

# NEWSCLIPPINGS

**JULY TO DECEMBER 2018**

## ENVIRONMENT



## Urban Resource Centre

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## **Massive afforestation stressed to make environment healthy**

Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Fazal-ur-Rahman has said that massive afforestation is the best option to make Sindh clean and green and to ensure healthy environment.

The chief minister, who was speaking at the launching of monsoon tree plantation campaign by planting a neem tree sapling on the premises of NJV School, the oldest public school of Karachi, also reviewed on Tuesday progress of 31 ongoing mega projects under Karachi Package.

He stressed the need for maintaining the projects properly after their completion.  
He also visited the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT).

Speaking at the tree plantation drive launching ceremony at the NJV School, the chief minister emphasised the need for undertaking massive planting of indigenous/local trees across the province to combat and avert severe heatwaves observed in Sindh in recent years due to climate change.

"Massive afforestation is the best option to make Sindh clean, green and a moderate climatic region to ensure healthy environment," he said and asked all government departments to plant trees on their premises.

Minister for Forests and Wildlife Khair Mohammad Junejo on the occasion also asked all residents of the province to plant more and more trees to improve environment of Sindh.

The additional chief secretary of forests and wildlife department apprised the chief minister of measures being taken to achieve better results from previous plantation campaigns.

He said that although the plantation target was set at 11 million saplings during monsoon, in view of more than usual interest of the public due to heatwaves in Sindh, a massive plantation was expected.

After plantation of the sapling, the chief minister visited the NJV School, which has been adopted by the Akhuwat Foundation. The school houses over 1,000 students with 45 per cent female enrolment.

The CM promised to extend full support to the NJV School.

He also praised the facilities at the school like AstroTurf, IT lab, English as a Second Language room and the under-construction library, hostel and gymnasium.

### **Mega projects**

The chief minister who also held a meeting to review progress of 31 ongoing mega projects under the Karachi Package, directed the project director of the package to start beautification work of Submarine underpass and Sunset-Gizri Boulevard flyover.  
He said that after completion, the projects must be maintained properly.

He asked the chairman of planning and development to work out a plan for maintenance and repair of the completed projects in the city.

He also directed the PD of the Karachi Package to complete the Karachi Zoological gardens renovation at the earliest.  
CM visits SIUT

During his visit to the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation, the chief minister said that SIUT was providing best treatment. He visited different wards of the SIUT and inquired about health of different patients.

He said "Almighty Allah has bestowed enormous qualities on Dr Adib Rizvi and this is why patients, their attendants, the staff of the institute love him and respect him," he said.

The chief minister said that the patients not only from rural and urban areas of Sindh, but also from other provinces and even from different countries visited SIUT for their medical treatment.

"I am proud to say that SIUT is one of the largest and best institutions in the world where free of cost treatment and best and personal care is given to patients."

(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 18, 18/07/2018)

## **Conservation of mangrove ecosystem discussed at KU**

Students and faculty members of the Institute of Sustainable Halophyte Utilisation (ISHU), University of Karachi, marked Unesco's International Day for the Conservation of Mangrove Ecosystem on Thursday. Various activities were held that aimed to raise national awareness about the importance of this unique ecosystem.

Dr Bilquees Gul, director of the ISHU read out a message by Ms Audrey Azoulay, director general of Unesco following a lecture which emphasised Unesco's commitment to supporting sustainable conservation of mangroves through various platforms all over the globe.

Ms Azoulay, in the message, emphasised on how mangroves contribute towards a better environment. She stated that mangroves provide protection from storms, tsunamis and rising sea levels and also prevent shoreline erosion, regulate coastal water quality, maintain fishing areas and contribute to improving food security for many coastal communities.

Mangroves also provide a habitat for endangered marine species. In addition, their natural mechanisms for storing atmospheric carbon, known as blue carbon sinks, help mitigate the effects of climate disruption along coasts.

However, the mangrove ecosystem is seriously threatened today. It is estimated that global coverage of mangroves has halved in 40 years, largely the result of coastal development.

Through its biosphere reserves and geoparks, which include mangrove forests in various parts of the world, such as the Sundarbans between India and Bangladesh — one of the planet's largest mangrove forests — Unesco is actively working to add to knowledge about this unique ecosystem and improve its management and preservation.

This commitment is also intended to further the sustainable development of indigenous communities and to promote the role of women, who are at the heart of the local economy.

Dr Gul added that the international day for the conservation of the mangrove ecosystem is an invitation to renew efforts to support the preservation of an ecosystem that is vital for our planet and its inhabitants.

ISHU also organised a series of online lectures by world renowned scientists. During the seminar local and foreign mangrove experts delivered online lectures to create awareness about the importance of mangroves. The speakers highlighted the importance of the mangrove ecosystem that is vital for our planet and inhabitants. In this connection, poster competition as well as field trips and site visits will also be organised for students in the coming week.

(By PPI Dawn, 18, 27/07/2018)

### **Oyster Rocks: Newly-discovered safety wall becomes risky picnic spot for Karachiites**

Just a little ahead of Dolmen Mall Clifton, Oyster Rocks, a relatively unexplored area, seems to have become the new favourite picnic spot among Karachiites.



Although Oyster Rocks is fast becoming a central point for the people of the city to spend their leisure time, the 'safety' wall is a risky place of leisure. The pointed and unstable concrete blocks are a cause for concern as one can easily slip off of it.

The 2.5 kilometre long breakwater was built by Chinese experts at a cost of billions of rupees to secure the South Asia Pakistan Terminal.

The breakwater is a structure used to protect the harbour from the impact of waves and make it easy for ships to anchor. It aims to protect large freight ships from the hazards of a high tide and ensure stable water.

#### **Sea View instead of French beach**

The protection of the safety wall as well as the people who visit the area rests with the Karachi Port Trust (KPT). However, despite attracting hundreds of people on a daily basis, the KPT has no procedure in place to monitor the breakwater.

In addition to those seeking adventure, one can witness pushcarts and vendors who have set up shop at Oyster Rocks too. According to the vendors, the area is most frequented by youngsters, who often misplace their steps on the pointy rocks and fall, severely injuring themselves.

A massive steel-built tower was constructed for the purpose of monitoring the wall. However, the tower is only used by the visitors to get a view of the sea. This too is a risky act as the tower is not built to sustain too much weight. Moreover, the road leading up to the China Port's safety wall is rocky and believed to be unsafe.

#### **Water commission threatens to stop constructions in DHA, Clifton**

Images and videos of the China Port are trending on social media, rapidly increasing the location's popularity as a place of leisure and adventure.

Packed with families throughout the week, especially on weekends, the spot has been compared by many visitors to the ports of Dubai and Mumbai, which have similar concrete, conical-shaped stones.

(By Kashif Hussain The Express Tribune, 04, 30/07/2018)

### **Climate challenges**

YEAR after year, the findings of the annual State of the Climate report make increasingly evident the rapid pace at which climate change is affecting the ability to sustain life on Earth. Its report on 2017 is no different; based on global temperatures, last year was the second or third warmest year (depending on which dataset is analysed), and the hottest non-El Niño (a climate event that warms the Pacific) year ever. Sea levels rose to a record high last year, as did greenhouse gas emissions. The Arctic and Antarctic both experienced considerable ice melt, glaciers lost mass for a 38th consecutive year, and prolonged warm oceanic temperatures decimated vast swathes of the world's coral reefs. Scientists across the globe all agree that these changes are endangering the world's food and water supplies, and contributing to the devastating climate events — heatwaves, flooding, storms and wildfires — witnessed of late. Ironically, the report initiative is spearheaded by a US government agency — the very same government whose leader, President Donald Trump, torpedoed hopes of the Paris Agreement's impact to mitigate the impending disaster when he decided to withdraw the US from the list of signatories.

