

# NEWSCLIPPINGS

*JANUARY TO JUNE 2021*

## ENVIRONMENT



## Urban Resource Centre

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### **‘Green Emergency’**

While the New Year was celebrated with much zeal and fervour across Pakistan, K-P was witnessing a tragedy. On January 1, a heavy wildfire engulfed the forests of Mushkpuri, Birote Khurd and nearby Dunga Gali, reducing trees worth millions of rupees to ashes. Even though wildfires are rather common in the region, the forest department has consistently failed to prevent such losses from occurring.

It is hard to understand why the authorities refrain from investing in research, despite the country having already started witnessing the horrific effects of global warming. Not only does this isolated incident require serious probe for determining the root cause of such repeated occurrence, the issue of deforestation and wildlife needs to be addressed at a broader level. K-P alone has lost more than 1.2 million trees during 2018, with losses amounting to Rs27.2 million, while the annual rate of deforestation in Pakistan remains the highest in the world — between 0.2% and 0.5% per annum. Every year the country loses almost 27,000 hectares of natural forest area, with biodiversity and wildlife significantly threatened. Many have termed the situation a ‘Green Emergency’ — a crisis that has adversely impacted the rural population that relies on forests for livelihood. Furthermore, with the boom in population, raw materials from forest ecosystems become all the more scant, making it harder to balance supply with demand. Apart from being an essential resource, forests also need to be thought of as the lungs of the country as they play a vital role in sequestering carbon from the atmosphere, protecting upstream watersheds, and conserving biodiversity.

While afforestation may seem to be the obvious solution, the truth is that this alone will not help. The first step is to devise a policy that is conducive to forest investment and sustainable forest management practices. Then, the root causes need to be identified and systematically targeted. At the national level, sustainable and eco-friendly measures need to be sought.  
(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 14, 03/01/2021)

### **LG minister orders policy for promoting Sarsabz Sindh project**

Sindh Information Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah directed his department's officials on Sunday to devise a comprehensive policy for the full-fledged advertising of the Sarsabz Sindh project - an initiative planned for making Sindh green with the target of planting 100 million trees in next five years.

Addressing a meeting of the Sindh information department, Shah, who also holds the portfolio of the provincial local government and forests ministers, directed the relevant officials to organise press briefings for the promotion of the Sarsabz Sindh project after every 15 days and consult of relevant departments on the matter.

Acknowledging the effectiveness of social media for spreading information in the current age, he further instructed the officials to make the department's social media wing operational and share the links of the department's social media pages with journalists and media houses.

"There should be a prompt rebuttal to the federal government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's fake propaganda," he said, accusing Prime Minister Imran Khan of "appointing spokespersons to misguide citizens."

He claimed that over the years, the Sindh government had carried out extensive development work, especially with respect to health, education and infrastructure building.

"This year, 2021, will be the year of the restoration of forests in Sindh," he the provincial minister said, adding that fruit trees would be planted on the recovered land of the Sindh government.

He further claimed that the Sindh government was focusing on working for the welfare of journalists so that could work with liberty and effectively. In this regard, he directed the relevant authorities to ensure the provision of grants to press clubs and journalists associations.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 05, 04/01/2021)

### **Administrator orders beautification of Sharea Faisal, airport surroundings**

City Administrator Laeeq Ahmed on Friday directed officials concerned to make cleanliness arrangements at Sharea Faisal and airport surroundings as these areas were the first glimpse foreigners received of the metropolis.

"Airports' surrounding areas are made wonderful for the visitors around the world. Karachi is the face of Pakistan and there is need to work for betterment of the city," he said while visiting Sharea Faisal, Natha Khan bridge, Drigh Road, and adjacent areas of Jinnah International Airport.

The administrator directed the officials concerned to make the street lights functional at Sharea Faisal and other localities for convenience of the people.

He also ordered removal of all sorts of advertisement boards and political parties' flags. "Trimming of trees should also be done for further beautification. Seasonal plants including marigold should be planted at green belts," he added.

Mr Ahmed said that dignitaries of different countries were coming to Karachi for participation in programmes and it was important to give them good image of our city.

In a briefing, the administrator was told that 250 lights were installed from Drigh Road to Sharea Faisal out of which 200 lights were made functional while remaining would be fixed within three days.

Meanwhile, he also directed works and services director to repair footpath besides graveyard near airport as the people visiting the cemetery were facing hardships.

He directed that survey should be conducted to repair road and street lights on priority basis where necessary.

The administrator said that expedited works should be carried out jointly by all institutions concerned keeping in view the international events that are due to be held in the city.

Mr Ahmed said that Karachi Metropolitan Corporation was taking measures for uplifting of infrastructure and giving priority to the areas that were facing civic problems.

"The KMC is taking all-out measures to provide maximum civic facilities to the people by utilizing all available resources. All departments and stakeholders are also being taken on board," he added.  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 14, 30/01/2021)

### **NGO plants 60 fruit tree saplings in Mazar-i-Quaid's peripheral area**

Spring is an ideal time for planting flowers and trees. Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment (CBE) welcomed spring in a befitting way on Saturday morning by planting 60 fruit tree saplings at the Mazar-i-Quaid.

The tree saplings included 20 each of beri, known also as ziziphus mauritiana, Chinese date or Indian jujube, imli or tamarind, and badaam or almond. They were planted as part of Shehri's million-tree campaign on the land adjacent to the Quaid Mazar Management Board (QMMB) where the NGO has been planting trees since April 2016 after their dispatching dumpers of soil mixed with manure to the site and digging pits for that fertile soil and tree saplings that were placed in them. They have also planted neem, gulmohar, jamun, jungle jalebi, kachnar, chikoo, pomegranate, guava and citrus fruit trees there.

"You know beri or ber, as it is commonly known, is in season these days and you will be surprised to learn that at Rs250 per kilogramme it is even more costly than apples, which are Rs200 per kg," Amra Javed of the NGO, smilingly pointed out as she proudly walked one through the spacious lawns where so many of their earlier planted trees have started bearing fruit as well as providing shade.

"Soon we will have lots of birds here as we are providing them the habitat. The beri, guava, almond trees will also beckon lots of green parrots," she said.

4,000 trees planted so far About the lawns, resident engineer and QMMB secretary Mohammad Arif said that the mazar grounds span 132 acres, of which 61 acres are where the actual mausoleum is built and 71 acres is the peripheral area plot where they have many trees planted by different people and organisations including Shehri-CBE.

"We have some 4,000 plants here which also include the trees that late Ardeshir Cowasjee encouraged people to plant around 1994 through his Tree Mazar Committee," he said.

About how they water the plantation, the resident engineer said that they are also constructing a sewerage treatment plant so that there is always abundant water for watering the plants and trees.

"The pipes have already been laid out for drip irrigation on the mazar side. We would also be able to provide one million gallons of water to the city from this treatment plant," he said.

Farrah Rahman, focal person, Clean & Green Karachi, and Jilani Yousuf of Rotary Club Karachi were also present on the occasion to support Shehri-CBE and planted trees along with their team.  
(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 07/02/2021)

### **'Malir Expressway will affect Karachi's green areas'**

The construction of Malir Expressway will not just displace scores of families, but will also affect the green areas that are source of fruits and vegetables to Karachi, maintained a committee comprising persons affected by ML-1, Malir Expressway and demolition drive along Gujjar nullah raised the concern on Wednesday.

The committee voiced the concern during a press conference at the Karachi Press Club on the day.

Pakistan Institute of Labour, Education and Research director Karamat Ali, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan chairperson Asad Iqbal Butt, Mahnaz Rehman of the Aurat Foundation and others spoke on the occasion.

The speakers demanded on the occasion a public hearing on the construction of Malir Expressway and anti-encroachment drives along Gujjar nullah, Manzoor Colony nullah and the paths of Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) and ML-1.

Local residents need to be consulted at the hearing on the said projects and initiatives, the speakers stressed.

They also demanded alternative accommodation for 1,100 families displaced following the launch of the KCR and arrangements for the same for those affected by Malir Expressway and demolition of structures along Gujjar and Manzoor Colony nullahs.

This was promised by Pakistan Peoples Party chairperson Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the speakers called to the mind.

The speakers lamented that it had been a year since families were displaced from the path of the KCR, and they still hadn't been provided alternative accommodation.

Similarly, those affected by the demolition drive along Mazoor Colony nullah too haven't been consulted on the matter.

