

FACTS & FIGURES

Housing Karachi's Poor: Look up. Because that is where Karachi is headed

Are we some kind of garbage that you want to dump us on the outskirts, asks the woman from Lyari. "Why don't you give us places to live in Defence, Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Gulshan-e-Maymar?"

She's got a point, and many people like her agree: why should they move out to the peripheries of Karachi just because it's getting too congested in the centre of the city? "Karachi cannot expand any more," adds urban expert Arif Hasan. It has to go up.

He and the woman from Lyari are talking about one thing: densification. They were commenting on it in a documentary, *Karachi Rising*, which was screened on Friday at NED University for the launch of a new IIED report on land ownership.

People want to live in the city and not in the suburbs. "Families want to live closer to work," says Hasan, explaining factors driving densification. Poor people with informal jobs (such as cooks and cleaners) tend to live close to where they work in katchi abadis. And generally, those with office jobs have to travel long distances to get to work. It is not surprising that people also want to stay close to their communities, neighbourhoods where they grew up. As a young man put it, if he is in his neighbourhood where he grew up, 400 people would come to his funeral. But if he moved to say Taiser Town, only 10 would come.

This is also cheaper. A study found that 2,000 women from three urbanized villages on the outskirts, for example, travel up to four hours a day just to reach the south zone of Karachi where their work is located. They spend Rs90 a day on transport.

It thus makes much more sense for people to invest in motorcycles. A young man who lives in Surjani explained that it takes him 30 minutes to travel back and forth on his motorcycle – a journey that takes two hours by bus. So far in 2013, Karachi has 1.4 million motorcycles. It doesn't help that there is no mass transit. Women won't use motorcycles because they are dangerous and not culturally acceptable.

"Over the past several decades, new satellite towns were developed in the anticipation that they would be linked to the city centre and new industrial zones," says Prof. Noman Ahmed of NED.

Continue Page 11

Third most populated city or most polluted?

Pakistan's largest metropolitan and the world's third most densely populated city suffers from severe pollution due to a lack of interest by successive governments in tackling environment degradation.

Without any environmental management policies, the city suffers everything, from air pollution to noise pollution; and water pollution to lack of sanitation and garbage disposal on macro as well as micro level, have turned the city into a health hazard.

From home to office, and hospital to government offices, sanitation, smoke emissions, substandard water, unhygienic conditions in government hospitals, sale of junk food and disposal of garbage in sea and drains is visible to rulers, but ironically no solid and result-oriented measures have yet been taken to overcome such menaces to save citizens. As per independent sources, Karachi generates at least 12,000 tonnes of garbage, most of which is dumped in the sea via improper drains and without any treatment. This also results in polluting the coastline, evidence of which can be seen on any visit to the beaches around Karachi and others parts of Sindh and Balochistan.

The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and Sindh government need to stop direct disposal of garbage into the sea. They also require formulating a joint policy based on scientific methods in this regard. Poor sanitary conditions and non-lifting of garbage in Karachi is another major issue. A huge quantity of garbage is thrown in storm-water drains across the city that not only shows government mismanagement, but also public apathy.

Continue Page 11

Green alert: Hoardings crop up, trees go down

As innumerable advertisement billboards crop up along the skylines in Karachi, the already scarce trees are being chopped down, raising the question of correlation between the two.

According to a former city Nazim, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation has turned a blind eye to tree cutting as they need the space for putting up billboards and other hoardings, reportedly a very lucrative practice for the administration. The former Nazim estimated that KMC earns Rs750 million per year through giving permissions for putting up hoardings.

Recently, the authorities chopped up half the trees behind the Bin Qasim Park and permitted advertisers to put up a number of billboards at the centre island [the patch of trees between two roads] in front of Dolmen Shopping Mall, Clifton.

A senior official of KMC's advertisement department, on the condition of anonymity, told *The Express Tribune* that the advertisement agencies first send a proposal to the city administration and if approved, they are given permission to put up the hoarding through a contract. The value of the contract is decided according to the importance of the location.