In Pakistan, on May 28, 2017, the temperature in Turbat reached 53.5°C — an all-time high for us and the world's highest temperature for May — while the summer monsoon rainfall was also 22.5pc less than the long-term average. Though our carbon footprint is relatively minuscule in terms of global emissions, we bear the brunt of extreme weather events, and for that reason alone must take action. Yet, here too building climate resilience is absent in the national discourse and does not even register at the tail end of policymakers' priorities. This lack of political will is manifest in the window dressing that is the Ministry of Climate Change — demoted to a division in 2013, then notified as a ministry again in 2015, only to be led by a minister with no expertise on the subject and with a tiny budget. Planning and development still rely heavily on carbon-intensive energy projects and unsustainable water management solutions. The PTI, in its 2018 manifesto, dedicated an entire section to climate change and made bold promises. With the new government to be formed in a matter of days, it is hoped that it delivers on at least some of these by ensuring that allocated funds for climate adaption come closer to matching the true, gargantuan scale of Pakistan's environmental challenges. (By Editorial Dawn, 08, 03/08/2018)

### **Expert calls for growing forests in city**

Given the intense hot weather conditions the city has been facing for the past few years, it is important that the government drastically enhances Karachi's green cover and turns at least 25 of its big parks into urban forests. This can be done easily with the help of a Japanese method, which is not only cost-efficient, but also requires less water and helps plant grow faster.

These suggestions were put forward by Shehzad Qureshi, heading Urban Forest, during a ceremony held to launch Make Pakistan Green Again, an initiative by an oil company, at a park on Wednesday.

A textile engineer managing his own businesses, Mr Qureshi has done an incredible job by creating a small forest of native species, where one could spot many birds hardly seen at any other place in the city.

"The method named after a Japanese botanist and plant ecologist Dr Akira Miyawaki requires plantation of native species close to each other. This helps plants to coexist and share resources through their root network," he explained, adding that plants didn't require irrigation because of their strengthened root system after initial three years.

According to him, the small urban forest he has grown in his adopted park in Clifton with the help of sewage took two and a half years to take shape like a jungle. "We only used organic material that includes simple manure, rice husk and bagasse. Plants grew 10 per cent faster and the survival rate was 93pc."

Mr Qureshi, who took inspiration for the urban forest initiative after being deeply moved by the large number of mortalities the city experienced due to severe heatwave in 2015, said his target was to grow 50,000 trees for which he had started utilising more space in the park.

The city of Karachi, he pointed out, desperately needed more such forests. "It's now a matter of our survival owing to the challenges of climate change we face. Everybody has to come forward, plant trees and take care of them."

The event, organised by Byco Petroleum Pakistan Limited, saw plantation of 1,000 saplings.

(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 18, 16/08/2018)

### **Pollution & intelligence**

A NEW study has found a link between air pollution and impaired cognitive performance, with the effect impacting all age groups, particularly those over 64. In previous such studies, a link has been established between air pollution and cognitive development in students. The latest study, conducted mostly in Chinese cities but with universally applicable findings, looked at a sample of 20,000 families across a four-year period, the results of the tests administered to them measuring cognitive performance and how far they had been exposed to nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide. The findings showed that the longer people were exposed to these compounds, the more their intelligence was damaged, in some cases enough to destroy a year's education. Language skills were harmed more than mathematical skills, and men were affected more than women.

The findings are troubling for medical professionals everywhere because the compounds in question are common components of urban air pollution. The authors of the study said 95pc of humanity is now breathing dirty air and is susceptible to harm. For Pakistan, the work is of particular importance given the massive investments being made in coal-fired power plants. Burning coal releases huge quantities of sulphur dioxide that can spread over an area of hundreds of square kilometres, depending on wind conditions. Urban air quality is also particularly bad due to unregulated fuel additives and other industries, contributing to large amounts of combusted impurities. The new link between air pollution and intelligence should add another measure of urgency to the government's agenda of prioritising environmental issues. Greater regulation of industry and the vehicular fleet of the country will be

necessary to bring this menace under control. Such work can only be done in coordination with local bodies, and the new government must immediately begin its task. The quality of our future human capital depends upon it.  
(By Editorial Dawn, 08, 30/08/2018)

## Decreasing rainfall adding to city's environmental, water woes

Karachi is witnessing its driest monsoon spell in the last two decades with nearly zero millimetres (mm) of precipitation being recorded so far by the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD).



The absence of rainfall is a matter of concern for environmentalists as the dry spell is likely to decrease the underground water level, raise the level of pollutants in the atmosphere. The Hub Dam, which supplies water to a large area of the city, is also likely to reach its dead level soon as there have not been enough rains to fill it.

The monsoon season in the provincial capital starts in July and lasts till the middle of September. No significant rainfall has been recorded till now and the season is going to end in around two

weeks.

### Historical trends

Commenting on the situation, PMD Director Abdul Rashid explained that it is not the first time that 'trace rainfall' has been recorded in the monsoon season. Trace rainfall, he explained, is when the rain is recorded at less than 0.1mm.

According to Rashid, 0mm of rainfall was recorded in Karachi in the monsoon seasons of 1987 and 1991, while 1994 was another year in which the city received scanty rainfall with the total precipitation during monsoon recorded at 0.2mm. Around 50 years back, 1964 was another dry year with 0.5mm of rainfall during monsoon.

### First monsoonal showers bring respite to Karachi

Analysing the data, the Met office director said that occurrence of dry years in the city did not indicate that successive years would also receive less rains. The data, according to him, showed that the city received sufficient rainfall in years that preceded and followed the arid years.

Sharing the data of the monsoon season of Karachi of the last 10 years, Rashid said the city received 91.5mm of rainfall in 2008, whereas, in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 it rained 272.8mm, 274.6mm, 280.1mm, 129.1mm and 114.9mm respectively.

Monsoon season did not result in enough rains in the city in 2014 with only 12.4mm of rainfall being recorded. The next three years, 2015, 2016 and 2017, witnessed a gradual increase in precipitation as 48mm, 98.8mm and 125.3mm of rainfall were recorded.

The current monsoon has been a dry one not only for the provincial capital but also for the entire province. According to the PMD director, it has rained 80% less in Sindh this monsoon compared to its average rainfall.

When *The Express Tribune* sought Rashid's opinion about prospects of rains in Karachi in the coming months, he said there was very little likelihood of rainfall in September. October, he said, would be hot and sunny.

### Met office predicts drizzle in Karachi

When asked about possibility of a heatwave in October, which is generally one of the hottest months in Karachi, the PMD officer said chances of heatwave were low however they could not be entirely ruled out.

### Climate change effects

"Due to climate change and global warming, the rain pattern is changing but this is certainly not the first time [it has happened] - at least according to the data," Rashid said. He asserted that it is not the case that there will be no rains in Karachi from now onwards.

"All over the world, many regions where usually less rain is recorded have been flooded and areas where there are heavy rains have remained relatively dry," the PMD officer said, referring to the changing rain patterns.

Commenting on the erratic rainfall pattern, University of Karachi Institute of Environmental Sciences Assistant Professor Dr Amir Alamgir said one must study rainfall data of 10 years to arrive at sound conclusions regarding rain patterns. Data of the last 10 years shows that southern areas of Pakistan, including Karachi, have been receiving less rainfall than before, he said.