There is no record of how many families will be affected by the construction of ML-1 in a city and no assurance of alternative accommodation has been given to families fearing displacement, they added.  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 11/02/2021)

### **Unloading of potentially harmful cargoes without SOPs under way at port, Sepa tells SHC**

The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) on Thursday informed the Sindh High Court that soybean and pet coke consignments were being unloaded at Karachi Port Trust without standard operating procedures (SOPs) and in the absence of any monitoring system for ambient air on the KPT premises and adjacent areas.

In its report, filed on a set of petitions regarding the deaths of people due to suspected leakage of gas in Keamari in February last year, Sepa further submitted that its monitoring and lab analysis indicated that the parameters of particulate matter (MP2.5 & MP10) were exceeding the limits of ambient air quality standards regarding handling of soybean and pet coke.

The two-judge SHC bench headed by Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar expressed resentment with the police for filing the A-class report (accused persons are unknown or untraceable) in the trial court and not giving any consideration to the statements of affected people. The bench directed the SSP concerned to take action in the light of report submitted by Sepa.

The Department of Plant Protection (DPP) also placed its report before the bench and said that its team did not find any smell or sign of any poisonous gas during inspection of KPT terminal and sampling.

When the bench took up a set of petitions for hearing on Thursday, the director general of Sepa filed the report which said that its team had inspected the ship loaded with soybean imported from the US and observed high intensity of dust emission during the process of unloading.

*'Main threat to urban population of the vicinity is from soybean dust and pet-coke piles'*

The team also noted that several containers loaded with hazardous chemicals were also stored on the premises of KPT for last three to four years unclaimed by the consignees as informed by the management of KPT while surrounding area of oil terminal were found untidy and highly polluted with waste generated from oil tankers, it added.

The report further maintained that the main threat to the urban population of the vicinity was from soybean dust and pet-coke piles and also fugitive dust emission in the form of particulate matter.

"Considering the situation and on the observation of the team of Sepa and also lab results of Environmental Certified Laboratory namely Sustainable Environmental Services (SES) Laboratory which indicates the parameters of Carbon mono Oxide, Particulate Matters (PM 2.5) were exceeding the prescribed parameters of Sindh Environmental Quality Standards (SEQS)", it added.

Sepa in its report also recommended that marine pollution board of KPT should play its proactive role to prevent and control ambient air quality of ports premises and surrounding areas and all oil companies and terminals must prepare environmental management plan/environmental audit report for their operational activities and submit it for review and approval of Sepa.

KPT must handle soybean and pet coke only under strict international standards and regulations at specified places, it further suggested and requested the bench to call final reports from commissioner of Karachi and HEJ Research Institute of Chemistry, University of Karachi, to reach a conclusion.

The DPP in its report said that its four-member team had inspected the ship carrying soybean in order to detect insect pest and disease symptoms injurious to domestic agriculture while sampling for aflatoxin level detection was also made.

Since no insect pest was detected on arrival and the aflatoxin level as per HEJ lab of University of Karachi was in admissible limit, the department issued plant protection release order, it added.

The petitioners approached the SHC seeking directives for the authorities concerned to investigate the incident, take remedial measures and give compensation to the families of those that had died in the incident.  
(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 12/02/2021)

### Karachi's Clifton beach to sport an urban forest

The Clifton beach, the most frequent recreational spot for Karachiites, has long since been dotted with heaps of garbage and industrial waste.

The rot is punctuated only by concrete structures - restaurants, malls or offices, high-rise residential buildings - and barren stretches of land. It is here that Masood Ahmed Lohar has camped out for over a month.

He has spent his days, along with a team of volunteers, toiling away to rid three acres of land of debris, litter and industrial and medical waste.

His nights were spent in a make-shift tent with the sea breeze providing little respite from the stench of an unkempt beach. And on Monday, with the inauguration of an urban forest that is to sprawl across 200 acres of land, at least, his efforts were rewarded.

At least 45 different kinds of saplings, mostly native ones, have now been planted at the site that was once the most convenient waste dumping ground for all and sundry.

"It is a thick forest we are going to set up," said Lohar, who heads a non-governmental organisation, Sindh Radiant Organisation. It will be multi-layered and an incredible site for citizens, he says beaming. The urban forest, launched in partnership with the Sindh government, has been conceptualised under the Miyawaki method.

The technique pioneered by Japanese botanist, Akira Miyawaki, enables a dense forest to grow in small areas 10 times faster than usual. Lohar intends to plant one million *Salvadora persica*, or Peelu or Khaber as known in the local parlance, on the urban forest that stretches from Dua Chowrangi till near the China Port.

"We will plant all sorts of local fruit trees in this forest," said Lohar speaking to The Express Tribune. The project is expected to see completion in the next three to five years. "It is hard to stay here day and night. I got sand in my eyes and lost my skin colour. It is a challenge but as a Pakistani I accept this challenge," he says of his efforts thus far.

It is since January 8, 2021, that the make-shift tent near the forest has been his home. Elaborating on the hurdles faced by him and his team before the forest could be inaugurated, Lohar said that it was almost impossible to plant a tree on the site.

"We were just digging plastic. It seems this spot has been used as a garbage dumping site." Lohar, who is the former country head of the United Nations Development Programme's GEF Small Grants Programme, said that he has invested around Rs75 million in the past one and a half month.

Over a dozen volunteers from various areas of the metropolis, including Neelam Colony, Sheerin Jinnah Colony, Korangi, and from Thatta, Badin, Hyderabad, Umerkot and Thar, have toiled away along with Lohar since January 8.

Besides, thousands of trees from different cities such as Badin, Thatta, Hyderabad, Tando Jam and Lahore have been transported to the site.

"Transporting trees to Karachi is a challenge but we see trees growing well and that gives us strength," says Lohar.

For Lohar and his team, the rewards promised by the forest are unending. Along with the climatic benefits, they look forward to a healthy ecosystem of plants and animals thriving in the forest. "We have recorded 42 birds, including 29 native birds," said Mir Altaf Hussain Talpur, who looks after the flora and fauna around the site.

Talpur is hopeful that native birds will frequent the forest without disturbance. Similarly, Lohar is hopeful that the forest will help reduce heat waves that plague the metropolis in the summer season.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony on Monday, adviser to Sindh CM on environment, climate change and coastal development, Murtaza Wahab, said that it was a pity that no special measures had been taken thus far to develop the coastal belt of Karachi.

"Gone is the place where there was garbage before. [Now] there is a pleasant atmosphere here," he said as he briefed the media on the project, which has been launched under the public private partnership mode.

For Lohar, the inauguration is just the beginning of what is to come. He has a nursery on the outskirts of the city, which houses over 30,000 papaya trees, he tells The Express Tribune.

Sharing his initial plans, he says, he will soon be planting them in the forest. "I want to see this dream come true. It is nothing but my passion and we are all emotionally attached to this forest."

(By Sameer Mandhro The Express Tribune, 04, 16/02/2021)

### 200-acre urban forest being developed by city's seashore

There is a new urban forest coming up by the seashore in Clifton, but to write about it, one first needed to find it.

Taking directions from Shahzad Qureshi, the person already known to have transformed much of his adopted park into an urban forest by using the Miyawaki method, one reached the spot all right. First a greenhouse came into view, then a camper's little blue tent and then the man behind this new urban forest, who happily took one around to show the work done there so far.

For the last month, the little blue camper's tent has been home to Masood Lohar, the main force behind this urban forest that would be planted on an area of 200 acres, no less. "Over the years, due to our own callousness, our ecosystem has been compromised. But we are going to plant some three million trees to create a jungle here. Once the saplings being planted there take root, it will surely do its share of work in regenerating biodiversity," he told Dawn.

Formerly working with the UNDP Global Environmental Finance (UNDP-GEF) Unit, Mr Lohar opted for early retirement. From his provident fund and pension, he managed to set up a plant nursery in Hyderabad. "It was there that I managed to ready one million saplings of peelu trees. We wanted to plant these trees, but where? The Navy offered us land at Sandspit, Murtaza Wahab also got in touch about letting us plant our trees in a park but we needed more space for so many trees. That's how we got this place," he said.

