

# COAST RIVER / WILDLIFE



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## Seaview beach — the most accessible picnic point in city

The hustle and bustle associated with a popular spot can be witnessed at the Seaview beach almost every evening. But the activity on the kilometre or so long stretch between the Village and McDonald's restaurants, part of Abdul Sattar Edhi Avenue, grows considerably on weekends, peaking a little after sunset on Sunday.

Picnickers and revellers, on motorbikes, in cars, pickups and other vehicles, converge on the beach from all roads leading to it. Naturally, all sorts of businesses flourish where people gather to enjoy themselves.

The footpaths and area paved with tiles is occupied by vendors of various commodities though some individuals and families also share the space with them on the broad, short walls and the steps descending into the sand.

Measures needed to improve management, sanitation

There are people selling jewellery pieces made from seashells. There are carts loaded with corn cobs and their roasting arrangements. There are hawkers carrying steel buckets with cold drinks, juice packets, chana chaat, etc. A few snack bars are built at a distance from each other. Even a 'food truck' sits in the parking area linked with a small electricity generator placed on the footpath to energise the vehicle's cooling and heating systems and, of course, light bulbs.

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'Beach buggies', if the contraptions may be called so, decorated with lights look particularly nice in the dark, scurrying from place to place with jubilant passengers. "We charge just Rs100 for a trip," says a buggy driver, Baacha Khan. "An individual or a whole family may enjoy the ride at the same fare."

He says the vehicle is his own. Asked how much a buggy costs and how much he earns daily, he says: "A vehicle can be bought for Rs100,000 to Rs200,000, depending on its condition. He says he saves something between Rs1,000 and Rs1,500 a day. "The petrol costs a lot as the vehicle consumes too much fuel while running through the sticky sand." Besides, they have to pay the contractor's men, too. "They usually demand Rs200 a day, but sometimes if we have some genuine excuses for not paying, they don't insist on the payment."

Owners of camels and horses stroll around to seek customers, offering a relatively short ride, also for Rs100. There are no fixed points for them and some parents do not like their small children to be taken too far from them. They also charge per ride and not per person, accommodating up to four children or a couple of adults on their animals' saddles.

The corn cob vendors charge Rs20 to Rs40 for an ear, depending on the size, time and demand for it. When asked how much he normally earns daily, Aslam, a Pakhtun teenager, says: "This pushcart belongs to a contractor, who pays me from Rs700 to Rs800 daily."

At the two ends of the beach, tall columns are lit with rows of colourful lights running up and down the pillar to attract and entertain prospective customers and the public.

What seems to be missing from Seaview and other picnic spots is the erstwhile ubiquitous photographers who offered the visitors instant photos of a particular size for a reasonable price. Equipped with the handy digital and mobile phone cameras, having the added facility of movie making, the modern picnickers no longer fancy photos of that kind. The poor guys might have found some other means of earning.

Many people enjoy walking in the wet sand with occasional waves touching their feet. But many reckless men and women, not necessarily young, go into deep water and risk their lives. There are no policemen or volunteers to stop the enthusiasts from going inside the danger zone.

The enclosed parking area is crowded on weekends. There are several entry points to the enclosed roads. The staff posted there charges Rs40 per vehicle, but there is hardly anyone to regulate the

vehicles inside. So people driving in the opposite direction add to the chaos. The relevant officials of the Defence Housing Authority, or the contractor, should not only collect the fee but must also take responsibility for the drivers' convenience.

And with the multitudes visiting the place, trash of every kind littering it is also inevitable. Occasionally students of various educational institutions make an effort to clean the sandy area, a gesture that deserves appreciation. But this effort is too small a step towards resolving the gigantic issue. The DHA, having enormous resources, can do it!

(By Naseer Ahmad, Dawn, 14, 05/09/2017)

## **Karachi beaches sealed in the wake of Saturdays drownings**



The city's 64-kilometre-long coastal belt has been closed for the public for an indefinite period following the deaths of 12 members of a family at Hawke's Bay.

Hawke's Bay was closed for picnickers on Sunday following a horrifying incident in which 12 people drowned the day before. Some family members who had arrived from various areas in District Central such as Paposh Nagar, North Karachi and North Nazimabad, drowned while swimming in the sea while others were killed while trying to rescue their relatives. A woman and two children were among the victims.

"We stopped each and every person from picnicking on the beach today [Sunday]," confirmed Mauripur SHO Niaz Panwar. "It is not only at Hawke's Bay. No one will be allowed at any beach across the entire coastal belt, particularly on Saturdays and Sundays."

A large number of picnickers had arrived at Hawke's Bay beach on Sunday but were stopped by the authorities. An extra contingent of law enforcers was deployed at the beach since early Sunday morning, which caused anger amongst revellers who had gone there to enjoy the beach. They also staged a protest against the police and government. "Instead of stopping the people, the government should make proper arrangements," said a picnicker, Sarfaraz Khan.

### **Family picnic turns into tragedy: 12 of a family drown at Hawke's Bay beach**

Nearly 55 people, including three Saudi nationals, have lost their lives in the three months of the monsoon spell. Nearly 40 of them drowned at Hawke's Bay.