"According to Investor Group on Climate Change's report of 2014, Sindh and Karachi's rainfall has been reduced by 10 to 15%," Dr Alamgir maintained. He cited climate change as the reason for changing rain patterns, adding that shifts in rainfall trends was one of the signs of climate change.

The academic was of the view that hydrological cycle of the port city had been disturbed and drizzles that were being occasionally experienced in the city were cloud bursts and not actual monsoon rains.

### Implications

According to Dr Alamgir, implications of decreasing rainfall could be dangerous. Growers of Karachi's suburban areas are mostly dependent on groundwater, he said, adding that its levels will likely continue to decrease.

#### **40% of Karachi without water for last 15 days**

"In order to cultivate in suburban areas of the port city, reliance can increase on domestic and industrial waste water," he said. Occurrence of rainfall is necessary in a city like Karachi to clear its atmosphere of pollutants, the academic said, adding that in the absence of rain, air pollution levels will rise.

Sindh Abadgar Board Vice-President Syed Mehmood Nawaz Shah seconded Dr Alamgir's views. Cultivation in Karachi is carried out in Malir, Gadap Town and near Hub, he said, adding that farmers mostly use underground water to irrigate their crops, which cannot serve as a sustainable resource without sufficient rainfall.

#### **Hub Dam**

Major parts of Karachi are largely dependent on the Hub Dam for their water supply, the water level in which is dependent on rainfall in its catchment areas.

Currently, according to a government official, the Hub Dam can supply water to Karachi and Balochistan for the next 50 days as water levels in the dam have increased around four to five feet due to some rain in catchment areas of the dam.

The official said 276 feet is the dead level of the Hub Dam, which has now risen to 282 feet. Karachi is currently receiving 50 million gallons of water per day (MGD) from the dam and adjoining areas of Balochistan are receiving 30 MGD.

The official, however, maintained that if it did not rain in the monsoon season, the dam could again reach its dead level. The Karachi Water and Sewerage Board has already taken permission from the Water and Power Development Authority to continue taking out water from the dam after it has reached the dead level, he said, adding that even then a limit will be reached soon after which the dam will not be able to supply any more water.

(By Oonib Azam The Express Tribune, 04, 05/09/2018)

### **'Ending marine pollution needs comprehensive approach'**

A comprehensive strategy including incentives to industries opting for environment-friendly processes is required to tackle growing marine pollution that has jeopardised the survival of many species and contaminated food chain, said experts while sharing their views on government efforts to improve waste management system and harbour conditions in the city.

Dr Nuzhat Khan, a senior scientist associated with the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), said that most untreated waste ended up in the seas, seriously affecting marine life and contaminating food chain. This complex issue required a multi-pronged strategy.

"It's mainly our land-based mismanagement which is polluting our seas and oceans. Hence, the strategy should include setting up an effective waste management mechanism in the city as well as looking at ways to bring a positive change in industrial operations," she said.

Explaining this point, Dr Khan said that there was an immediate need for legislation aimed at encouraging industries to move towards environment-friendly systems, processes and increase their exports.

#### *Industrialists unwilling to cooperate with research institutions*

"This is critical. You have to create a mechanism that sends a strong message that it's pretty much gainful to invest in environment-friendly systems, for instance, offering major tax relief or providing utility services at highly subsidised rates for setting up treatment plants and replacing obsolete technology with environment-friendly methods.

"Creating grounds for increasing exports could be another way as internationally it's now an obligation upon exporting countries to show that they are meeting basic environmental, labour health and safety criteria during production," she noted.

Dr Shazia Nisar, an associate professor at KU's chemistry department, believed that cost-efficient solutions were available to reduce waste generation and tackle existing pollution, which could be successfully implemented if industrialists started collaboration with academic institutions.

Unfortunately, however, industrialists were not ready to cooperate with research institutions for pilot projects which needed investment, she said.

"Second, we need to create awareness on the hazards of pollution and industrial discharge so that people realise how pollution damages environment and endangers public health," she said.

According to her, one neglected area in this regard was improper use and disposal of textile dyes, a major hazard for both environment and public health.

"This area needs attention. These chemicals are highly toxic and people are using them without knowing their source or inquiring about their authenticity," she said, adding that the university in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission recently held a seminar, which received a good response and there was a need to hold more such events for creating awareness.

Endorsing the idea of encouraging industries to become environment-friendly, she said the government should offer some kind of assistance to industries willing to use environment-friendly chemicals and waste treatment methods. "There is also a dire need to strengthen capacity of officials dealing with environment and implement relevant rules and regulations."

Mohammad Moazzam Khan of World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan said that the government had to step in and each individual had to fulfill his/her responsibility towards environment.

"Right now, a major quantity of the solid and liquid waste daily generated in the city ended up in the sea. While the government needs to strengthen and activate all its relevant departments including the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency, individuals need to ensure that they dump garbage at the designated site," he said.

It is important to recall here that the government was forced to look into environmental, water and health issues plaguing the whole province after the Supreme Court intervened in these matters last year.

While the pace of improvement is too slow and an obvious change is yet to be seen, many experts believe that the government needs to adopt a holistic approach, demonstrate more seriousness and explore avenues that could help bring a lasting change. In this regard, they also referred to the task force set up over a month ago to improve hygienic conditions at the Karachi harbour where operational activities had been marred by a continued conflict between the Fisheries Cooperative Society and Karachi Fisheries Harbour Authority for years.

They also questioned Sepa's capacity to handle major environmental challenges.  
(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 15, 10/09/2018)

### **'Human beings the only ones on Earth who are disturbing ecosystem'**

"Even though we say plant more trees, there is no thought process, no plan and no vision," said Amber Alibhai of the Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment during her talk on 'Urban forestation' in the opening session of the three-day 'Youth for sustainable living' conference, a Goethe-Institut Pakistan and Schools: Partners for the Future (PASCH) initiative at the Goethe-Institut here on Friday.

"Most of the trees being planted during the drive are Gulmohar and Neem but they require a lot of water. Will they be able to survive in the current environment of high temperatures and little water?" she wondered aloud.

She said the city didn't need as many bushes or shrubs as it did trees, which can provide a green canopy.

#### *Global warming, need for more trees discussed at conference*

"But the big old trees of Karachi are over 60 years old. They are not going to be around for much longer and we need to think of planting more trees that provide a shade cover as well as be able to sustain the current environment and weather," she pointed out while reminiscing of old days when Karachi had many green parakeets and lots of squirrels because of the dense green cover. Rumana Husain, founding member of I Am Karachi, spoke on 'Building a framework for understanding environmental issues'. "We may be dreaming about living on another planet but it has not happened as yet," she said.

"Man is disturbing the ecosystem. We are the only beings on Earth who are doing this. So we need to think deep and hard about things such as our obsession with consumption, the green house effect and how these things lead to global warming. The more we consume the more needs to be produced, the more natural resources are exploited and environment is polluted.

"Global warming is real and has terrible consequences, such as melting of glaciers, the rise in ocean level, hurricanes, etc. It also has an effect on wildlife and sea life," she reminded along with making some suggestions.