The other side

When contacted about the legal aspect of cutting down trees, KMC Council Director Gufran Ahmed said that the former city Nazim, Mustafa Kamal, had passed a law under which any act harmful for the environment was strictly prohibited. Unfortunately, the law is not being implemented while authorities are openly violating the rules and cutting down trees, he added. The newly appointed director of Parks and Horticulture, Ashfaq Mallah, was contacted several times but he refused to comment on cutting down trees.

The spokesperson for the director, Muhammad Azad Khan, simply stated that he had just assumed charge and had no information about this issue. When asked about the laws prohibiting tree cutting, he said, "There is some kind of a law but I am not aware of its details." On the other hand, the former director of parks and horticulture, Abdullah Mushtaq, said that the KMC did not have any specific law which prohibits cutting trees. "We usually register the case against violation of government property," he said, agreeing that cutting trees to make space for hoardings was a very lucrative business through which the city administration earns millions of rupees. "The current parks director is not capable enough to tackle this issue but due to an internal setting, he has been given this position," alleged Mushtaq. "Earlier, we registered a case against the culprits who were involved in cutting the trees at Rashid Minhas Road and near Islamia College for violating government property."

According to him, the department was aware that many trees were being cut to make space for billboards and hoardings but since millions of rupees were involved, the officials were reluctant to put a stop to the practice.

Hazardous for society

"Trees are the lungs of this city. If the authorities continue cutting them down, there will be serious health issues in the future," said

Khatib Ahmed, a member of the Shehri-Citizens For A Better Environment. "We should be planting more saplings instead of cutting down trees for profit."

Multiple organisations and youth groups have taken it upon themselves to grow trees in the city but are disheartened when they see the grown ones being ruthlessly chopped down. "On one side, Karachiites are trying to save the city from environmental atrocities by planting saplings while the authorities have given permission to cut the old trees near the heavily polluted area of the Clifton beach," said Khurram, a resident of the same area.

According to the deputy director of public awareness of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency, Mujtaba Baig, the agency has not been approached about tree cutting in the city. "If we are told about any such incident, we will take action the people cutting down trees as they are increasing risks of health hazards," said Baig.

(By Ali Ousat, The Express Tribune, 07/10/2013)

Most Karachi hospitals without incinerators

While unsafe disposal of hospital waste is one of the most sensitive issues all over the world, in Karachi most of this waste is thrown away with the municipal garbage.

The practice is leading to the spread of deadly transmittable diseases including AIDS, hepatitis B and C among many others especially among Afghan scavengers. The hospital waste is also hazardous for garbage lifting staff of municipalities who shift the waste to the landfill sites.

Hospital waste includes human anatomical waste, waste from

surgeries and autopsies, needles, syringes, saws, blades, broken glass, nails, pathological waste, tissues, organs, body parts, human flesh, foetuses, blood and body fluids.

Pharmaceutical drugs and chemicals returned from wards, spilled, outdated, contaminated or that are no longer required are also dumped.

According to medical experts, proper incineration of hospital waste is mandatory and every hospital, clinic or maternity homes should be equipped with incinerators for disposal.

Experts lament that most major hospitals in Karachi are not equipped with incineration plants.

The incinerator at Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre is currently out of order. It was installed around 15 years ago but functions rarely. Even when the plant works, the smoke creates problems for the people living in Doctor's Colony due to the wind direction.

At the Jinnah hospital, around 150 operations are performed on average daily that generates a massive amount of medical waste.

Insiders told The News that some staff members of hospitals, especially public-sector hospitals, sold off the used medicine bags and drips made of plastic to junk dealers for recycling. The bags are taken to the Shershah scrap market for recycling.

Like nine pins

A philanthropist had donated around nine incinerators back in 2006 which were installed at Qatar Hospital, Sobhraj Hospital and Abbasi Shaheed Hospital among others, Dr Qaisar Sajjad, the Pakistan Medical Association finance secretary, told The News.

All the plants are out of order. He said municipal waste and hospital waste was generally mixed in the city. A lot of waste is thrown away from hospitals, clinics and maternity homes and large incineration plants are required for proper disposal.

Around 30,000 Afghan scavengers in the city were exposed to transmittable diseases due to the improper disposal of hospital waste, Sajjad said.