Of course, things are never as simple as they sound. Once Mr Lohar and his friends were given the land, they could not go about planting the trees on it right away. "We ran into loads of debris and once we started cleaning, we got to digging way deep to get out all the plastic bags, animal carcasses, etc. But while digging out the debris, we were also creating debris mountains in front of the sea. Now those very hills are serving as shields for the saplings against the salt spray from the sea," he pointed out.

*'We counted 42 different bird species found here; the forest will provide them a nice natural habitat'*

"Cleaning up the land has also made us broke. But we are determined," he added. Some of the saplings are sprouting fresh leaves, some new flowers. Mr Lohar ran around them like a gleeful child. "Look at the little leaves. Did you see that little flower bud?" he asks happily.

"Urban forests, planted using the Miyawaki method, are the best solution to Karachi's heatwave and other environmental issues. Earlier, in our surveys of this place, we counted 42 different bird species that are found here. The forest will provide them a nice natural habitat," he said. "Also we noticed three types of lizards here. Two we found in our survey and the third came to meet us itself," Mr Lohar laughs. "One of our guards found it on his lap."

The guards have been hired by Mr Lohar for their protection. "We get people here in the middle of the night. They threaten us and tell us to go away. There used to be several mafias operating here such as the land mafia, garbage mafia, water mafia, etc. And now that Environment Adviser to the Chief Minister of Sindh Murtaza Wahab has shown his support in our mission of saving the earth through tree plantation, these people have started saying that we are political people. Some think that we are just using the urban forest as an excuse to grab land here. But, we have told them that we are only here to plant trees," he concluded.

According to Uroosa Anwar, coordinator of Masood Lohar's urban forest programme, among the plants and trees being planted by them are moringa, sukhchain, oleander, date palms and wild almond.  
(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 19/02/2021)

### Urban forestation

ADAPTING to climate change finds high priority with the PTI. Its flagship enterprise in this respect comprises the billion-tree tsunami and the recently initiated Miyawaki forestation projects. This is commendable. However, unless addressed, certain factors can limit their benefits. For instance, there is a lack of a larger vision, and a narrow focus on 'projects'. Then there is the federal-provincial disconnect that inhibits integrated action.



Unfortunately, we invest in a 'projects-based' approach. Electric cars are imported without any overarching vision or strategy to transition to renewables. We have orange, green and red lines in the absence of a holistic, sustainable urban mobility vision. Miyawaki forests are popping up but there's no nationwide strategy of integrating urban forestation in the larger urban planning. This isolated focus means projects remain in limbo and ultimately crash. Projects are concluding points in an organic development web, preceded by a long-term vision, strategy, targets, enabled

human resources and technical and financial architecture. But for us, the 'project' is the beginning and the end.

In Karachi, the disconnect with the federal government makes matters worse. Will a patchwork of a few so-called urban forests, however well-intentioned, resolve the issue? Where is the larger vision of having an integrated 'urban forestation master plan' that avails the provisioning, regulating and cultural values of 'urban green spaces'? Green cover can serve as carbon sinks, and help reduce climate change. It acts as a wildlife habitat. Green open spaces help reduce the harmful impact of urban flooding and extreme heat events. The scale of flooding in Karachi's streets and neighbourhoods following last year's heavy rains could have been far less had we invested in more green cover that would have served as a natural drainage basin. Instead, concretised spaces increased the scale of flooding.

So how do we leverage the larger benefits of urban forestation? First, determine what to grow, when to grow, how to grow, where to grow, how to nurture and sustain. In the past, we suffered the consequences of ill-planned plantation efforts (eg cornucopia and eucalyptus). But where do we get guidance from? Let's first prepare our knowledge base. Document plant species that adapt best to our local climatic and soil conditions. Know where to plant what — roadside, parks, households/ rooftops, institutions, vertical farming etc. Can we go for bio-saline agriculture? Similarly, we need to educate ourselves on the benefits of edible farming, kitchen gardening

with associated waste-composting dividends and therapeutically designed gardens. Implementation will have to be data-driven, starting with GIS mapping. Follow implementation with monitoring. Document the social, economic and environmental benefits.

*For us, the 'project' is the beginning and the end.*

Karachi is a unique treasure among Pakistani cities owing to its coastal ecology. Amazing innovations can happen here, starting with preserving what we are fast losing — the mangrove forests. There is so much to discover in urban forestation vocabulary once you broaden your horizon of thought and action.

Next comes the phase of testing ideas. Select sample sites for implementing 'pilot projects' that may include coastal land, parks, roadside/ kerb spaces for parklets, walls for vertical farming, neighbourhoods, public spaces such as bazars, commercial districts, institutions such as schools, etc. The knowledge acquired through pilot projects can be upscaled to the city level. Rather than focusing solely on parks, focus on roadside plantation together with encouraging home gardening where each household becomes part of a national vision.

We need academies for training and capacity building. Engage and harness the knowledge of our academics. Set an ambitious target and create public enthusiasm over questions like 'when will we see our city's first botanical garden?'

The time for action is now. But who will do all this? Ideally, it is the city government that should play the guardian's role, enabling a space for all stakeholders to contribute to. In Sindh, unfortunately, functions that are best performed at the grassroots level are sourced at the provincial level. Forestation strategies are also being developed at the provincial level, restricting chances of viable implementation at the grassroots, particularly on an urban scale.

The father of sociology, Ibn-i-Khaldun, linked human morality and behaviour to the climate and the physical geography people inhabited, while the father of landscape architecture, Fredrick Law Olmsted, following the philosophy of 'environmental determinism', felt that green spaces, representing beauty and harmony result in social ills being swept away, inculcating in citizens civic loyalty, ethics and moral rectitude. So, a greener city can mean a happier, more peaceful city.

(By Farhan Anwar Dawn, 07, 14/03/2021)

### Plastic pollution

EVERY year on March 15, the global consumer movement commemorates the World Consumer Rights Day to raise global consciousness about consumer rights and needs. The day is dedicated to showcasing consumers' power and rights in ensuring an equal, safe and sustainable marketplace for all.

The theme for the World Consumer Rights Day this year is: 'Tackle Plastic Pollution'. Plastic contamination is one of the most important problems confronting the world. All the wonderful new innovations made with plastic use the material because of its low cost and durability, but the harsh truth is that plastic is negatively impacting our environment by filling landfills, causing problems for animals, and polluting our planet.

Plastic takes a long time to degrade, and only nine per cent of plastic has been recycled and 12pc has been incinerated since processing began in the 1950s. Approximately, 79pc of the 8.3 billion metric tonnes generated is currently sitting in landfills or littering our lands, oceans and waterways.

Furthermore, the process of incineration releases poisonous chemicals into the atmosphere, which is akin to adding salt to injury. For that reason, it is estimated that if significant innovations and changes in policy and behaviour are not made, the influx of plastic materials into the oceans is expected to increase manifold by 2040.

Similarly, consumers play a vital role in influencing the marketplace, so raising voice for the plastic crisis is an important step toward combating plastic pollution.

Being good citizens, it is our collective responsibility to work together in highlighting, addressing and tackling plastic pollution as well as mobilising businesses and governments to ensure a healthy world by avoiding the use of plastic in everyday life.

**Ainy Zehra**  
**Karachi**

(From The Newspaper Dawn, 07, 15/03/2021)

### Deforestation

Pakistan is among the 10 countries in the world most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Now the impact of climate change and global warming is being felt the world over as well as in Pakistan. This is evidenced by increasing atmospheric and sea temperatures and extreme weather events. However, those exercising authority do not seem to be aware of the challenges being posed by the destructive phenomenon of climate change. There are reports that the dense forests of North and South Waziristan are being fast denuded of trees, most of which are hundreds of years old, by the avaricious timber mafia. These mafias are recklessly cutting trees for use as timber and also for charcoal, which are, reportedly, much in demand in neighbouring provinces of Afghanistan.

These wood products are being smuggled out to the neighbouring country because there they fetch a handsome price bringing in fat profits for the smugglers and all those engaged in unlawful felling of trees. The smugglers enjoy political patronage and the backing

of unscrupulous elements in the local administration. The situation has worsened after the merger of tribal districts with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province. Formerly, local clans protected forests in their areas as without their permission it was not possible to cut trees. Recently a clan has banned the cutting of trees and also transportation of timber and charcoal through their area into Afghanistan. Charcoal is, reportedly, the only cooking fuel available in some provinces of Afghanistan close to Pakistan.

