

FACTS & FIGURES

Circular Railway Imperatives

THE likelihood of the revival of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) is the best infrastructure-related news that Karachi has had since the preparation of the 1975-85 Karachi Master Plan. All efforts should be made to see that this revival takes place and soon.

This is in spite of the fact that the KCR will serve only 0.75pc of the trips generated in Karachi; will not be affordable to the poor without a major subsidy; and will not overcome traffic congestion as cars and motorbikes will keep on increasing. But then, it has to be understood that the KCR revival is the foundation stone of the JICA-supported Karachi Transport Improvement Project (KTIP) which consists of several corridors of which the KCR is one. If the others follow then in 15 years the majority of Karachiites will be able to travel with dignity and comfort and if subsidies are generated (and they can easily be) the fare will be affordable for most commuters.

Transport systems reshape a city since they bring about land-use changes. If these changes are managed, the city improves both in physical and social terms. If they are not managed, then chaos, congestion and environmental degradation follows. The KCR will bring about major changes along its route and especially at its intersection with important road corridors.

It is necessary to plan the development at these intersections. They are ideal for high-density commercial and for high-density low-income housing, both of which Karachi desperately needs and which are multiplying in an ad hoc manner all over the city. Such development will also make the KTIP economically more feasible and the real estate development process can also subsidise the subsequent operation and maintenance of the project.

There are other requirements also. The stations should have sizeable space for the parking of cars, motorbikes and bicycles so that people can travel from their home to the station to take a train to their destination. Space should also be provided for rickshaws and Qingqis in a manner that they do not cause congestion.

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Colleagues vow to carry on Perween's mission

March 13, 2013, will go down in history as the day when the saviour of the poor of Karachi was lost to the brutal violence that haunts the city everyday.

On Wednesday, 12th March at 7:20pm, the exact time when Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) former director Perween Rahman was targeted last year, many co-workers and friends sat on white cotton mats at Urban Resource Centre's office to remember Rahman's sacrifices. Rahman is cherished across the country and also globally because she spent her life serving other people, said OPP director Anwar Rashid in his speech to the workers of the project at her first death anniversary. "Today, a year has passed since Rahman left us. It feels like that these words are from yesterday. She is here, her name is here and her words are here," said Rashid opening a discussion on Rahman. Earlier, OPP staffers offered Quran khawani for their slain teacher.

Rashid asked every staffer of the OPP to stand and say a few words on their experience about working with Rahman and how it changed after her death. Though everyone agreed that no one can fill the space Rahman left behind, they vowed to continue her work with zeal and enthusiasm.

"I feel like a student who took admission in a university but the university closed down before the completion of the course. The student has to finish all responsibilities that have now fallen upon his shoulders," said OPP Research and Training Institute joint-director Salim Alimuddin. Alimuddin, who survived a targeted attack on his car in the same locality where Rahman was murdered,

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Gadani – A paradise lost to pollution

The Gadani beach — one of the few coastal areas of Pakistan with sparkling blue water and a unique range of marine habitat — is in danger of losing its lustre.

Toxic wastes from the ship-breaking industry, coupled with illegal nets and the government's plan to set up a coal-based energy corridor in the area, threatens this breezy coastal edge of the Arabian Sea.

Once a top picnic spot for the people of Karachi, the Gadani coast has long been used as a "trash can" for dumping effluent generated by the ship-breaking industry - a very lucrative business.

"Over the years, the ship-breaking industry, which brings in enormous revenue both for the government and the businesses, has failed to develop an eco-friendly mechanism to handle its wastes. This is unfortunate," said Muhammad Moazzam Khan, one of the country's top marine life experts.

However, he maintained that the coast of Gadani is still better off than that in Karachi, where toxic wastes from industrial units are blatantly dumped.

Khan, who is the World Wildlife Fund's technical adviser on marine fisheries, pointed out that the energy corridor in Gadani expected to become operational in 2017 would release hot water and destroy the marine habitat.