"Be energy smart. There are thousands of students going to school every day and they commute in personal transport. How about carpooling or having more school buses. Save electricity. Open windows instead of turning the air-conditioner on. Conserve water, eat wisely, refuse the use of plastic bags. These are small but tangible actions. Living simply is more satisfying," she said. Mahim Maher, digital editor of Samaa English and Samaa TV, came up to speak for Kamal Siddiqi, director of the Centre of Excellence for Journalism at the Institute of Business Administration, who was seated nearby but had lost his voice due to a throat infection, focused on 'Water issues in Pakistan and how they are reported in the local media'.

Diverting one's attention to issues such as getting water through tankers instead of the line, the quality of water, water storage and dams, the politics of water, the falling level of ground water she said that reporting on water sucks because it is boring.

"It is the failure of the media for not doing stories that people care about," she said urging the students in her audience to report on the subject themselves on social media such as Instagram, Snapchat or You Tube.

Earlier, Goethe-Institut Director Stefan Winkler welcomed the participants of the conference while sharing with them what to expect in the coming sessions which also includes a trip to Keenjhar Lake.

Mr Burghard Brinksmeier, cultural counselor, German Embassy, Islamabad, who was also present on the occasion, said that the conference was specially designed for young people and students in particular who are part of schools that have the German language included in their school curricula.

Mr Ingolf Vogel, head of the Cultural Section of the German Consulate General in Karachi, said that they are more focused on inviting and addressing youth in conference because young people are the ones who will be making decisions and influence the future.

"The world desperately needs people to come up with solutions. Therefore, this conference will help them know and better understand the issues to come up with their own ideas for the future," he said.  
(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 16, 15/09/2018)

### **Karachiites clean up Sea View beach**

Volunteers belonging to different organisations participated in a beach clean up to observe the International Coastal Clean-up Day on Saturday.



A beach clean-up activity, organised by the World Wide Fund for Nature – Pakistan in partnership with the National Volunteer Programme (NVP) and a beverage company, was conducted at the Sea View beach on Saturday. The activity aimed to create awareness and a need to check the increasing pollution of the world's seas and oceans.

More than 150 volunteers, belonging to NVP participated in this activity, 'Beaches Without Waste.' They included university students, corporate executives, professionals, social activists and members of the digital community. The volunteers cleaned up to 300,000 square meters of the public beach. The litter was collected in separate colour-coded bags for plastic waste, paper waste and other waste, to facilitate recycling as far as possible. The total weight of the wastage was measured at 535 kilogrammes.

Speaking about the activity, Coca-Cola Pakistan General Manager Rizwan U. Khan said, "This activity is a small but significant component of Coca-Cola's global product packaging policy." He said that their campaign, 'World Without Waste,' that was launched on January 19, aims to help bring back a bottle or can for every single one that it sells. He added that the goal was to make recycling more accessible and collect and recycle 100% of the waste by 2030.

Meanwhile, the Green Media Initiatives in collaboration with Hashoo Foundation also conducted a beach cleaning in Karachi on Saturday.

Around 100 students from University of Karachi, Institute of Business Management, Federal Urdu University for Arts, Science and Technology (Fuuast), youth and volunteers participated in the event, which was aimed at creating mass awareness about the significance of cleaning coasts and oceans and protecting them from waste, particularly plastic and discharge of sewerage. Speaking on the occasion, Fuuast Zoology Department chief Seema Naz Siddiqui and other participants applauded Green Media Initiatives' event organizer Shabina Faraz for organising beach cleaning to raise awareness.

Expressing her views, Faraz said, "I would like to thank all participants for playing a leading role in this mega activity besides the students who have come from various NGOs and citizens of Karachi for collecting tonnes of solid and plastic waste from the beach,"

She was of the view that growing pollution in the seas was due to limited awareness amongst masses and lack of proper infrastructure. Faraz said they should use sustainable solution of solid waste and reduce plastic pollution. She invited the media to play its role to create awareness about environmental degradation.

The International Coastal Cleanup Day was started by the Ocean Conservancy in 1986 to engage volunteers in collecting marine debris from the world's waterways. During the cleanup, volunteers act as "citizen scientists," tallying the items they find on data cards.

The information is used to identify the sources of marine debris, examine trends in debris items, and increase awareness about the threats of marine debris. Cleanups may be done along the shore, from watercraft, or underwater.

The ocean covers 71% of the Earth. The ocean helps produce the water we drink and the air we breathe. It absorbs carbon dioxide and lessens the effect of global warming. It also produces food and recreation opportunities for millions of people. Despite its importance, the ocean is still not fully explored or understood.  
(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 05, 16/09/2018)

### **Climate woes & population**

FEW will contest that global climate change is a serious threat to the future of human welfare. And there is a plethora of suggestions regarding potential interventions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as switching to renewable energy sources and making energy use more efficient. But the international climate community is largely silent about the potential role of reducing population growth as a policy option that can improve the environment and bring many other health and socioeconomic benefits as well.

This silence may be understandable in the more developed countries that have seen sharply declining birth rates and where issues like aging populations are now of more concern. But it has no place in developing countries like Pakistan, where environmental

sustainability is threatened not only by growing climate risks, but also by the pressures of a large and still fast-growing population. With 208 million people, we are the sixth most populous country in the world, and at an intercensal growth of 2.4 per cent, our population growth rate is the highest in South Asia.

At the same time, we rank seventh among countries most adversely affected by climate change. Rising temperatures are disrupting rainfall patterns, melting glaciers, intensifying floods, and causing extreme weather events. But perhaps the most frightening environmental stress to emerge is water shortage. We are already water scarce and the situation is projected to worsen over the next 20 years. Already, large parts of the country are affected by drought, which could spread and intensify with devastating consequences.

*The alleviation of scarcity would be short-lived unless the number of consumers also stabilises.*

For now, the government's response seems focused on expanding water storage capacity. The Prime Minister and Chief Justice of Pakistan Fund for Diamer Bhasha and Mohmand Dam is a good initiative for improving our water security, but in the longer run, the country must adapt in a way that ensures equilibrium between future consumption and projected supply. Water conservation in all sectors, domestic, agricultural, industrial, etc, is an important second avenue to prioritise. But even if we were able to implement and enforce good practices in time, the alleviation of scarcity would be short-lived unless the number of consumers also stabilises. Urgent efforts to reduce unplanned pregnancies and slow population growth must comprise the essential third prong for tackling the water crisis in Pakistan.

A few simple calculations confirm this. Total availability of water resources in Pakistan is currently estimated at around 178 billion cubic metres (BCM). With our current population size, this translates into 860 cubic meters (m<sup>3</sup>) per capita, a level indicating scarcity. At an annual growth rate of 2.1pc, our population will expand to 246m by 2025 and over 300m by 2035. Unless we improve our ability to store and conserve water, per capita water availability will fall to 730m<sup>3</sup> in 2025 and 590m<sup>3</sup> in 2035. Assuming we succeed in building the Diamer-Bhasha dam in time, it will add a precious 9.9 BCM to our water availability, but even then, due to population growth, per capita availability will only improve to around 770m<sup>3</sup> in 2025 and 630m<sup>3</sup> in 2035.

Regrettably, Pakistan's population programme has shown very slow progress in this area. The results of the 2017 census indicate only a negligible decline in population growth over the last two decades, and the latest Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18 results show hardly any change in fertility between 2007 and 2018.