It is surprising that while the federal and provincial governments are doing a good job towards increasing the forest cover in the country, how the deforestation in erstwhile tribal areas has escaped their attention. One of the short-term results of deforestation is soil erosion which affects the soil and environment in multiple ways. Considering the fact that the denudation of forests in areas close to Afghanistan will harm both Pakistan and Afghanistan, the two countries should cooperate in preventing deforestation. (By Editorial The Express Tribune, 14, 24/03/2021)

### **Incineration plant in Landhi Industrial Area inaugurated**

Adviser to the [Sindh](#) chief minister on law, environment and coastal development Murtaza Wahab inaugurated SN West Incineration Plant in Landhi Industrial Area on Thursday, stating that the fully automatic plant was the first of its kind installed in the city.

"It has the capacity to burn 12,000 kilogrammes of industrial and medical waste," he said, adding that measures had been taken to minimise environmental pollution caused by the plant as well as to protect the plant from pollution.

Explaining the plant's mechanism, Wahab said, "The plant makes use of scrubbing towers to convert black smoke to white smoke."

According to Wahab, who also hold the portfolio of the Sindh government spokesperson, due to the "revolutionary policies" of the provincial government, a network of industries has been established in Sindh.

"Yet, curb environmental pollution caused by factories remains our priority," he added. "And this plant [SN West Incineration Plant] will burn industrial and medical waste in an environment friendly way."

Turning his attention to infrastructure development, Wahab said the Sindh government had constructed road in Landhi Industrial Area on the request of industrialists, spending from the provincial government's funds, as a result of which a network of industries had been established in the area.

He further stated that the Sindh CM had approved 11 new roads for SITE Industrial Area. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 26/03/2021)

### **'Climate change does not discriminate between rich and poor'**

On the global call for a climate strike by young Greta Thunberg of Sweden back in September 2019, this year, too, many environmentally conscious climate activists gathered at Bagh-i-Jinnah, also known as Polo Ground, here on Friday.

Their banners, placards, etc, matched with this year's theme #NoMoreEmptyPromises. Similar strikes were being organised privately across Pakistan — in Islamabad, Lahore, etc.

Besides discussing what was done about the demands they had presented in 2019, they also wanted to know what else was being done about the Bundal and Buddo islands' issue, urban flooding, heatwaves, etc.

Climate activist Ahmad Shabbar told [Dawn](#) that they organise two such climate strike marches in September and in March every year now. "In 2019, 23 cities all over the globe participated and Karachi was one of them. Climate change does not discriminate. You may be rich or poor, you will feel it," he said.

#### **'Greenwashing of issues'**

"After 2019, the world including us experienced the pandemic ... we had record rains here in Karachi, record winters, too, though short, and heatwaves. More is expected this year also. There were certain demands that we had shared with the federal as well as Sindh government. So they were Pakistan-level and Sindh-level demands. But we haven't really seen much happening other than tree plantations. Our government is into 'greenwashing' of issues just like they are into whitewashing," he regretted.

*Karachi activists join global movement to raise awareness about environmental degradation*

"The environment is a very political issue. Crude oil, food sources all depend on climate. Thus climate needs to be given the most importance," he said.

Aadil Ayub, another activist, was wearing a yellow shirt that had the words 'Pakistan Climate strike' written all over it.

"It is known that Pakistan is the fourth most vulnerable country to climate change. We face climate devastation, which is getting worse and worse, but not many, especially those making the decisions here seem to care," he said.

"And since those who really do care about the environment are not included in the government committees that make all the decisions concerning climate, this is how we show and highlight our concerns, by holding such climate strikes," he said.



"The decisions made here for improving the environment are not very people-centric. They are development-centric. All that is done here is to show facts and figures to like we are a climate-progressive country internationally, nothing more," he said.

#### **Call to include civil society in decision-making**

Environmental activist Yasir Husain also said that the government was anti-environment and anti-people.

"The civil society is to be included in government meetings. It is required by law. But it is not done here," he said.

"The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency [Sepa] is not doing environmental protection here. It is more into environmental destruction rather, and is one of the worst departments in the Sindh government. The same is the case with other provincial environmental protection agencies. They are all into making money," he said.

Tofiq Pasha Mooraj, who is lovingly referred to as 'maali' by his fans, said that climate change was a very serious issue but it had been on the back burner, unfortunately.

About holding the climate strike twice a year, he said it should be done even more often. "I wish I could take out time every Friday and like Greta go on strike and sit on the footpath with my banner. The cause warrants being in your face to raise awareness," he said.

And there was someone like that right there. She was Noor-ul-Huda Daudpota, who called herself a climate communicator.

The young lady had painted "Climate crisis" on her forehead with a red marker. "I work for climate change. I have been talking about climate emergency for a time now," she said.

And she has been doing it also through her actions. "I don't buy clothes until I need them. I am a vegetarian. I made my own compost from vegetable and fruit waste. I use no plastics. I don't buy makeup, I don't buy shampoo, nothing that is packaged in plastic because I live a zero-waste life. I also carry with me a zero-waste kit with reusable utensils, containers, bottle, etc. I live a sustainable life," she announced, while inspiring so many others to follow in her footsteps.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 30/03/2021)

### **Heatwave in Karachi**

SUMMER has arrived in parts of the country with full force. The Met office has predicted that a heatwave is due to strike Karachi and some other areas of Sindh and also Balochistan after March 30. It has warned that the heatwave will hit Karachi particularly hard with temperatures expected to rise to 39°C during the day and humidity levels reaching 64pc. Though parts of Sindh and Balochistan, such as Jacobabad and Sibi, are known for their overwhelmingly hot and dry summers — the temperature often soars to as high as between 45°C and 50°C — heatwaves in Karachi have become a regular phenomenon only in recent years. Perhaps the first recorded heatwave of its kind struck the megapolis in June 2015. The people were caught completely unprepared. Over the course of a few deadly hot days, it was reported that over 2,000 people in the city perished, with the crisis being exacerbated as it was the month of fasting. Among the dead, a large number comprised the elderly, the homeless and those living in irregular housing settlements where houses are often small and poorly ventilated and where electricity supply is unreliable. In fact, Karachi also experienced an unusual heatwave at the tail end of the summer season in October last year. There is little doubt that the increasing intensity and frequency of heatwaves is a consequence of global warming.

Though higher temperatures of up to 55°C have also been recorded in Jacobabad and Sibi, a drastic increase in mercury levels turns Karachi into what experts call an 'urban heat island' with devastating consequences. Met officials have advised citizens to stay indoors and keep themselves hydrated, but this is not enough. The authorities should immediately take steps to set up temporary shelters where people can rest and hydrate themselves. Over the long term, the authorities should also work with urban planners and other professionals to create more green spaces in the city and improve the transport system to reduce carbon emissions.

(By Editorial Dawn, 06, 30/03/2021)

### **City's capacity to manage disasters reviewed**

Strategies to improve Karachi's disaster response were discussed at a meeting in the commissioner's office involving 14 departments of the emergency response system and a team of Jinnah Sindh Medical University (JSMU) collaborative project titled 'Measuring Urban Capacity for Humanitarian Crisis'.

Presided over by Karachi Commissioner Navid Ahmed Shaikh, the participants reviewed the research outcomes presented by JSMU Association of Physicians of Pakistani Descent of North America (APPNA) Institute of Public Health and suggested measures like upgrading various ambulance services in Karachi according to international standards and a formal system of accreditation of ambulances to be introduced by the commissioner's office.

'Measuring Urban Capacity for Humanitarian Crisis' is a collaborative project between JSMU APPNA Institute of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The project is being conducted in three cities — Karachi, Port Harcourt (Nigeria) and Fortaleza (Brazil).

Appreciating the research project, Commissioner Shaikh said that the findings would help relevant departments to focus on the identified gaps and advised the project team to share the complete project report with all.

*Call to create a formal system of accreditation of ambulances*

Professor Lubna Ansari Baig, chairperson of AIPH-JSMU, said that an emergency management agency should be established with a universal emergency helpline. She said this while presenting the outcomes along with the project team, including Dr Junaid Razzak and Mehjabeen Musharraf.

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and stopping bleeding initiatives should be introduced for the general public through mass media, she added.

She stressed the need for building a formal medical accreditation system of ambulances by the government.

She also informed the audience that a city emergency health response capability assessment tool had been developed to measure lifesaving capability of urban health systems in the aftermath of any casualty.