"The corridor is a looming threat to the marine life in this area," Khan told reporters during a field trip to Kaio Island, a 30-minute boat ride from the Gadani coast.

Kaio Island, located near Gadani in the Lasbela district of Balochistan, is known for the diversity of marine life off its coast.

"This is among the very few areas along the coast of Pakistan which has a coral sand-associated habitat inhabited by colourful invertebrates and a large number of fish species," Khan said. "Marine life around the island is being seriously affected by the increasing pollution on account of the accumulation of debris."

The WWF had recently organised a cleaning activity at Kaio Island. "We found nets and litter that had drifted from nearby," said Khan.

Another major threat to marine life is what experts call derelict fishing gear.

Asif Sandeelo, a WWF spokesperson, said derelict fishing gear referred to nets, lines, crab or shrimp pots, fish traps, and other recreational or commercial fishing equipment that had been lost, abandoned or discarded in the marine environment.

"These nets are a serious threat to marine life, because they keep on trapping and killing fish. This is also called ghost fishing," he added.

"Fishermen use the illegal technique of spreading small nets in the water to catch the fish. When these nets are lost or

abandoned, they keep on accumulating fish," he further explained.

Efforts are being made around the world to remove debris from important marine habitats to restore their natural conditions.

(By Ammar Shahbazi, The News, 24/03/2014)

Perween's devotion to social service recalled

"What more can one say about this young architect, barely 25 years old, who comes out to work for the first time and realises that designing houses for the rich is not what she wants to do all her life? And so she joins hands with people who work for the betterment of the poor and gets so involved in this work that she only leaves it when leaving this world," said Tasneem Siddiqui of Khuda ki Basti.

He was speaking at the fourth session of the Perween Rahman Lecture Series titled 'Celebrating Perween Rahman, a symbol of resistance' at the T2F here on Saturday evening, just five days short of the slain researcher and activist's first death anniversary.

"Usually we work for the 20 per cent with resources but there are 80pc people who live on the margin with few resources in our society that no one thinks about. Perween, working on Dr Akhtar Hameed Khan's philosophy of letting people help themselves, showed the people of Orangi the way. And then using that model she helped others, too, such as the victims of the 2005 earthquake, the 2010 floods and the 2011 rains. Even the government modeled its sanitation policy after her work in Orangi," he said.

"The work at Orangi Pilot Project [OPP] is still going on as

a routine but we have lost Perween's innovative mind and her will to take on new initiatives. Not everyone has her discipline, commitment, ideas and bravery. We can get other qualified people but not everyone will have that spirit. She was irreplaceable."

Senior journalist Zubeida Mustafa said Perween was a public figure who kept a very low profile. "She wouldn't even come on TV and remained in the background while motivating and pushing others forward. She had this way of helping people gain confidence and feel proud of their achievements however small," she said.

"As a journalist I didn't need to double check any information I got from her. Her research was so authentic.

And her work superseded Orangi as she had done so much for other people, too, for instance her work in the flood-affected areas and starting schools where people who had some education provided basic education to others. It is the government's job to provide education to the people. Perween's schools set up in little verandahs in people's homes, etc, may not have been great but they were something at least," she said.

"She worked to bring about a change within society so that it can work towards its own betterment."

Architect Arif Hasan said that the work for cities and countries could not be done without first developing an understanding of the societies. "You have to sit down with the people to know them better. When people are ready for change you don't need big money to help them. Just make do with whatever resources you have in hand. And Perween did that. Human dignity was of prime importance to her. She didn't call slums 'slums'. She called them the informal sector. And the poor weren't 'poor' but people from low-income homes," he said. "It is thanks to her in-depth documentation that the Orangi Pilot Project is the biggest resource of information here," he added.

Zohra Yusuf of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan said Perween was more than a symbol of resistance against injustice. "When pushing to reopen her murder investigation, someone recently asked me why we are pursuing Perween's case in particular as there have also been others who like her were killed here such as the late Hakim Mohammad Said, the head of the KESC, etc. But while each killing really shakes us, with Perween's killing we hit a new low," she said.