A major factor in the neglect of population growth in climate change policy is the common perception that birth rates are not the responsibility of the government and cannot be changed by its intervention. This outlook, which is especially prevalent among economists (including prominent experts in Pakistan) assumes that birth rates reflect actual demand for children, which is not the case. Each year about 89m unintended pregnancies result in 30m unplanned births in the developing world among women who want to avoid pregnancy but are not using effective contraception. The Population Council estimates that there are 4m unwanted pregnancies each year in Pakistan alone. Reasons for non-use of contraceptives include lack of access to services and the high costs of modern methods. Fear of side effects of methods, disapproval of husbands, and reluctance to violate social norms are also significant barriers to use.

Voluntary family planning programmes can reduce these obstacles by increasing access to contraceptives, providing subsidies, and expanding method options, thus contributing to sustained declines in fertility. The potential impact of such programmes — and the fact that population growth can be reduced substantially, not through coercion, but simply by avoiding unplanned outcomes — is illustrated best by comparing Bangladesh and Pakistan. The two countries had almost the same population size in 1980 when Bangladesh implemented one of the world's most effective voluntary family planning programmes. In contrast, Pakistan's programme has until recently been relatively feeble, lacking government funds and most of all commitment. Not surprisingly, the population trajectories of the two countries have differed sharply since 1980. By 2100, Pakistan's population is projected to be 178m more than Bangladesh. This difference will be attributable squarely to the success of the Bangladesh family planning programme. In the international discourse on climate change mitigation and adaptation, developed countries may be excused for wanting to avoid the awkward role of promoting voluntary family planning in developing countries: after all, it is the developed world that is primarily responsible for causing the climate to change through its excessive emission of greenhouse gases, and entering into a population policy discussion in the context of climate change might appear to blame the poor countries for problems created by the rich ones. But countries like ours, which are already facing the brunt of climate change, must focus urgently on what is a viable and affordable policy option for adaptation.

All of us who care about alleviating Pakistan's water crisis, and ensuring its sustainable and equitable development — especially the new government — must prioritise the most obvious and inexpensive solution: focus on population welfare as a key to dealing with climate change stress.

(By Zeba Sathar | John Bongaarts Dawn, 08, 17/09/2018)

## Smoking scourge

IT is encouraging that action is being taken on an issue that has for long been relegated to the back burner. According to recent news reports, the federal health services minister, Aamer Kiani, has written to the chief ministers of all four provinces about the need to apply more stringently the law on enlarged pictorial health warnings on cigarette packets. Suggesting a crackdown, one of the letters — to the Punjab chief minister — notes that the use of tobacco products causes the deaths of some 160,000 people every year across the country. Almost 23.9m adult Pakistanis use the leaf in some form or the other, and the economic cost resultantly incurred by the national economy stands at a staggering Rs143bn. Pointing out that under the targets, that are in line with the UN SDGs, the country is obligated to reducing one-third premature mortalities from non-communicable diseases, Mr Kiani noted that tobacco use is the leading preventable risk factor from NCDs. He added that under SDG 3(a), Pakistan must strengthen the implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

The most frustrating aspect of the war of attrition that Pakistan must continue to wage against the use of tobacco is that at least on paper, the laws have been framed and are available. Section 4 of the Cigarettes (Printing of Warning) Ordinance, 1979, prohibits the manufacture and/ or sale of cigarette packets that do not carry health warnings as prescribed by the government. Similarly, as recently as December, the health ministry prescribed enlarged pictorial health warnings for tobacco packaging, a notification that came into force in June this year. These are part of a network of laws and directives that includes bans on smoking in public places, the sale of tobacco to minors, the sale of loose cigarettes etc. Even so, violators are legion, and smoking continues to entrap millions. This is a battle that the country can simply not afford to give up on.

(By Editorial Dawn, 08, 02/10/2018)

### **Karachi citizens brave hot weather amid power and water crises**

Most localities in the city plunged into darkness for the second consecutive day on Tuesday with K-Electric (KE), as usual, attributing the breakdown to tripping of Extra High Tension (EHT) lines caused by humid weather.



Earlier, the power supply was suspended in many areas between Sunday night and Monday morning, which according to the power utility company, was due to similar reasons. KE said the tripping forced the power utility to carry out load management in different localities throughout the city.

#### **K-Electric asks SHC to disqualify PPP candidate for defaulting on bills**

The areas that remained affected due to the tripping of the EHT line at midnight and by irregular load shedding till Tuesday afternoon included Defense, Clifton, Saddar, Garden, Lyari, Landhi, Korangi, Gulistan-e-Jauhar, Gulshan-e-Iqbal, North Nazimabad and Uthal.

The intermittent power breakdown, beginning on Sunday, also created a major water crisis in the city. According to the Karachi Water and Sewage Board (KWSB) a 72-inch main water trunk burst due to the water's back pressure after the power failure on Monday morning at Dhabeji pumping station. "This also affected 133 million gallons of water supply to the city," said KWSB spokesperson, Rizwan Ahmed. The line was repaired by Tuesday evening. However, there was another power breakdown which led to a burst in another water line on Tuesday morning. The water was, however, being supplied through alternative sources, according to Ahmed.

According to one citizen, who asked not to be named, the disruption of KE's system has become routine since the past many years and affects the lives of the city's residents even when there are small changes in weather. "Such frequent power breakdowns never happen in any other place as they happen in Karachi," she said.

She also felt that KE call centre provides misleading information to consumers in such situations causing further distress. Khurram Ali, a resident of Clifton, said that the power utility company should focus more on producing their own indigenous electricity to meet the demands of the residents of Karachi rather than relying on the national grid after every power disruption in Karachi. "If KE is efficient in taking bills and carrying out load-shedding, then they should also be efficient in providing residents of the port city uninterrupted power supply," he said.

According to KE Communication Director Sadia Dada, the power demand in Karachi is approximately 2,500 megawatts which shoots up to 2,900MW in peak season, whereas KE has a shortfall of up to 350MW in normal circumstances.

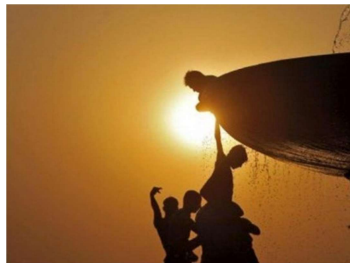
#### **Electric company official arrested**

"The added shortfall up to 350MW to K-Electric from the national grid remained restricted on Tuesday due to technical reasons, forcing load management even in load-shedding exempt areas of Karachi," she told The Express Tribune. The company usually gets 650MW for Karachi from the national grid. The shortfall is met with scheduled load-shedding as aligned by the policy of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA).

(By Our Correspondents The Express Tribune, 05, 03/10/2018)

### **Heatwaves imminent if tree cover not increased, warns IPCC report**

Heatwaves in the port city, similar to the one in 2015, are expected to become a common occurrence in the future, warned a report by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).



According to the IPCC's report, global warming of 1.5°C-2°C is going to worsen the situation in the city where conditions comparable to the deadly 2015 heatwave are expected, along with unavoidable poverty and health risks that come with global warming. This is the conclusion of the most comprehensive assessment of the science of climate change to date highlighted in the IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C which was discussed at a meeting of governments in Incheon, the Republic of Korea. IPCC is a body set up to provide a clear scientific view for governments on the causes, impacts and solutions to rising temperatures.

**Temperature to remain moderate till June 9 in Karachi**

The world has already passed a degree of warming as carbon emissions have risen continuously since the 1850s. The IPCC 1.5°C report now confirms that the current degree of global warming has already exacerbated human health factors, such as extreme weather events, heatwaves, food security and sustainable development, and will worsen with rising temperatures. Meanwhile, World Health Organisation Senior Scientist Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum said, "Threat to human health is increasing as nations fail to prepare. The report makes clear that the lower the warming, the safer for health. As we pass 1.5°C-2°C, or even higher, the risks to health will multiply."