According to some surveys, many of these teenage kids had acquired hepatitis B and C and HIV/AIDS.

Suggestions

The doctor recommended that the government should make it mandatory for all hospitals and clinics to only use syringes which break automatically after use.

The Karachi Municipal Corporation and the five district municipal corporations should also take initiatives. Sajjad suggested setting up at least 18 large incinerators, one each in the 18 defunct town municipal administrations of the city.

(By Qadeer Tanoli, The News, 07/10/2013)

From Keenjhar with poison

At the Keenjhar Lake, things have gone from bad to worse. One of the most important water sources of Karachi is getting dirtier day by day, putting the majority of the city's population at risk.

Like many other wetlands in Sindh, Keenjhar Lake's freshwater ecosystem is being threatened by the increased volume of industrial and domestic effluents discharged, says Haleem Adil Sheikh, the Pakistan Relief Foundation chairman.

"Karachi has been receiving contaminated water for the past 10 years," he claims. The port city is supplied drinking water from two main sources: Keenjhar Lake and Manchar Lake. Toxic effluents are being dumped in Keenjhar Lake through three routes: Kotri's industrial and municipal waste poured into the lake through the Kalri-Baghar canal (KB Feeder); industrial effluents from about 100 factories in Nooriabad Industrial Area on the Super Highway; and municipal waste and agriculture runoff from the adjoining areas of Nooriabad.

"While the industrial and municipal waste from Nooriabad is stored in ponds, the toxic waste overflows into the Keenjhar Lake through Jhampir whenever it rains," said Sheikh, who is also a leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid.

Research indicates that water supplied to Karachi often has traces of phenol, chromium, cadmium, nickel and mercury. Nine-hundred cusecs of drinking water are supplied daily to the megacity from Keenjhar through the Chilya Bund.

"Only 42 percent of Karachi's population gets chlorinated water," Sheikh claims. In Thatta and its adjoining areas, the people are compelled to drink untreated water. Besides all the problems, an effluent treatment plant in Kotri, built with a cost of around Rs90 million, started leaking three days ago. "Engineers are busy in plugging the leaks," said Sheikh.

But the damage has been done. While Manchar Lake has been degraded beyond repair, the Keenjhar Lake is heading toward the same destiny – slow environmental death. “How will the Karachiites fulfill their drinking needs?” Sheikh wonders.

He said he had made up his mind to initiate a “Clean Water Campaign” and also file a petition in the Sindh High Court. “It’s a man-made disaster,” he added.

Keenjhar may even be stripped off its Ramsar status once it is degraded. Sheikh blames the lack of any site-specific wetland management plan for the disaster.

Pointing out that Keenjhar was the second largest freshwater lake in Pakistan, he said its conservation and protection was vital for the health and well-being of the people of Karachi and Thatta.

The picnickers, who unabashedly throw garbage in the lake, also contribute immensely to its pollution. Besides, many people opt to wash their buses and trucks at the lake. Sometimes, even cow dung and dead animals are dumped in the lake too.

“The marine life at Keenjhar Lake has been severely affected,” Sheikh said, “and the fisher folk have been the worst sufferers.”

In a report “Poison Soup” published in the Guardian newspaper on March 22, 2000, this scribe had written that up to 37.6 percent of the irrigated areas in Sindh were waterlogged; 14 percent was saline and another six percent was severely saline, according to the World Bank. While the water table at the turn of the century was deeper than 90 feet, the water had then reached the surface at some places, completely destroying the farmers’ ability to grow any kind of crops.

“Also suffering are Pakistan’s large inland freshwater lakes, Manchar and Hammal, once extremely valuable fisheries and vital for bird life. The damage is said to be retrievable but many fishermen on Manchar, one of Asia’s largest lakes, have already lost their catch,” it was written then.

Thirteen years on, no efforts have been made to fix the problems. (By Shahid Husain, The News, 17/09/2013)

Plan Karachi lest we become Dubai

A few years back three women rode motorcycles to work. Now 11 do. With no mass transit system in Karachi, more and more people want to buy motorbikes as a cheap and affordable vehicle for mobility.