Perween's older sister Aquila Ismail, who conducted the discussion, said she hoped the Supreme Court would intervene in her murder investigation. "Her killing was the greatest injustice done not just to her family but this country as well," she said.

"Perween can be a symbol of resistance as she worked for all those deprived of their basic rights. We can all work within our own little spaces to resist injustices to move her work ahead."
(By Shazia Hasan, Dawn News, 24/03/2014)

Karachi has the potential to explore all renewable energy sources

Our options to survive the brutal impact of climate change rest on two pillars: entering into the renewable energy age and a massive thrust for energy efficiency.

In Pakistan, some movement is visible on this front but, as always the approach is 'project-oriented' rather than going for a long-term strategy. If this initiative is to be planted on the right path then reference can be made to the recently launched 'Energy Turn Around' programme in Germany, which aims to convert renewable energy sources to the extent of 66 per cent by the year 2050. Only 10 years ago, renewable energy resources produced just over six per cent of electricity in Germany.

The transition is to be coupled with more efficient use of energy and cutting greenhouse gas emissions. This ambitious drive is based on finding answers to three simple questions – where we are today, where do we want to be in 2050, and how do we get there.

For example, while charting a pathway for 100 per cent renewable energy use in a summary by the German Advisory Council, a portfolio of renewable energies for cost effectiveness was calculated in different scenarios. It was found that wind energy, particularly off-shore wind energy, will assume paramount importance by 2050. The level of solar-energy use varied depending on energy demand. The share of biomass use in energy production did not exceed seven per cent, mainly owing to possible land-use conflicts and the relatively high cost of this resource.

No doubt Germany is far more advanced technologically than Pakistan and the context there much more favourable. Nevertheless, it is the 'pathway' and the process that we need to focus on. We may set less ambitious targets but the roadmap needs to be appropriate.

Now let's take the case of Karachi – a city with an ever-increasing energy consumption profile. If we only look at the automobile load, it is ever-increasing with more emphasis on the use of private vehicles. But then Karachi is also full of exciting potential to accommodate the use of all forms of renewable energy sources – wind, solar, bio-mass, geothermal. All options are on the table. The vast expanses of land in Gadap and other peripheries can provide space to establish wind and solar parks, if we look for a city-level intervention.



Karachi also has an advantage that the power utility is privately-run and it can be much easier to facilitate a process to connect stored renewable energy in the grid system. In Germany, power production and distribution is managed by four private sector companies that have developed innovative partnership models with the government, consumers and other private sector concerns. The use of wind and solar energy for multiple application modes can also be done at household, neighbourhood and housing-society levels.

Karachi can benefit from offshore wind mills, taking into account the relevant environmental considerations.

The capital investment and maintenance cost for this can be high but can be offset when energy is produced at a large scale in the long run. The Ghoroketi Bandar Wind Corridor, spreading 60 km along Sindh's coastline and more than 170 km deep towards land, has the potential to generate more than 60,000MW of electricity from which Karachi can also benefit.

Geothermal power is also considered sustainable because the heat extraction is small compared to the earth's heat content. Manghopir has hot sulphur springs that can be assessed for geothermal energy. Then the vast agricultural landscape in Karachi offers extremely high potential for tapping into bio-mass and bio-fuel based energies. Eventually, what is needed is not just a collage of 'projects' but deeper thinking, vision and a long term strategic framework if sustainable and viable benefits are desired.

(By Farhan Anwar, The Express Tribune, 24/03/2014)

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Health for all

ARTICLE 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has a right to medical care and security in the event of sickness and disability. This right also figures in the constitution of the World Health Organisation.

This idea has informed debate on universal health coverage (UHC) which means that all people should enjoy equal access to a range of health services — palliative, rehabilitative, preventive and treatment — without incurring financial ruin in the process of accessing and paying for them.