According to co-author of the *1.5°C Health Report*, Arthur Wyns from Climate Tracker, "It is now the scientific consensus that global warming affects human health, causes the loss of millions of lives and is a poverty multiplier."

#### **Forecast predicts temperatures to rise over the weekend in Karachi**

Although risks to human health and food production systems will be lower at 1.5°C than at 2°C of warming, warming of 1.5°C is not considered 'safe' for most nations and communities, the IPCC report finds.

According to the world's leading climate scientists, because of 1.5°C of warming, twice as many megacities will become heat stressed and will expose an additional 350 million people to deadly heat stress by 2050.

"The impacts of 1.5°C would disproportionately affect disadvantaged and vulnerable populations through food insecurity, higher food prices, income losses, lost livelihood opportunities, adverse health impacts and population displacements," the report concludes.

Professor Dr Zafar Iqbal Shams of the Institute of Environmental Studies at the University of Karachi believes that the increase in heatwaves in Karachi can be attributed to the urban heat island effect.

According to Dr Zafar, urban heat islands are established in urban centres due to extensive use of concrete structures in the development of the city due to which the temperatures significantly rise as compared to the surrounding rural areas.

Dr Zafar suggests that the only solution to reduce and mitigate heatwaves is to increase tree cover in the city that would overcome the risk of heat strokes, which claimed the most lives in the deadly 2015 heatwave.

"Authorities must implement laws to protect trees from getting cut down in the name of development. The only long-term solution to mitigate the worst effects of climate change is to expand our urban tree cover and initiate eco-friendly practices such as green roofs on terraces and high-reflectivity coatings for roads can be used reduce urban heat island effect," said Dr Zafar.

Residents of Karachi are already experiencing hot weather with the mercury having touched 40°C during the past few days. Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) states that mercury is likely to reach 33-40°C as the heatwave continues to prevail in the metropolis for the next two days.

(By Muhammad Salman Khan The Express Tribune, 04, 08/10/2018)

## **Plastic pollution**

MOST Pakistanis would be forgiven for not knowing that a ban on plastic bags exists across most of the country, given that our federal and provincial governments have failed to implement such bans properly. In fact, implementation is so poor that, in any market, one will see plenty of plastic bags changing hands with impunity.



The verdict is still out on why bans on plastic bags have so far failed in Pakistan. While there may be multiple reasons, a lack of will seems the most likely cause behind the continuing widespread availability and use of plastic bags. After all, if authorities in the capital can effectively ban smoking shisha in public places, end the decades-old tradition of kite flying, and impose food and time restrictions on wedding ceremonies, how difficult is to curtail the use of plastic bags?

In Sindh, for example, a ban has existed since 2014 under the Sindh Prohibition of Non-degradable Plastic Products (Manufacturing, Sale and Usage) Rules and the Sindh Environmental Protection Act. It was only earlier this year that the provincial government finally issued a notification to impose the ban. The issue isn't particular to Sindh alone, as poor implementation of plastic bag bans has also been reported in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Our country is facing an escalating plastic bag pollution crisis. A recent survey by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency found that about 55 billion bags are currently being used, and is expected to increase yearly by 15 per cent. The sooner we realise and address the shortcomings in our strategy to ban plastic bags, the less likely we are to share the fate of countries where plastic bags have caused floods by clogging waterways, seriously harmed ecosystems, and contributed to the spread of vector-borne diseases.

#### **Why have bans on plastic bags so far failed in Pakistan?**

Imposing an outright ban on a widely used item without creating disincentives to discourage its use and providing some affordable alternatives is futile. Our government needs to consider strategies such as imposing a bag tax, which has proved to be very effective in other countries. For example, after a five-cents bag tax was imposed in Washington, DC, usage fell by an estimated 86pc. There's no reason why it wouldn't have similar results in Pakistan.

Initially, only single-use plastic bags, which take decades to decompose, can be tackled. Thick recycled plastic bags are a good alternative if they are reused, as are oxo-degradable bags. But these alternatives should be taken with a pinch of salt. If people only use thick bags once, they'll be as harmful to the environment as standard bags, if not more so. Oxo-degradable bags still take three years to decompose completely; even longer if they end up in a landfill with limited exposure to oxygen.

One might think that the only remaining option is to use bags that are not made of plastic, but this isn't an entirely straightforward solution. Paper bags are considered by many to be the most obvious substitute, but recent research has shown that they contribute significantly to global warming. This leaves us with cloth bags, which also have a big carbon footprint.

With no alternative that is 100pc eco-friendly, the most impactful approach is to maximise our reuse of shopping bags, be they made of thick plastic or cloth. That is what people used to do before the advent of single-use shopping bags, so going back to this eco-friendly habit shouldn't be too herculean a task. On our part, we need to get used to taking our reusable bags with us when we go shopping.

But, of course, the bigger responsibility lies with the government, whose job it is to facilitate people in transitioning from single-use plastic bags to reusable bags. Steps need to be taken to make the transition easier for shopkeepers, who have been and will be facing backlash from consumers when they don't provide free shopping bags. Affordable alternatives to traditional single-use bags should be made readily available, and if the government is willing to go the extra mile, subsidising them could expedite the implementation of plastic bag bans across the country.

Besides these measures, there is also an urgent need to launch awareness campaigns to educate people about the necessity of banning single-use plastic bags, and how changing our habits and using more eco-friendly bags can make a difference. So far, awareness campaigns to influence the behaviour of shoppers are ostensibly non-existent in Pakistan. Without awareness campaigns, there is bound to be widespread non-compliance.

The growing demand and use of traditional plastic bags in Pakistan despite bans is a testament to the lack of efforts by the government. Plastic bag pollution could have been curtailed years ago if more concrete and meaningful steps had been taken, but it's not too late for the government to mend its approach and put a lid on this growing menace once and for all.

(By Obed Suhail Dawn, 09, 12/10/2018)

## **Climate change threat**

It was once said that we have to preserve the well-being of the planet for future generations. But it now seems that the threat is imminent, and within the span of current generations' lifetimes. A recent report by the United Nations' scientific panel on climate change warns of looming consequences as early as 2040 — wildfires, the death of coral reefs, and rising food shortages being just some of the anticipated disasters. The panel recommends rethinking and restructuring the global economy. But are the decision makers — world leaders, economists, and the owners of giant corporations — paying attention? And will they be able to put aside political differences, urgently form new policies and implement them across the board?

Pakistan is one of the countries most vulnerable to the risks of climate change. According to a Gallup poll, we are also now one of 19 countries in which the majority of the population considers climate change to be a leading threat. Although we produce only 0.34pc of global greenhouse gases, we suffer the effects disproportionately due to our geographical makeup. Being an agrarian economy, with more than 50pc of the population linked to agricultural activities directly or indirectly, the implications are even more disastrous. We have already witnessed the distressing effects of unpredictable and unprecedented weather changes in the form of floods that have displaced millions in Sindh; severe water shortages, drought, and starvation in Thar and Balochistan; heatwaves in Karachi that claimed the lives of 1,200 people in its worst spell; and flash floods and landslides in the Gilgit-Baltistan area. This has led to large-scale climate-caused migration. The Paris Agreement stated that responsibility for climate change lies with all countries. Encouragingly, the PTI government has made climate change a top priority. In his first address to the nation, the prime minister listed environment in his 11-point agenda. The country must follow a strict course of action and implement the frequent reporting of progress. Adapt or perish. If not, the future looks dystopian.