In the year 1990 there were 450,000 motorcycles in the city. Now the number stands at 1,350,000. In a survey conducted at bus stops of the city, 32 percent men waiting for buses wanted to own a motorbike but could not because it was too expensive. Meanwhile, 56 percent women wanted to be able to ride one.

“The future of Karachi will be disastrous if the government does not plan a subsidised mass transit system,” said renowned architect Arif Hasan on Thursday. He was speaking at the Aga Khan University Hospital auditorium where a talk ‘Karachi: the housing imperative’ was organised.

In his hour long talk he emphasised how the poor had been thrown away to the periphery of the city through policies adopted by various governments. As a result, they spend 40 percent of their income on transport and live in houses with worsening facilities.

Hasan talked in length about the Doxiadis Plan during Ayub Khan’s era where two satellite towns, Landhi-Korangi and North Karachi, were planned to house the poor. “They were situated at least 30 kilometres away from the centre of the city. This was the first time Karachi was so widely bifurcated into the rich and poor. From here began the transport problems of the city.”

Quoting a study, he said 2,000 maids travelled every day, changing three buses from the outskirts of Karachi to work in Gulshan-e-Iqbal, PECHS and Defence Housing Authority.

Housing today

The residential area in Karachi makes up a total of 36 percent of the land. Of this, 74 percent is developed formally in the shape of housing schemes for 38 percent of the population. On the other hand, 22 percent of this residential land is developed informally in the shape of Katchi Abadis for housing 62 percent of the population.

Houses of 120 square yards or less are owned by 88 percent of the population. Houses of 400 to 2,000 square yards are owned by 2 percent of the population, but they occupy 22 percent of the total residential land.

Land has become expensive even in the periphery. Therefore, if in 1991 a square yard in the outskirts of Korangi cost Rs176, now it costs Rs25,000. Moreover, construction cost has risen up from Rs666 per square yard in 1991 to Rs5,000 per square

yard today. Hasan claimed that housing on the periphery had taken away women from the workplace, and in most middle-class families, it took two to run the kitchen. Moreover, the father is always away from the family, as most of his time is spent in travelling. "As a result, people who have their own cars can afford to live in the periphery because they can drive to work. The rest prefer to rent spaces closer to work. The phenomenon has also led to densification of existing localities, so that in a house where five people lived, now 15 do."

Densification of Karachi

People who had property within the city have converted them into high-rise apartments. Hasan quoted examples of various middle-to low-income neighbourhoods where a developer approached the owner. "He tells them that the first two apartments will be yours and the other ones will be ours."

These apartments do not have ventilation or sunlight and most are without lifts. "As a result, the elderly and children remain cooped up in their houses." Moreover, in case of an earthquake, these buildings will crumble to pieces. "The housing units are becoming smaller and smaller to make them affordable."

Hasan ended his presentation with slides from Dubai. In the first slide Palm Jumeirah, Burj al Arab and Burj Khalifa were shown. In the next slide were shown workers confined to cubicles where there wasn't even space to stretch out their hands. "If we do not plan Karachi, we might become another Dubai," Hasan concluded with a warning.

(By Sidrah Roghay, The News, 20/09/2013)

Traffic management: Extortion prevents Saddar from turning into pedestrian zone

The plans to turn part of Saddar into a pedestrian zone have yet to take fruit due to the lucrative extortion business in the area, *The Express Tribune* has learnt.

The traffic police, representatives of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) and the commissioner's office are allegedly earning up to Rs80 million in bribes every month. "Due to the presence of corrupt officers, the authorities have been unable to convert Saddar into a pedestrian zone," said a shopkeeper in Saddar. The plan to convert Saddar into a pedestrian zone was prepared on October 22, 2012, and Sindh governor Dr Ishratul Ebad Khan had also granted Rs100 million, but the project has yet to materialise. According to the proposal, all vehicles will be barred from parking their vehicles in front of Empress Market, Bohri Bazaar, Mochi Gali, Preedy Street, Zaibunnisa Street and other adjoining areas.