Though this conception of universal health coverage has been termed as too narrow by some researchers, the UHC is nonetheless a good starting point to initiate discussion on the aspiration, and mechanisms of achieving health coverage by all members of society.

The need for it has arisen because of the realisation that health coverage is increasingly becoming restricted thanks to the declining commitment of governments across the world to publicly funded health provision for all and the corresponding increase in private, often expensive, health facilities.

These developments have produced unequal health access and outcomes. Like the rest of the developing world this is true of Pakistan as well where the health system runs on a dual track. There's a publicly funded system and a private health sector, with the latter assuming an ever-larger share with each passing year.

According to one estimate about 120 million people fund medical care through out-of-pocket payments of one sort or another in Pakistan. This is quite a huge number and highlights the enormity of the

challenge in meeting the goal of UHC in the country. Over the years, the public provision of health has come under great stress due to low budgetary allocations and increasing demands placed on it by a growing population. As a result, public health facilities are deteriorating. These facilities are further degraded by the exit of the middle class which is increasingly using private healthcare systems. The result is that public health facilities are being used by the poor as a measure of last resort.

In cases where the poor access the private health sector the cost of treatment is so high that it often tips families towards medical impoverishment. Consequently, a large majority of the population stays away from accessing healthcare as long as they can for fear of incurring financial ruin. In addition, between the rich and the poor, formal-sector employees are afforded considerable health coverage — the armed forces personnel are the best covered, in this regard, from the beginning of service to the grave, with the bureaucracy coming in a close second.

There is also a network of social security hospitals to provide cover to those registered. Yet a large section of the population, employed in the informal sector falls outside this protective health cover. This unplanned and ad hoc health setting with varying levels of health coverage poses huge challenges if Pakistan is to conform to the standards of UHC.

A start can be made by setting up a high-level committee to examine the current system of healthcare provision and to examine how it can be improved and pressed into the service of meeting the goal of UHC. (The Indian example can provide a good template in this regard). Towards this end, high-level political commitment is a must. This commitment should cut across party lines so that UHC is made a top priority with enhanced budgetary outlays. So far there has been no well-thought-out collective thinking on universal health provision among political parties. Political parties have not advanced beyond making promises to expand health budgets.

Most crucially, the private sector needs to be robustly regulated and made part of the government agenda on universal health coverage. This should involve private hospitals taking on non-lucrative patients as part of the UHC healthcare package.

With the health budget unlikely to rise in the foreseeable future in the face of the ever-galloping military budget, and the lack of political spine to redirect priorities, a national health insurance scheme can also help. This scheme should be run on a non-profit basis. Currently, there are some micro-credit schemes which offer a level of health insurance. But these schemes are profit-oriented and may not help greatly in the realisation of UHC.

In some parts of the world cash transfer programmes have been made conditional on children of the poor attending health clinics. A similar move can help expand health access to the poor.

Above all, ensuring better access to social determinants of health such as education, housing and sanitation is an essential underlying requirement. Not addressing the social determinants of health can dilute the gains achieved through the policy tools mentioned.

(By Arif Azad, Dawn News, 25/03/2014)

Water-borne diseases major health threat

Water-borne diseases pose serious threat to public health in Pakistan claiming not less than 1.2 million lives every year while billions of rupees are lost every year to treat patients with water-borne diseases that can be avoided.

According to estimates, around 250,000 children in the country die under the age of five due to diarrhoea, mainly caused by the use of untreated water. The water-borne illnesses account for nearly 60 per cent of child deaths in Pakistan with approximate 630 children dying daily from diarrhoea.

Not less than 80 per cent of infectious and parasitic diseases are related to contaminated water and 25 per cent of hospital beds are occupied by people suffering from water-borne diseases. Globally, one child dies every 8 seconds due to water-borne diseases.

Head of Community Medicine at CMH Lahore Medical College Professor Muhammad Ashraf Chaudhry expressed this while talking to 'The News' in connection with World Water Day being observed on March 22 around the globe.