(By Editorial Dawn, 08, 14/10/2018)

## **Plastic pollution**

EIGHT individuals from Europe, Russia and Japan were asked to keep a diary of everything they ate for a small study. After a week, they provided stool samples to scientists. All eight subjects were found to have traces of plastic in their system. Each had had plastic-wrapped food or had drunk from plastic bottles, while six had consumed seafood. It bears repeating — our planet has a plastic problem, and it isn't going away anytime soon. The worldwide production of plastic is said to have swollen to nearly 300m tonnes a year. More than 8m of that ends up in the oceans, where it can take anywhere from 100 to 1,000 years to disintegrate, contaminating beaches, endangering marine life and eventually making its way into the food chain. The survey results may shock some, but it was inevitable that the material found all around us would one day be inside us. Recently, the EU Parliament voted for an outright ban on single-use plastics. With a growing population and rapid urbanisation, Pakistan's demand for cheap plastic will keep increasing. Are policymakers paying attention? Those in the corridors of power should be — particularly since many have stakes in large-scale industries.

A UN report states that the Indus River has the second highest amount of plastic waste dumped into it at 164,332 tonnes. Most of the untreated industrial waste of Lahore, Faisalabad and Sialkot also ends up in the rivers, lakes and sea. Another WWF study mentions that plastic contributes nearly 50pc of the beached pollution at Karachi's Clifton beach, while other beaches along the

coastal belt are also getting polluted. The implications for public health are worrying. In the past, there have been several attempts at banning non-biodegradable polythene bags, but these were always resisted by manufacturing industries, which employ thousands of workers. It is said that some 10,000 manufacturing units produce over 50bn plastic bags a year in Pakistan. The Sindh government announced a ban this year (although the law has existed since 2014), but little evidence of its compliance exists on ground, as is evident from the absence of large-scale, inexpensive, environmentally friendly alternatives and the lack of awareness amongst the general population. However, informed consumers can change some of their lifestyle choices by prioritising the environment and health of their fellow citizens over convenience. After all, even in the absence of strict laws, the market still only responds to demand.

(By Editorial Dawn, 08, 26/10/2018)

### **Serious concerns raised over increased pollution in Port Qasim**

Concerns related to serious environmental degradation affecting the federally administered Port Qasim area dominated the proceedings of a public hearing held at a hotel on Thursday.

Among other reservations, questions were raised as to why the area had been heavily industrialised without assessing the cumulative impact of projects.

The public hearing called by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) pertained to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of a proposed project titled 'Expansion of PVC (polyvinyl chloride) and VCM (vinyl chloride monomer) manufacturing plant' by Engro Polymer and Chemicals Limited (EPCL).

The EIA report was prepared by Hagler Bailly Pakistan (HB-P).

The project site is located in the eastern industrial zone of Port Qasim and southern part of Malir district.

The programme started off with a brief presentation on the project by Athar Abrar Khawaja, manager of the Engro project, who explained the design, major processes and operational controls of the existing plant.

The project, according to the details shared in the programme, aims to increase production of PVC — a chemical used in the manufacturing of numerous plastic products — and VCM (raw material for PVC) from 195ktpy to 295ktpy and from 195ktpy to 245ktpy respectively.

This would be done by establishing another PVC plant within the boundaries of the existing facility. The project will also include other modifications, for instance, the addition of a 7km-long import line for ethylene dichloride and installation of another VCM storage tank.

On corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, he said that the company planned to install five filtration plants in the area and a health clinic.

Giving a presentation on the EIA report, Vaqar Zakaria representing HB-P said that the sampling data was collected to assess air and water quality, and noise levels, apart from secondary data on topography, geology, seismicity and climate.

"While all other data on air quality complied with Sindh Environmental Quality Standards (SEQS), the sulphur dioxide concentrations exceeded the annual SEQS," he said, adding that traffic on Port Qasim access roads and combustion points where coal, petrol and diesel were being used as fuel are major sources of sulphur dioxide emissions.

Pointing to high environmental pollution in Port Qasim, he said: "Its ecology is headed towards a disaster. The area faces serious environmental issues which have emerged due to massive dredging, discharge of all kinds of waste into the creek system, destruction of mangroves and even fishing with the help of small mesh-sized nets. The larger picture of this area needs a lot of attention."

Sharing some EIA report data, he said that an estimated 59,000 people lived in the surveyed settlements of the study area and that water availability was a major problem being faced by locals as most underground water was saline and brackish.

Replying to a question on pollution in the Port Qasim area during the question-answer session, Waqar Hussain Phulpoto representing Sepa said that it was only after the water commission took up the case of marine and environmental pollution that Sepa staff was allowed to visit Port Qasim for inspection.

"Such a state of affairs is indeed a source of embarrassment for us. However, things have changed after the Supreme Court intervened," he admitted, adding that the Port Qasim Authority (PQA) had committed to the court to build two combined effluent plants in its jurisdiction.

Sauqib Ejaz Hussain, a senior environmentalist, criticised the PQA and questioned whether they had a master plan. "The PQA allowed the destruction of mangroves grown over 200 hectares by Engro under permission from PQA, as well as of naturally grown mangroves for different projects, ignoring their protected status."

He called upon Sepa to review its SEQS including that of air quality which had been raised unjustifiably and were contributing to pollution.

"Another violation (in Port Qasim) is the discharge of untreated waste by industries into Badal Nala, which is a storm-water drain," he said, expressing concern over Sepa's role and authority.

Dr Syed Raza Ali Gardezi representing Citizens for Environment urged Sepa to have a uniform standard for the number of trees planted to compensate for the vegetation lost due to a project.

To concerns related to human and environmental safety, Mr Khawaja said that the proposed plant wouldn't generate any hazardous solid waste whereas liquid waste would be treated in the already operational treatment plant.

"Apart from local standards, we also follow international standards. Health screening of staff is a regular feature of our operation that also includes weekly emergency drills. The data on the operation is regularly submitted to Sepa," he said.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 16, 26/10/2018)

### **Mubarak village fishermen await rehabilitation measures after oil spill**

While there has been no official explanation yet on the source and true extent of a recent oil spill reportedly affecting coastal parts of Sindh and Balochistan, fishermen at Mubarak village — a coastal town worst hit by the disaster — desperately await damage-limitation and rehabilitation measures.



A visit to the village, located some 46km away from the main city at Sindh-Balochistan border and home to about 7,000 people, showed on Wednesday that the air was heavily polluted by hydrocarbon fumes and dark oily patches could be seen covering large parts of the beach.

Ignorant of how this disaster might affect their health, villagers were found more concerned about their fishing activities — their only source of income.

"It's the only month when we get the largest catch. We have been ruined by the disaster, but no one has come to inquire about it. We think it might take a year or so for the whole area to rehabilitate," said Sabir, a fisherman, voicing concerns of villagers, adding that fishermen in the open sea were returning empty handed.

The villagers demanded that the government hold an independent inquiry into the incident as they didn't trust the Balochistan Environmental Protection Agency officials and that the government provide them with alternative employment.

#### *Still no answers about source of spill*

"This village is deprived of piped water supply, electricity, gas, health and educational facilities for many years. Now, we have lost our livelihood; the disaster is not only killing fish, but also ruining our fishing nets," another villager said, adding that someone must take responsibility for the incident.