### **Funeral prayers**

The funeral prayers of 11 members of the family were offered on Sunday afternoon. A large number of people gathered at Babul Islam Masjid in North Karachi's Sector 9 to attend the last rites. A gloom enveloped the congregation when the bodies were brought from the Edhi morgue in Sohrab Goth. Besides a large number of relatives and neighbours, Mayor Wasim Akhtar and leaders of several political parties also attended the funeral. The victims were laid to rest at the Muhammad Shah graveyard in North Karachi.

Meanwhile, the funeral prayers of the twelfth family members were offered after Asr prayers at Jama Masjid in Paposh Nagar.

The victims' relatives blamed the government for the incident. "If there were lifeguards with proper equipment like motorboats at the beach there would be no loss of life," complained a relative, Ahsan Iftikhar. "Usually the majority of the deaths occur in a bid to save the others and this happens because of the unavailability of lifeguards and speed boats at the beach."

Edhi Foundation Spokesperson Saad Edhi told The Express Tribune that Hawke's Bay and Sandspit are not suitable for swimming, as many sudden deaths have occurred there.

### **Three picnickers drown at Karachi's Hawke's Bay**

He added that there should be a permanent ban on swimming at these beaches, as such few lifeguards cannot protect thousands of picnickers at a beach that stretches 64km. Edhi said that though the number of lifeguards is few, however, he has seen their hard work and dedication. Citizens should have the sense not to go swimming in the sea when it is not the season, he said, adding that many do not even know how to swim.

### **A tough job**

The city's 64km coastal belt lacks proper lifeguard units working under one authority and the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) emergency response centre at Hawke's Bay is being run by the fire department with meagre resources at its disposal. But the KMC is not in charge of all of Karachi beaches. KMC officials said that Karachi's 64km long coastal belt starts from Keti Bunder and goes right up to Mubarak Village. The KMC's jurisdiction in this area is just 27km long.

The remaining 37km is looked after by other authorities such as the Port Qasim Authority, Landhi Fish Harbour (near Rehri Goth), Korangi Creek, Cantonment Board Clifton, Defence Housing Authority, Karachi Port Trust, Pakistan Navy, Cantonment Board Manora and Kanupp.

"The KMC's jurisdiction in this area is just 27km long and it has only 46 lifeguards," said Mayor Akhtar. "The provincial government should deploy mounted police force here."

### **Five of a family drown at Hawkesbay beach**

A senior resident of the area and lifeguard Anwar Baloch told The Express Tribune that the situation was better when former city nazim Naimatullah Khan involved local boys of their village situated near the sea on a contract basis and hired them as lifeguards.

However, after Khan's tenure ended the practice was stopped and the KMC hired permanent lifeguards, most of whom are rarely on duty or do not even know how to swim.

He added that the only solution is to involve locals, as they spend their days and nights in the sea and are well aware of how to swim. If they are paid, he said, they will perform their task well.

(By Faraz Khan, The Express Tribune, 13, 11/09/2017)

## **Pieces of plastic kill shark, catfish**

Fishermen at sea have recently caught fishes entangled in some plastic material that seemed to have caused their death, the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWF-P) reported on Saturday.

In the first incident, Captain Mahar Gul, fishing 160 nautical miles south of Astola Island, Balochistan, found a spot-tail shark entangled in a polythene bag.

"The deep cuts on its skin and associated inflammation indicated that the shark became entangled in the bag, which caused its slow death," he said.

In the second incident, Captain Noor Mohammad, fishing 135 nautical miles southwest of Karachi, found a giant catfish in his net.

Upon taking a closer look, he found a plastic strap around the head of the dead fish," a WWF-P press release stated.

Mohammad Moazzam Khan, technical adviser on marine fisheries working with the WWF-P, said that these incidents were a grim reminder that the increasing plastic pollution had reached our offshore waters and was killing marine life.

“Plastic pollution along Pakistan’s coast is a major concern and is worsening because we don’t have a proper solid waste disposal system in the city. Most plastic pieces entering the sea become a serious threat to marine life due to their non-degradable nature,” he said.

Studies carried out by the organisation, he said, had revealed that 65 per cent of litter that reached the coast included plastic products, such as mineral water bottles, caps, polythene bags, balloons, wrappers, shoes, broken utensils, styrofoam and discarded fishing nets.

It is estimated that globally about eight million tonnes of plastic is dumped into the sea or finds its way there through wind or flow of rivers and urban runoff. This is about equivalent to dumping a garbage truck into the marine waters every minute.

According to a statement submitted by Sindh Solid Waste Management Board to the Supreme Court’s water commission led by Justice Mohammad Iqbal Kalhoro, about 12,000 tonnes of garbage is generated daily in Karachi, of which only 40pc is collected and taken to the dumping site whereas the remaining garbage mainly reaches different drains or is burnt locally.

“It’s sad to see that Pakistan’s beaches are now littered with all kinds of waste. There is a need to keep them clean, create awareness as well as to have a proper waste disposal system,” said Dr Babar Khan of the WWF-P.

(Dawn 17, 15/10/2017)