PILER said as a citizen of Karachi we have many concerns about the nuclear reactors being set up along the coast. All the decisions for setting up of these nuclear power plants were not in made in a transparent manner.

Architect Arif Belgaumi explained the history of earthquakes around Karachi and said the 1945 earthquake with 8.1 on Richter scale happened about 250 to 350 km west of Karachi, but tsunami had affected Karachi as well. Khurram Hussain, an economist spoke about the possible short and long term economic effects on Karachi and nationwide in case a severe nuclear reactor accident happens. He said after Fukushima nuclear disaster, there was a social divide in Japan. He within a radius of five kilometres of the nuclear power plant, dense population is living and most of trading industrial areas are also located. Bulk of the furnace oil is handled at the port.
(DailyTimes, 02/02/2015)

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