Important water-borne diseases are viral hepatitis A & E, poliomyelitis, rota virus diarrhoea in infants, typhoid and paratyphoid fevers, dysentery, cholera and intestinal worms.

Dr. Ashraf believes that water pollution has become a very serious problem in Pakistan because of the rapid growth in population and the growth of the industrial sector. The most common sources of water contamination are a result of human activity such as discharges from factories, leaky and rusty underground water pipelines, storage tanks, cross-

connections between water supply lines and sewerage drainage pipelines, improperly treated sewage disposal, agricultural chemicals and pesticides trickling and seeping in to underground water aquifers, he said.

It is important that water in many cities of Pakistan is unsafe for human consumption due to both bacterial and chemical contamination.

It is ironical that after 66 years of independence, we do not have a national drinking water policy and minimum mandatory safety and quality standards for drinking water in Pakistan, said Dr. Ashraf.

He added that those who are responsible for treating water at source like chlorination are either absent or not trained to do their job properly. Either their apparatus is not working or they have short supply of chlorine gas cylinders. You scratch of surface of any issue in Pakistan and ultimately you reach at "lack of governance" and "lack of political will", he said.

He added that water table is falling from one to 10 feet every year and Pakistan may be officially declared 'water deficit country' by 2020. It has been predicted that next world war will be on water. Without safe water we would be poisoned to death by our own waste products and toxins resulting from metabolism, said Dr. Ashraf.

"March 22 which is International World Water Day is a mean of focusing attention on the importance of freshwater and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources," he said. The theme in 2014 is Water and Energy.

Talking of the guidelines both for water pollution control authorities and the community in order to curb the incidence of water-borne diseases, he said water must be protected from pollution and sterilized by boiling or chlorination. Water must be brought to 'rolling boil' for 5-10 minutes. Chlorination of water may be carried out by chlorine gas (on large scale), bleaching powder, chlorine tablets, and chlorine stock solution. All chlorinated water must be kept for 30 minutes before drinking. For emergency disinfection, two drops of ethanol solution of iodine will suffice to one litre of water. Uninterrupted chlorinated water must be supplied to the consumers.

Water treatment plants or chloronomes should be run by experts and well trained personnel and also supervised properly, said Dr. Ashraf.

He added that proper inspection and sampling of the water points should be carried out on regular basis by the local health authorities. Residual chlorine should also be checked periodically. Surveillance has to be established at every point in the distribution system to ensure supply of safe water to the consumers, he said.

He suggested that old, outdated and rusty water pipelines, more than 30 years old, should be replaced by new ones and laid far distance away from the sewerage lines in order to avoid cross-connections between two lines. Water pollution control departments should be established and developed at district level, providing them with necessary funds, staff and physical facilities for field surveys and laboratory work. Public water storage tanks

as well as water storage tanks in houses should be cleaned regularly at least twice a year, said Dr. Ashraf.

He said that drinking water at bus stops, rail compartments and from vendors is not safe. Septic tanks should be at least 15 meters away from underground water storage tanks. Water should be stored in clean and covered utensils, he said.

He said that adult human should consume at least eight to 10 glasses of water per day. Make a habit to drink at least two glasses of water on empty stomach. It will save you from many diseases including constipation and cancer. Water also helps in losing weight and making you smart. Everyone should develop a habit of carrying a water bottle, said Dr. Ashraf.