Professor Junaid Razzak, director of Centre for Global Emergency Care at Johns Hopkins University, added that this tool would allow local governments to evaluate their emergency planning and humanitarian response.

In a separate message, Vice Chancellor of JSMU Professor S.M. Tariq Rafi thanked the commissioner for his support and said, "this project is part of JSMU's mission to provide modern and innovative solutions to society through relevant research".

Fourteen departments of the emergency response system participated in the meeting.

In 2019 the JSMU organised a drill to assess the city's disaster preparedness in collaboration with the then commissioner of Karachi. Earlier, around 60 representatives of civic agencies received capacity-building training, in preparation for the drill. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 14, 02/04/2021)

### **Experts call for Karachi-specific law for tree protection, plantation**

No plantation campaign can increase green cover of the city unless the government enacts a Karachi-specific law for tree protection and plantation and imposes a strict ban on cutting of tree/s, unless it is authorised by an expert committee representing all stakeholders, including the academia. This body should also serve as a legal authority on granting permission for tree plantation at public spaces.

This was shared by experts in a conversation with Dawn on Sunday.

They were expressing their opinion about the recently launched tree plantation campaigns in terms of their significance in improving green cover of Karachi.

"Ad-hoc and non-scientific approaches never bring out positive, sustainable outcomes. Plantation at public spaces should follow thorough planning, which means studying land and soil properties and getting details about the civic infrastructure existing above and under the ground at the site," said Dr Zafar Iqbal Shams, a senior teacher and researcher at Karachi University's Institute of Environmental Studies.

*Demand strict ban on tree cutting*

In other words, the job required involvement of relevant stakeholders, including the community that could play an important role in ensuring sustainability of plantation, he added.

"If these factors are ignored, saplings will either die soon out or suffer from stunted growth, wasting money, time and energy while contributing nothing to environmental improvement."

**No law to protect trees**

Asked about Karachi's green cover, Prof Jamil Kazmi of KU's geography department who has studied the subject extensively through Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping, said that the city's green cover increased from 500 square kilometres in 1998 to 570 square km in 2008 due to extensive plantation of conocarpus and mangroves and expansion of the agriculture sector.

"It was reduced to 260 square km in 2018 and 2019 (within the city), almost a 50 per cent reduction, following reduction in groundwater level, depletion of agricultural area due to extensive extraction of sand and gravel along riverbeds that led increased runoff, desertification and urban flooding. Another factor contributing to reduction in tree cover was the increase in the built-up area."

**Exotic species**

The city's green cover, he argued, could only increase with eco-friendly development and trees were protected under a legal cover.

"Thousands of trees are cut down on account of different development projects and a few hundred saplings are planted as replacement. On the other hand, we see either plantation of exotic species or ones which are not suitable for a particular land and the result is high mortality."

In this respect, Dr Kazmi referred to plantation of date palm trees on the University Road by the government sometime back. Ninety per cent of them died. Each plant costing about Rs2,500 had been brought from Khairpur.

“There is a need for a scientific approach in consultation with experts. We must discourage monoculture as it happened in the past and the entire city was filled with eucalyptus and then conocarpus and promote indigenous species.”

Highlighting some other challenges to increasing the city’s cover, senior ecologist Rafi-ul-Haq said the biggest challenge was the absence of a single civic authority governing the whole city and a Karachi-specific law for tree protection and plantation.

“The forest law doesn’t apply to Karachi. We need a law that clearly defines rules and regulations for plantation in the city and fixes severe punishment on tree cutting. There should be an expert body with legal powers to survey the city and develop plantation guidelines for a particular area per its requirements, permits plantation campaigns and monitor the process periodically.”

### Three city zones

According to experts, the city can be divided into water-logged, saline and dry land zones and plants suitable to specific conditions should be grown in a specific area. Apart from the coastal land, many parts of the city have become water-logged and highly saline due to leaking water and sewerage pipes.

Plants, such as conocarpus and eucalyptus, Dr Shams suggest, can help improve soil conditions in these areas, if they are planted with proper planning and care. They both are exotic non-invasive (not a threat to local vegetation) with high water requirements and deep roots that can damage underground civic infrastructure.

### Ecological trial

All exotic/imported species must go through an ecological trial to prove that they are not invasive, he said.

Plants suitable for water-logged and saline land also include coconuts, chikoo, babul or gum, Jerusalem thorn, Farash, java palm (jamun) and sugar apple (sharifa).

Both date and coconut species are members of the palm family. The former is suitable for dry areas and the other for coastal land.

“Plants such as moringa, date palm and wild almonds are not suitable for coastal land and will show poor growth,” replied Dr Mohammad Qaiser, senior botanist and co-author of Flora of Pakistan, when asked about plantation of these species under a recently launched urban forest project along the Clifton beach.

An exotic species, he pointed out, didn’t necessarily be invasive (species) that threaten local biodiversity as they fast replace local vegetation.

“Devi or vilayati keekar (Prosopis juliflora) that releases toxins tops the list of invasive species in our environment as it has spread across the country. Leucaena leucocephala (ipil ipil), which is among the 100 worst invasive species in the world, can be seen in some areas of Karachi.”

Some exotic species suggested by Dr Shams for different districts of Karachi are: Delonix regia (Gulmohr), Pithecellobium dulce (Jungal jalebi), Peltophorum pterocarpum (Copper pod), Parkinsonia aculeata (Jelly bean tree) and Cordia sebestena (Geiger tree).

Some suggested native tree species: Crateva adansonii (Barna), Alstonia scholaris (Devil tree), Albizia julibrissin (pink siris), Albizia lebbek (lebbek tree), Cassia fistula (Amaltas), Erythrina suberosa (Flame tree), Thespesia populnea (Portia tree), Dalbergia sisso (Sheesham) and Monoon longifolium (false ashoka) and Moringa oleifera.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 05/04/2021)

## Survey finds Korangi’s air quality worst amongst city’s districts

Air and noise pollution levels across the city, particularly in Korangi district, are worrisome and there is a dire need for urgent intervention to minimise their adverse impact on environment and public health, said participants at a consultative meeting held at the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI) on Monday.

The meeting on Karachi’s air quality and noise levels was jointly organised by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) and KATI.

Presiding over the meeting, Sepa director general Naeem Ahmed Mughal gave a presentation, highlighting the current status of the city’s air quality index, particularly the concentration of PM2.5, and noise pollution levels.

He shared figures of a survey conducted last year at 93 different locations of the city prior to the lockdown and said the overall city situation with respect to air quality, particularly PM2.5 concentration and noise levels, depicted a bleak picture.

*‘Deteriorating air quality and worsening noise pollution would have direct impact on human health’*

Referring to environmental quality standards, he said air quality and noise levels in most areas of the city were beyond permissible limits, which would ultimately have health implications, including respiratory diseases and lung cancer.

“Deteriorating air quality and worsening noise pollution levels would have direct implications on human health, particularly on vulnerable groups,” he said.

The findings of the survey, he said, showed that Korangi was the worst district in terms of deteriorating air quality. "The list also includes some spots in the city, particularly the main traffic corridors, including the one in the area of Liaquatabad 10. The air quality index in these areas was found to be far beyond the permissible limits," he noted.

The Sepa director general further shared that noise pollution levels in almost all districts were beyond permissible limits except in district South.

Suggesting ways to tackle the problem, KATI president Saleem-uz-Zaman urged Sepa to pursue a policy for importing electrical vehicles as, he said, Pakistan had electricity in surplus.

"This would help reduce air pollution since vehicles are the main contributing factor to air pollution," he told the audience.

Dr Zafar Fatmi, representing the Aga Khan University, floated the idea of a pollution-free Korangi as a pilot project, which later could be replicated on a mass level in the city. He described the different modalities in that regard.

Environmental consultant Jahangir Asad underscored the need to ascertain the sources of pollution, which required detailed monitoring of air quality and noise levels in the city.

Senior environmentalist Shahid Lutfi shed light on the ambient air quality management and suggested strategies to curb air pollution. He also emphasised the need for redefining Sindh environmental quality standards with respect to different sectors.

"For the betterment of the environment, we need a sustainable mechanism for air pollution management," he recommended.

Concluding the meeting, Sepa director general spoke of the agency's commitment to the environment despite having limited human and financial resources.