Even the nearly 46 buses that are plying on these routes will not be allowed to enter Saddar. Instead, they would take the straight road that connects MA Jinnah Road and Lucky Star. The transporters' association was, however, not very happy with the idea as several of their routes would be disrupted. "If the government makes Saddar a pedestrian zone, it will neither be beneficial for the transporters nor for any other commuters," said Karachi Transport Ittehad president Irshad Ahmed Bukhari.

"Whenever this plan materialises, people will have to walk at least 15 to 20 minutes to catch a bus from either Seven-Day hospital or Lucky Star," he told *The Express Tribune*.

Good for business?

The traders in the area, who are paying hefty amounts of extortion to various political parties and the traffic police, appreciated the plan. The president of the Sindh Tajir Ittehad, Jamil Ahmed Paracha, expressed his doubts about the plan translating into reality. "Lots of stakeholders are charging bribes and their businesses will end if this area becomes a pedestrian zone," he said, hoping the government enforces the plan. "If it succeeds, our business will increase by at least 40 per cent."

According to Paracha, traffic congestion, high level of noise pollution and smoke from vehicles is bad for businesses. "People avoid coming to the city centre for shopping," he pointed out, hoping the pedestrian zone will improve the traffic situation. "Saddar will once again become an area where people can shop and enjoy walking." Paracha suggested the government also build wider footpaths to further beautify the area. "This idea came from European cities where every town centre is declared a pedestrian zone to provide a relaxing environment to people."

Work in progress

The commissioner's office is still working on this idea as the criminal elements dominate the area, said the chief engineer of the implementation unit at the commissioner's Office, Syed Muhammad Shakaib.

"We have started negotiations with various stakeholders, including unions, government officials and even political parties that are backing the extortionists," he said, adding

that these stakeholders have assured them of their cooperation. In the first phase, the authorities will remove all encroachments and finalise the re-routing of public buses, said Shakaib. Later, the traffic intersection will be restructured. In the long run, all relevant departments, such as communications, electricity and gas utilities, will be taken on board to make the area environmentally friendly, he added. Interestingly, the part of Raja Ghazanfar Ali Road that falls within Bohri Bazaar was converted into a pedestrian zone nearly two decades ago but Shakaib claimed it is merely an encroachment. The road was blocked for regular traffic before 1987 but there is no official notification that ordered this, he said.

(By Ali Ousat, The Express Tribune, 03/10/2013)

Education for all: Enrolment in schools stays low despite higher budget

The Sindh government has allocated a higher budget to education but public sector schools have failed to increase enrolment or even control the drop-out rates of students.

These findings were made by a non-profit organisation, DevCon, which carried out a detailed study of budget allocations and expenditures under different heads in government schools. Sharing the findings of the report on Thursday, DevCon revealed that the disproportionate developmental budget allocation and still lesser actual expenditure on development has kept a majority of schools without utility, sanitary and infrastructure facilities.

The study has focused on the fiscal budgets for three years up to 2012 in the five districts including Hyderabad, Badin, Sanghar, Jacobabad and Khairpur. "The purpose of this exercise is to create awareness on the education sector's budget management and priorities," explained Shahi Umrani, DevCon's team leader. The data has been collected from the district education offices and account books.

Enrolment and drop-out

The report notes that despite a regular increase in the per child budget allocation, enrolment has shown a drop in primary schools during the three years under review. For example, the per child allocation in Hyderabad was increased from Rs6,869 in 2010 to Rs16,768 in 2012. However, enrolment dropped from 118,725 to 101,715 students in primary schools.

Missing facilities

There are 47,557 schools in the province out of which nearly 90 per cent are primary schools. In Badin, Jacobabad and Sanghar, over 25 per cent of the schools do not have a building. The percentage is 13 in Khairpur and two in Hyderabad.

Similarly, a majority of the schools operating in a building do not have boundary walls. Facilities of electricity and water are also missing in most schools. Nearly half the schools in Jacobabad do not have toilets and the situation is similar in Badin, Sanghar and Khairpur. Hyderabad is doing slightly better with only 13.5 per cent without toilets.

Current and development expenditure

The study points out that the proportion of the development expenditure remains dismally low in the annual budget. In 2010,

Sanghar earmarked Rs140.9 million for development works from its annual budget of Rs1.26 billion, which comes to around 13 per cent. However, only Rs90 million from the allocated sum were released.