(By Muhammad Qasim, The News, 22/03/2014)

The Unplanned Revolution Observations on the Processes of Socio-Economic Change in Pakistan

By Arif Hasan

The book describes the process of socio-economic change in Pakistan along with its actors and their relationship with each other on the one hand, and with the larger physical and political context on the other, as viewed by the author through his development related work and travels in the different regions of Pakistan since 1968. The writings identify past socio-economic conditions as viewed by the communities the author worked or interacted with, present conditions and emerging trends. Price: Rs.495.00 available at Oxford University Press

Circular Railway Imperatives

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It has to be understood that they will continue to be used for the foreseeable future. Space for hawkers also needs to be provided since the latter, low-income groups and commuters are inseparable, something planners and bureaucrats do not seem to understand and it is because of this that hawkers' eviction and rehabilitation projects invariably fail. Unless these requirements are fulfilled you might have an efficient rail system but you will have chaos and environmental degradation around it. The rehabilitation of the railway also means removing 5,000 families who currently live on its right of way or adjacent to it. The project plans to relocate them to distant Murad Goth and to provide them with an 80 square-yard plot and Rs50,000. This move will impoverish them. They will be removed far from their places of work. This will mean extra travel time and cost. It will also mean that their women will be without a job; their children without a school; and the family far from health and recreation facilities.

Currently, these, along with legally acquired utility connections, are available to a sizeable majority of the households within their neighbourhoods. Studies of the relocated Lyari Expressway-affected persons show that 89pc of them have become poorer because of the relocation; many have become destitutes and many more have migrated back into the city as renters near their places of work where they once owned homes. There is also conclusive evidence that insensitive relocations increase social alienation, depression and anger and make socio-economic upward mobility difficult if not impossible. These repercussions are the last thing that this already fragmented and increasingly violent city requires.

The KCR Affectees Action Committee has presented two alternatives to the government's relocation plan. One, it has identified railway land near where most of those affected live. It wants this land to be allotted to them along with a HBFC house building loan for those who opt for it. Two, that the government simply offers a lump sum of an average of Rs1,500,000 to Rs2,000,000 per affected household and they will move out and find their own accommodation. This will increase the rehabilitation cost from 1.6pc of the total project cost to between 2pc to 2.5 pc. The Action Committee argues that the rehabilitation cost will go up in any case to well over 2.5pc just as the Lyari Expressway rehabilitation cost increased from Rs2 billion to Rs7bn. This second alternative also saves the government problems associated with implementing a flawed rehabilitation process and its corruption-related issues. The alternatives presented by the Action Committee need sympathetic consideration. Many of Karachi's infrastructure projects, designed and built decades ago, remain incomplete. This should not happen with the KCR and its related developments. Also, whenever land has been opened up as a result of planning initiatives, it has been plundered by those in power and their underlings, impoverishing the city and its citizens. It is hoped that this time this will not happen. Maybe it is time to think of establishing a citizen's committee to oversee the planning and implementation of land-related issues that will surface as a result of the KCR revitalisation. But then for the effective implementation of the KTIP, Karachi needs peace and an efficient local government, both of which it does not have.

(By Arif Hasan, Dawn News, 25/02/2014)

Lack of planning contributing to urban poverty

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said that the space she left behind remains unfilled, adding that it is a difficult task to shoulder the burden of work she has left behind but they will work hard to complete her mission.

Architect and OPP chairperson Tasneem Ahmed Siddiqui lauded the efforts of the OPP staffers who have continued their work in Orangi despite threats that emerged after the twin attacks on their seniors. Tasneem said, "Rahman used to say she has no part in the work which is going on. It is happening because of the efforts of staffers and the people for which it is done." "I am happy to see the work to which Rahman was dedicated is still going on. We have to keep faith that time will pass and these difficult days will be over. We have to continue our work for the people. Some people are born to help others." He further told his staffers that their work has helped people across the country and they have to keep going on. "If you stop, you will bring shame to Rahman's efforts." He urged them to stay united and carry on Rahman's work. "If you get divided into groups, then her mission would come to a close."

For architect Arif Hasan, she was a good student and friend. He found her to be a strong woman. It was her strength that brought the OPP to this point, he said. "She tried to learn from everyone, which is why she became a person of such high calibre," he said, adding that OPP staffers have requisite knowledge and capabilities and they should keep the principles of the OPP alive (The Express Tribune, 14/03/2014).

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