"The department is trying its utmost to improve air quality and noise pollution levels in the city. It has increased its monitoring activities as well as focusing on mitigation strategies. What, however, we need is cooperation from all stakeholders."  
(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 06/04/2021)

### **Urban forest developed in Nooriabad**

A new urban forest has been developed in the Nooriabad industrial area, says a press release.

The forest has been developed by Pakistan Cables Limited on 2.5 acres and hosts approximately 40,000 trees. Planting of trees commenced in 2019 at the Pakistan Cables new factory site at Nooriabad.

Based on the proven method of urban forestation from Japan and developed by Akira Miyawaki, it has been implemented by renowned entrepreneur of the Urban Forest, Shahzad Qureshi.

Kamal A. Chinoy, executive director Pakistan Cables, sharing his views at a media briefing said: "It's imperative that as an industry we work towards uplifting the living standards of our planet.

Urban forests promote a healthier environment and most importantly environmental education among the public at large.

"By developing the urban forest in an industrial estate, we hope to inspire others to step forward and join us in giving back to our planet."

Fifty-nine indigenous species are planted in the urban forest. Miyawaki's technique makes the trees grow 10 times faster than in nature, creating a self-sustaining forest within two to three years, said Mr Qureshi.  
(From The Newspaper Dawn, 14, 14/04/2021)

### **Karachi bakes at 43.5°C, Cyclone Tauktae starts dissipating**

The districts in lower Sindh including Karachi remained under the influence of prevailing cyclonic storm Tauktae on Monday and experienced another very hot and dry day.

The mercury rose to 43.5 degrees Celsius in Karachi.

The Met department has forecast very hot and dry weather with gusty winds continuing in Karachi, Hyderabad, Shaheed Benazirabad, Badin, Mirpurkhas, Tando Allahyar and Thatta districts till tomorrow (Tuesday) evening.

Gusty winds, it said, might affect orchards in these districts.

"Lower Sindh will likely have the same weather conditions as the storm will move further north-eastward. Today, Karachi and Mithi had the same temperature," said Sardar Sarfaraz of the Met department.

The storm had started dissipating and weather in lower Sindh would improve by Wednesday as the sea breeze blocked by the storm would resume, he added.

According to the Met officials, the highest ever maximum temperature in the month of May is 47.8 degrees Celsius, which was recorded in 1938.

Over the last decade, the highest recorded maximum temperature is 46 degrees Celsius recorded in 2015.

“The very severe cyclonic storm Tauktae has tracked northward at a speed of 15km/h during last the 12 hours and lay centred at a distance of about 580km south of Thatta and 650km south-southeast of Karachi. The maximum sustained winds around the system’s centre were 180-200km/h gusting 220km/h,” stated the department’s advisory posted on its website at 9pm.

The system, it said, was likely to move further northward for some time then re-curve towards northeast and cross the Indian state of Gujarat.

“None of Pakistan’s coastal area is under threat. However, under its influence, dust/thunderstorm/rain with few moderate to heavy falls and gusty winds of 40-60km/h are likely to occur in Tharparkar and Umerkot districts [and] at isolated places in Badin and Sanghar districts during the next 36 hours.”

Sea conditions will remain rough to very rough and fishermen of Sindh are advised to suspend their activities till May 19. (By Newspaper’s Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 18/04/2021)

### Lyari girls go to war against plastic

Lyari may be one of the more impoverished areas of the metropolis, but that does not mean its women are any less concerned about the environment. In fact, their latest documentary on environmental protection has been nominated among seven other films for the Greenit campaign of the German Embassy in Pakistan.

The documentary, titled ‘Environment on the Frontline’, has been created by the Lyari Girls Cafe. It highlights the hazards of using plastic and its impact on the environment. It also shows young girls of Lyari distributing handmade bags among locals and asking the masses to avoid using plastic bags.

The voting process for the best documentary will continue till May 15. LGC members have taken photography and civil journalism courses and used these skills to the fullest when highlighting pollution in Lyari and Karachi.

The team comprises its head Sehrish Turk and other members including Bisma Soomro, Shazia, Tasweer Fatima Khatri, Urooj and Amjad Hussain - all of whom are residents of Lyari. Turk tells The Express Tribune that they worked on street photography to show a better image of Lyari. She adds the documentary features activities carried out by LGC which aims to raise environmental protection on a public level.

Turk says promos for the documentary were posted on social media two months ago by the German Embassy, Islamabad. She outlines that all the team members agreed to shoot a short documentary based on LGC’s environment-related activities.

According to Turk, her team has been affiliated with the LGC since 2017 and has been participating in awareness campaigns for women empowerment, children’s rights and environmental protection. “LGC is promoting the trend of cycling among women and providing technical training to aspiring female boxers, among other activities,” claims Turk.

She says that it took them over a month to complete the documentary and all six members of her team participated in shooting and editing the videos, while some others helped them voluntarily. The social activist hopes their participation in the documentary contest will bring the role of Lyari’s women environmentalists to the fore.

“Climate change is a global issue and we want to urge every sensible person to participate in such activities,” says Turk.

“We will be more assured of our positive work if people encourage us and vote for our video to be selected for the award,” she adds. She says their participation in this contest has instilled confidence among other women of the area and many are now willing to work on such projects.

“This experience has boosted our spirit and we want to make more documentaries to highlight the positive image of Pakistan.”

#### **Peddling away**

According to Turk, cycling used to be a difficult activity for women, but LGC has now made it possible. She boasts that women are now cycling and filming videos in a place where it was once difficult for them to even travel alone. She reveals that local women are also making and distributing paper and cloth bags in markets to eliminate the use of plastic.

The pandemic, lockdown and restricted moment have hampered the promotion of their documentary. “It is a challenge for us to approach and ask communities to watch the film and support our goals,” says Shazia Jameel, one of the filmmakers and the members of the LGC.

“The film seems to have gained the attention of thousands of people,” Jameel says. “We have been receiving messages and support from different corners of the country,” she adds, saying supporters of her organisation have sent encouraging messages from all over the world.

The documentary, titled "Environment on the Frontline", highlights hazards of using plastic and its impact on the environment. It also shows young girls of Lyari distributing handmade bags among locals and asking the masses to avoid using plastic bags.

The LGC launched the Say No To Plastic Bags campaign in August 2019. "The girls have distributed roughly 11,000 handmade bags. We have to distribute 4,000 more in the coming days," reveals Urooj Bisma, another member of the LGC.

The film also shows young girls cycling in different busy neighbourhoods and on roads of the city. "We need a pollution-free Karachi and Pakistan," urges Bisma Soomro. She and other team members have visited different to boost their environmental movement.

Around 60 girls cyclists regularly go for a ride on Sunday and over 150 girls have learnt cycling since 2017 when LGC launched the activity.

\*With additional reporting by Sameer Mandhro  
(By Kashif Hussain The Express Tribune, 04, 11/05/2021)

### **Murad declares emergency in coastal districts of Sindh ahead of Cyclone Tauktae**

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presiding over a cyclone emergency meeting on Saturday at CM House declared emergency in all the districts located along the coastal belt in order to take precautionary measures to meet any untoward situation.

"A control room should be established at the chief secretary office to keep close coordination with all the districts, in respect of their requirements and giving them necessary instruction on behalf of the government," he said.

The meeting was attended by Rehabilitation Minister Faraz Dero, Adviser Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah and other relevant officials.

A senior meteorologist told the meeting there was a generic term for non-frontal anti-clockwise rotating weather system with surface wind ranging from 34 to 47 knots. He added that it usually caused three types of impacts, including torrential rains, thunderstorms, high-intensity winds and storm surges.

He said that cyclone classification in Pakistan and South Asia caused different kinds of disturbance.

*Fishermen advised not to venture into the sea during May 16-20*

"Gusty winds and damage in detaching fruit from the tree is caused when a depression develops a pressure of 996 hPa/mb with a wind speed of 22 to 27 knots. When deep depression with a pressure of 986-995 hPa/mb develops with a wind speed of 28 to 33 knots negligible damages are caused to houses, fruit trees, some crops and caravans," he added.

The Met director said that when the cyclonic storm had a pressure of 971-970 hPa/mb along with a wind speed of 34-47 knots it caused minor damages to houses and significant damage to signboards, trees and small craft.

"Severe cyclone storm emerges when a pressure of 930 to 955 hPa/mb with a speed of 64-89 knots and it causes significant structural damage, caravans blow away. In this way two other categories are extremely severe cyclonic storm and super cyclonic storm, which cause extensive damage to house, power and communication lines," he said.