In Hyderabad, the development budget fell from Rs103 million – 17 per cent of the total budget – in 2010 to Rs73.4 million – less than five percent – in 2012. Khairpur district allocated Rs2.44 billion budget for 2012, the highest among the five surveyed districts, but it set aside only Rs105 million for development schemes.

"It has been observed that the salary component gets the lion's share with 90 to 95 per cent," Umrani pointed out. "This leaving scarce funds for other expenses such as repairs, maintenance and development projects."

"A lack of good quality education, commitment to teaching and learning, parents' attention and corruption in the education officials are the factors behind destruction of the education system," said Rehmatullah Bilal, the petitioner in the Supreme Court case that resulted in the recent judicial inspection of schools in Sindh. "Resource constraint has only tertiary relevance as a barrier to education."

The report also points out incompetent manner of the budget preparation and management, which is left to the clerical and accountant staff by the officials responsible for these tasks. "There are some 250 posts of taluka based ADOs but only around two dozen of them have merit and seniority based officers working on them. All the remaining are occupied by unconcerned junior staff," an official of the education department, seeking anonymity, told *The Express Tribune*.

(By Z Ali, The Express Tribune, 21/09/2013)

Continue from Page 1 Housing Karachi's Poor: Look up. Because that is where Karachi is headed

But the poor don't want to live here because there isn't a proper transport network, for one. The government has to help them pay for housing in the dense areas and bring the katchi abadies into its net so that proper homes are built. Given these preferences (proximity, cost, less suffering), Karachi is growing more dense: 17,325 people per square kilometre. The private sector has stepped in to cater to this demand. But much of this development is informal (read katchi abadi). People are thus building one-unit houses in these unplanned settlements in the congested parts of the city. They prefer this, because they can expand or build up as their families grow. They can use parts of the house for commercial purposes as well. But these structures don't follow the building control authority rules. The high-rises are built on shallow foundations and in an earthquake they will collapse, warns Hasan. They don't have proper ventilation and aren't built to properly allow light in. Plus these housing units are becoming smaller and smaller in the dense parts of Karachi so they are more affordable. This leads to immense congestion, which Hasan warned will naturally have its own social problems. But more than anything else, these dense high-rises in katchi abadies don't have lifts. The elderly and children find it hard to make it up and down which means that they are cooped up all day. At the end of the day, the question is whether the elected representatives and bureaucrats feel that poor deserve help to get a roof over their heads. Pro-poor or social housing is the answer to many of Karachi's problems. But unless something is done soon, it will all be downhill from here.
(By Noman Ahmed, The Express Tribune, 15/09/2013)

Continue Article 2, Third most populated city or most polluted?

Substandard water is also being supplied to citizens through tankers and other sources, a matter that needs authorities to look into to ensure citizens' health, especially by devising a comprehensive water management policy. Simultaneously, the government needs to take actions against the smoke emitting vehicles. Thousands of vehicles emitting clouds of smoke in many areas, particularly Saddar, are plying without any fear. Vehicular emissions are a major cause of air pollution in Karachi, causing lung diseases among people. All major arteries of the city brave extremely higher levels of smoke, laden with toxic fumes and particles, but various departments and agencies related to environmental control, traffic regulations, motor engine fitness and authorities responsible for removing roadside encroachments are not giving proper attention to this serious issue. Summarising the situation in monetary terms, the annual cost of environmental degradation in the country is about 4.3 percent of GDP (\$4.3 billion). Specific examples are; air, land and water degradation, drought and desertification, water logging, forest depletion, loss of biodiversity, vehicular and industrial pollution and climate change.

According to a report, Karachi with a population of 18 million is one of the most heavily polluted mega cities in the world with serious human health risks. The city is congested with a large number of motor vehicles (over 1.3 million) and has a large industrial base in and around the city. Karachi needs millions of trees to make the environment not only greener, but also healthier. Adding trees to the depleted urban forest can reduce the level of air, as well as noise pollution, giving relief to the citizens suffering from all sorts of problems, including law and order.
(DailyTimes, 03/10/2013)

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

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