#### **Tracks of cyclone**

The meeting was told that there were two possible tracks of the cyclone. "If the cyclone crosses Indian Gujarat, then its outer peripheral effect would be on Thatta, Badin, Mirpurkhas, Tharparkar, Umerkot and Sanghar districts. Thatta, Badin and Mirpurkhas would receive heavy rainfall of 70 to 90mm each, Umerkot 80 to 100mm while Tharparkar would receive very heavy rainfall of 230 to 250mm," he said.

According to the weatherman, in case the cyclone crosses northwest and crosses west of Karachi then its outer peripheral effect would be on Karachi, Hub, Lasbela, Hyderabad and Jamshoro districts. Karachi may receive 60 to 80mm rainfall, Hyderabad 30 to 50 mm, Jamshoro 150-170 mm, Dadu 180 to 200mm, Bela and Sukkur 80 to 100 each and Jacobabad 60 to 80mm.

Another official of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) told the meeting that the depression over southeast Arabian Sea had intensified into a cyclonic storm Tauktae and lay at a distance of about 1,460km south-southeast of Karachi.

He said that the system was likely to intensify further into a severe cyclonic storm (SCS) during the next 12-18 hours and move in north-northwest direction and reach Indian Gujarat by May 18 in the morning.

"Under the influence of this system, widespread heavy to very heavy dust/thunderstorm-rains with gusty winds of 80-100 kilometre per hour (kmph) are likely to occur in Thatta, Badin, Thar, Mirpurkhas, Umerkot and Sanghar districts from May 17 to May 20. Dust/thunderstorm-rains with few heavy falls and gusty winds of 50-70kmph are also likely in Karachi, Hyderabad, Jamshoro, Shaheed Benazirabad, Sukkur, Larkana, Shikarpur, Jacobabad and Dadu during May 18-20. The sea conditions would be rough to very rough and fishermen are advised not to venture in the sea during May 16-20," he said.

#### **Control room, billboards removal ordered**

Keeping in view the presentation given to him, the chief minister directed the administration in Karachi to start clearing all the choking points of nullahs.

He directed the Karachi commissioner and administrator to start removing all the billboards, neon signs and ask the builders to make precautionary measures for security of their under-construction structures.

He directed the PDMA to provide dewatering machines, generators to local administration, where required.

Mr Shah directed fishermen not to go into the deep sea for fishing from Sunday.

He directed the chief secretary to set up a control room in his office and post a BS-19 offer as its head to receive requirements from districts and issue necessary instructions to the administration on behalf of the government.

He directed Tharparkar district administration to take extraordinary measures because it was expected to receive very heavy rains.

All the district administrations should make alternative accommodation arrangements, in case shifting of people became necessary.

He directed the chief secretary to seek the requirement of funds from the district administration and ensure timely releases. The district administration was also directed to set up control rooms in their districts.

He also issued directives to the irrigation minister to declare emergency in his department and keep proper monitoring of the embankments of the canals and distributaries.

He also directed the LG and rehabilitation ministers to stay in Karachi and personally monitor each and every arrangement.  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 16/05/2021)

### **Strong winds break heat spell in Karachi**

At least five people, including a minor, were killed and around a dozen others were wounded in roof and wall collapses, among other accidents, as strong winds, accompanied by dust and sand, bludgeoned Karachi on Tuesday evening. Mild to heavy showers also battered parts of the city offering respite from the sweltering heat that had gripped the city.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department Director Sardar Sarfaraz, the hot spell witnessed over the past couple of days, under the influence of tropical cyclone Tauktae, may persist till Wednesday (today) afternoon.

Normally a cyclone loses its intensity after touching land but the intensity of the cyclonic storm Tauktae did not decrease as it landed over Gujarat, India, he said. However, Sarfaraz reiterated, the cyclone does not pose a threat to Pakistan's coastal areas.

Through Monday night and till late Tuesday afternoon the metropolis sizzled under the cyclone's influence, which resulted in the suspension of sea breeze. Mercury shot up to 41.5 degrees Celsius and remained at 33 degrees Celsius at its lowest on Tuesday while humidity in the air was recorded at 45 per cent.

The heat spell was broken in the evening as strong gusts of wind, blowing at a speed of 70 kilometres per hour, battered the city. The dust storm rose in the Malir, Gadap Town, Super Highway, Gulshan-e-Maymar, Gulistan-e-Jauhar and Ahsanabad areas and had soon gusted throughout the city.

The dusty gale was followed by rainfall of varying intensity in different parts of the city.

According to the PMD, the heaviest rain was recorded in PAF Base Masroor at 7.3 millimetres, followed by 5.8mm in Surjani Town, 1.1mm in Saddar and 1mm in Nazimabad.

#### **The damage**

While the sudden change in weather offered respite from the torrid conditions, it also brought death and destruction in different areas of the city.

An eight-year-old boy plunged to his death as the storm wind swept him off the second floor of a building in Clifton.

The deceased, identified as Shan, was shifted to Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) for medico-legal formalities. The body was later handed over to the aggrieved family.

Meanwhile, the wall and roof of a house collapsed in Dabba Colony, Baldia Town, killing a woman and a man on the spot.

The deceased, identified as Kaleemunnisa, 55, and Waheed, 45, were shifted to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital for medico-legal formalities. Meanwhile, a motorcyclist was killed and a woman was injured when their two-wheeler skidded on Murtaza Chowrangi near Malir River as rain pelted over them.

Both Noor Bakhsh, 25, and his cousin, Samina, were shifted to JPMC in injured condition but the former succumbed to his wounds shortly after.

At least a dozen others were wounded in separate incidents as roofs, walls and billboards collapsed on Rashid Minhas Road, in Defence Housing Authority, Mehmoodabad, North Karachi and other areas.

Residents of some areas also reported power outages soon after the dust and storm hit.

In a statement issued later in the night, the K-Electric claimed that power supply was restored in all areas within four hours.

\*With additional input from APP  
(By Aftab Khan & Wasiq Muhammad The Express Tribune, 04, 19/05/2021)

### **Mangrove forests finally bouncing back**

Mangrove forests not only protect coastal communities from natural disasters, but also provide shelter to the marine life which earns them a living. A decade ago, their dwindling numbers spelled disaster. Now, however, signs are more encouraging.

Efforts to conserve one of the largest arid climate mangrove forests in the world has borne fruit and the cover of the Indus delta has expanded to 220,000 hectares.

The Sindh Forest Department claims over hundred per cent growth in the Indus deltaic mangroves over the last 10 years. It adds strategies are being implemented to expand the mangrove plantation to more than 260,000 hectares.

The Indus delta mangrove forests are an important ecosystem in the coastal deltaic region formed by the River Indus. The forest is, almost entirely, dependent on freshwater discharges from the river and a small quantity of freshwater from domestic and industrial effluents of Karachi.

Sindh Forests, Mangrove and Rangelands Chief Conservator Riaz Wagan says the mangrove forest was measured at 107,000 hectares in 2009/10. "In 2020, this has expanded significantly to 220,000 hectares along the area extending from Korangi Creek to Kajjar Creek.

He reveals that the plantation of 10,000 more saplings has started in the month of May as part of an annual plantation activity along the coastal belt. "This will continue till October 2021," he says.

The chief conservator continues that by the year 2023, 30,000 more saplings will be planted to achieve the target of 260,000 hectares - the level of mangrove forestation in the 1980s. "The covered area of mangroves forests decreased over the last two decades of the previous century," he says.

The official continues that lack of freshwater flow in the Indus deltaic region, soil erosion due to sea intrusion, pollution, unregulated cutting and reckless utilisation of mangrove trees are also major factors contributing to deforestation.

According to Flora of Pakistan, eight species of plants have been identified along the coast of Pakistan, out of which four have completely disappeared. Meanwhile, three species are on the verge of extinction and only *Avicenna Marina* is surviving in the Indus delta. At present, out of the four mangrove species found in the Indus delta, *Avicenna Marina* makes up 90 % of total mangrove forests.

A Handbook on Pakistan's Coastal and Marine Resources was published by Mangroves for the Future - a joint initiative of stakeholders including the ministry of climate change and forest department. It notes that an area of 344,846 hectares, comprising varying densities of mangroves, mud flats and water channels, was declared as protected forests in 1958.

It was placed under the management and control of the Sindh Forest Department. However, the marked area has reduced significantly. A 1985 assessment by the Sindh Forest Department, using Landsat data and ecological surveys, revealed an area of 280,470 hectares under mangroves. In 2003, SUPARCO said the total mangrove cover reduced to 86,728 hectares, while other figures from 2005 outlined a further decline to 85,000 hectares - the lowest on record.

It is estimated that 90% commercially important tropical marine species, especially prawns, spend at least some part of their life in the mangroves. IUCN had warned in 1998 that if mangroves deplete, up to 250,000 tonnes of fish caught off the Sindh Coast will be at risk.

The economic importance of mangroves of Indus delta can be measured from the fact that they provide important breeding zones for fish, shrimps, lobsters and crabs. This helps the national economy earn foreign exchange of around US\$100 million annually from exports, besides providing employment and a livelihood to more than 100,000 people associated with the fishing industry.

Riaz Wagan says the Forest department has adopted a strategy to engage local communities. He adds a significant majority of local residents have started cooperating with government agencies after observing the benefits of mangrove rehabilitation. He says the participation of local communities is vital for the conservation and rehabilitation of mangrove forests.  
(By APP The Express Tribune, 04, 04/06/2021)

### **KPT needs to understand its responsibility'**

The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) launched a drive to teach both the general public people and Karachi Port Trust (KPT) officials about the importance of collecting garbage from seawater.

SEPA officers and staff conducted the drive along ten nautical miles of seawater between Baba and Gaba jetties in Kemari.



More than ten tonnes of garbage was picked up and loaded into solid waste management vehicles parked on the shore. The waste would ultimately be disposed at a landfill site.

Sindh Chief Minister's Advisor on Law, Environment, Climate Change, and Coastal Development Barrister Murtaza Wahab was present as was provincial environment secretary Muhammad Aslam Ghauri.

Also in attendance was SEPA Director-General Naeem Ahmed Mughal and other senior officials. Talking to the media, Barrister Murtaza Wahab said the officials decided to mark World Environment Day by taking steps on the ground to improve the environment rather than giving speeches in airconditioned hotels.

"Going to the field to deliver something practical requires a little hard work," he quipped. He said the purpose of collecting garbage from flowing seawater and taking it to the landfill site was not only to sensitise people, but also to make the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) realise its primary responsibility of preventing pollution.

He said oil spills from ships all over the world have spread a carpet on the surface of the water.

"This must be visible to the KPT administration. It should ensure that all ships and powered boats must be made to comply with environmental standards." He pointed out that if SEPA takes steps to prevent pollution in the sea, it is said that the water falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government and not bound by provincial environmental law.

He urged people who come to Kemari for recreational and commercial purposes to protect their sea and not litter. "Doing so spreads marine pollution and prevents fish from entering the polluted area. This hurts the fishermen's income," the advisor said. He further said KPT should emerge from its land disputes and play a role in protecting the sea. He offered SEPA's as the agency understood that the sea belonged to all and protecting was a collective responsibility.

Replying to a question, Wahab said the Solid Waste Management Board used to collect garbage from five districts of Karachi, but now its scope is in all seven districts, including densely populated one such as Central and Korangi.

Asked polythene bags, he said the Sindh Government was initially very strict on enforcing the ban which led to the introduction of biodegradable plastic bags in the market. "However, harmful plastic bags remained available in small shops and stalls because the public did not cooperate as it should have. Now the situation is returning to normal, but there would be strict implementation of the ban once again."

The advisor said SEPA had installed treatment plants in many industries. "Besides, the Sindh chief minister has allocated Rs500 million to clean the drains of Karachi, an installment of which has also been released. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 05, 05/06/2021)

### **Seпа ordered to start process afresh for public hearing on EIA of seafront project**

An environmental tribunal on Tuesday set aside a notice issued by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) for public hearing on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of a multistorey luxurious commercial-cum-residential project proposed to be built on the seafront by a private builder.

The three-member tribunal headed by its chairman retired Justice Nisar Muhammad Sheikh also directed the Sepa director general to issue a notice inviting the general public for hearing on the EIA of the proposed project.

While allowing the appeal, the tribunal's chief ordered that the public hearing should be held within 15 days after publication of the notice in newspapers as provided under the law.

*A tribunal has stopped the environmental watchdog from holding the public hearing scheduled for July 2*

Altaf Hussain had filed an appeal and challenged a public notice issued by the Sepa chief on June 29 inviting the general public for hearing on the EIA of the multistorey project — HMR Waterfront Development — in Phase-VIII of Defence Housing Authority (DHA).

His counsel, Irfan Mir Halepota, informed the tribunal that the project was proposed on Abdul Sattar Edhi Avenue, which starts from Khayaban-i-Iqbal in Phase-V and ends at the 16th Street near the DHA Golf Club, but Sepa did not mention its exact location in the public notice.

The public hearing was scheduled for July 2, but Sepa failed to mention the place of the event, which has to be the launching site of the proposed project under the law.

He submitted that the proposed project would be built on Plot Numbers 1 to 16 on a total area measuring 836,730.36 square feet.

He added that it would comprise of 18 towers (two commercial and 16 residential) having basement and ground plus 31, 33, 34, 35, 36 and 37 floors in each tower.

The total built-up area would be 13,200,203 square feet, according to the concept plan.

The counsel argued that Sepa in compliance with Section 17 of the Sepa Act, 2014 and Regulation 11 of the act that pertains to the review of initial environmental examination and EIA had got published the public notice.

The public notice did not comply with mandatory requirements of Regulation 11 under which the type of the project, its exact location, name and address of the proponent and the place at which the EIA of the project can be accessed are required to be provided, the counsel pointed out.

He added that the public notice merely mentioned that “project HMR Waterfront Development will be located at Abdul Sattar Edhi Avenue in Defence Housing Authority (DHA) Phase VIII, Karachi”.

The counsel stated that the impugned notice also violated Regulation 11 (3), which required giving 15 days to the general public prior to holding of the meeting to review the EIA, as 14-day time had been given in the present case.

Besides violating the environmental law, Mr Halepota argued that the impugned public notice also infringed upon the fundamental Right to Information as bestowed under Article 19-A of the Constitution.

The counsel pleaded to declare the impugned public notice for public hearing on the EIA of the proposed project as unlawful.

In the appeal, it was requested to declare that Sepa was required to get published a fresh public notice in accordance with Regulation 11 of the Sepa Act, 2014.

It was also urged to restrain Sepa, its officers and agents from holding the proposed public hearing scheduled for July 2 till the final disposal of the appeal.

(By Naeem Sahoutara Dawn, 13, 30/06/2021)

### **Toxic ship at Gadani**

This week, an old ship has anchored at the Gadani shipbreaking yard, even though Interpol had issued a warning as the ship contained toxic chemicals. While the Environment Protection Agency of Balochistan has sealed the plot where the ship is anchored, and an investigation has been launched to check the mercury levels aboard the ship, there are many questions that come to mind.

Foremost being, how did the ship even get to the Gadani yard in the first place? As per the Basel Convention of 2004, old ships that have been categorised as ‘toxic waste’ cannot leave their home country for scrapping without the explicit permission of the importing country. This law was set into place following many developed countries sending off their retired ships to mostly South Asian countries for scrapping, causing an environmental crisis in the poor countries. As a result of these regulations, Gadani was one of the shipbreaking yards to be adversely affected. Even in this most recent case, Bangladesh and India had refused to scrap the ship due to the high levels of mercury and other chemicals on board. Curiously, the deputy director of Balochistan’s Environment Department stated that no such permission had been granted to the ship owner for scrapping at the Gadani yard. The authorities are now investigating how the ship got here.

Interpol’s warning regarding the presence of toxic metals and gases is not unfounded though. In 2011, four Bangladeshi workers died after inhaling toxic gases as they worked in a compartment of an old ship to dismantle it. Had the ship in question at Gadani not been investigated, a similar or perhaps worse loss of life could be possible. It was only last year that 17 people had died as a result of soya bean dust, an aeroallergen, and toxic material in the air due to pet-coke handling at Karachi’s Keamari Port. It is imperative for the government to thoroughly investigate how this ship was able to reach Gadani without permit and ensure strict measures to prevent any further accidents.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 31/06/2021)