He also shared the concern that picnickers won't visit this area for recreation this winter, contributing to fishermen's financial woes. According to villagers, the oil spill was initially reported near Churna Island on Wednesday and reached the village the following day. A number of marine animals, including turtles, fish and crabs, they said, were found dead on the beach.

Many of these animals, they said, were eaten up by stray dogs while they buried some of them. The oil stench was so intense on Thursday that they found breathing difficult.

#### **Health hazards**

Asked about how hydrocarbon fumes affect health, Dr Javaid Ahmed Khan, senior consultant pulmonologist at the Aga Khan University Hospital, said: "This could be seriously damaging for health especially for the respiratory system. The elderly having other health complications, for instance asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, and children are most vulnerable." Damage to health due to inhalation of hydrocarbon fumes was well-documented, he said, calling for urgent action to protect the public health.

Sharing similar concerns, Naeem Mughal, a senior official of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa), said that a Sepa team had visited the site and measures were being planned by the government to contain oil spill damage.

"There is a need to fix responsibility because then the party concerned would be asked to support rehabilitation measures. It's not a one-time damage. The whole marine ecology has been affected by this incident," he said.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Maritime Security Agency held a meeting on oil spill, which was attended by all relevant officials of government departments and private organisations.

According to sources, the meeting remained inconclusive on the source of oil spill and it was suggested that all departments would pool resources to tackle the challenge.

Dr Nuzhat Khan representing the National Institute of Oceanography said that data was being collected to determine the scale and damage caused by the oil spill.

"We have taken samples of sediments, water and oil from various spots. It's too early to say about the source of the oil spill. However, what I could say is that it's emulsified oil," she said.

It seemed that there was a large oil patch which broke up due to wind and currents and affected various coastal parts.

According to Dr Khan, the spilled oil has reached many locations including Cape Monze beach, Bhit Khori beach and Hawkesbay beach. Sunhera beach, however, was found clean during the visit.

"Oil spills have the potential to contaminate sediment, seawater and air due to many volatile compounds emitted by the spilled oil into the air. They have negative impacts on the residents of the affected areas and these effects can aggravate [due to] severe weather conditions," she said.

No official of the Balochistan Environmental Protection Agency was available for comments.

### **Environmental disaster**

Expressing serious concern over the devastation caused by the oil spill, the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan issued a statement according to which "a major oil spill occurred along the coast of Karachi, spreading from Mubarak village to Manora. It also affected Sandspit beach.

"The oil seems to have weathered and has converted into semi-solid tar indicating that it might have released a few days back. A WWF-P team visited Mubarak village and Sandspit and found dead animals, including a turtle covered with oil on the rocky shore.

"The impact of the oil spill on other animals, birds and ecosystem has not been determined as yet but it is likely to have serious implications," it says.

According to Muhammad Moazzam Khan, technical adviser on marine fisheries at WWF-P, the oil spill can have a severe impact on the marine ecosystem of the area as it has affected the rocky beaches.

"The incidence can lead to mortality of marine animals and plants inhabiting this important ecosystem. It can also have serious consequences for marine birds if they come in contact with this oil," he said.

The oil spill, according to him, has spread to Churna Island, which is one of the most sensitive habitats along Pakistan's coast. This island is among a few areas where corals are found and is known to have diverse marine life.

"It is possibly the most important diving and snorkelling site along Pakistan's coast. Cleaning beaches affected by oil spill is extremely difficult as its physical removal or use of dispersant is not easy," he noted.  
(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 05, 27/10/2018)

### **Churna Island directly hit by oil spill: experts**

As an operation began on Saturday to contain damage from the oil spill at Mubarak village and near Cape Monze, experts called for immediate measures to protect Churna Island's sensitive habitat, which was directly hit by the oil spill.



Located some six kilometres from Mubarak village, the island falls under the jurisdiction of the Balochistan government. The island, a lifeline for fishermen, is a major biodiversity hotspot popular for scuba diving and snorkelling.

"The seawater surrounding the island was heavily polluted with oil traces that have left the whole rocky boundary of the island darkened," said Dr Javed Aftab of the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), who along with his team carried out an offshore inspection of the oil spill on Friday.

*The Maritime Security Agency says the source of oil spill is still unclear*

The island and its surrounding area, he pointed out, was home to highly diverse marine life, including corals.

"We plan to inspect the site in more detail on Monday and collect more samples from the site. The conditions there are worrisome and require a detailed assessment," he said.

Explaining how corals are impacted by an oil spill, he said that it could kill them or impede their growth.

"The entire reef ecosystem can suffer from an oil spill, affecting the many species of fish, crabs, and other marine invertebrates that live in and around coral reefs," he said, adding that oil fingerprinting could help trace the source of oil spill.

He also shared his observations of Mubarak village and said that fishermen had genuine concerns over the loss of their livelihood and future implications of this disaster.

"The whole marine ecology along this coastal belt has been badly affected. Oil traces now cover rocky habitats supporting a diverse range of species. All must have perished [in] this disaster which would have short- and long-term effects," he said.

Environmentalists have long been demanding that Churna Island be declared a protected area due to its ecological significance, which in recent years faces serious threats from industrial development.

#### **Who did it?**

The deputy director general of the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency, Commodore Abdul Majid, told a press conference that the source of the oil spill was still unclear and an investigation into the incident would be carried out once agencies finished their damage-control operations.

"We came to know about this incident on 25th and immediately measures were taken to assess the damage. Air surveillance showed that there were two trails of oil spillage," he said, adding that the quantity of spilled oil could be six to seven tonnes.

Speaking to Dawn, PMSA spokesperson Lt Cdr Wajid Nawaz Chaudhary said that the Pakistan Navy and PMSA had initiated efforts to contain the oil affecting the sea.

"We are being helped by the Karachi Port Trust and Byco. Both oil spill trails of around 500m each exist near Cape Monze. However, we will check whether Churna Island is affected or not," he said in reply to a question.

The clean-up operation at Mubarak village, he said, was also being carried out while samples had been collected by experts, which would help trace the source of oil spill.

Sindh Minister for Environment and Coastal Development Taimur Talpur also visited Mubarak village and inspected the affected areas.

(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 14, 28/10/2018)

### **Most oil spill affecting Mubarak village coast cleared: PMSA**

Most of the oil spill affecting the beach in Mubarak village has been cleared in an ongoing operation being participated by a number of stakeholders, the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) stated on Sunday.



"Seventy per cent of the affected area has been cleaned up in Mubarak village on the second consecutive day of operation which will continue tomorrow (Monday)," said a PMSA press release.

It also stated that the PSMA also conducted an aerial surveillance on Sunday and found a minor oil slick close to the Cape Monze coast.

"The information was passed on to the beach cleaning team. The Karachi Port Trust is tasked to undertake initial assessment of the oil spill/traces, if any, at the Sandspit and Hawkesbay beaches," it said.

The operation led by Pakistan Navy is being assisted by the PMSA, Karachi Port Trust, Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), Ship Breaking Labour Union Gadani, Shell Pakistan and Sindh Environmental Protection Agency.

When contacted, Commander Rao Abid of Pakistan Navy, heading the beach clean-up operation at Mubarak village, explained how oil traces were being 'removed' both manually and mechanically.

"The contaminated soil is being manually removed and sent to the KMC incinerators for disposal. Sixty per cent of this cleaning process has been done," he said, adding that it's a scientific way and employed all over the world to contain and tackle oil traces on affected coasts.

Answering a question that how oil traces on rocks were being treated, he said initially soft sand was spread on the rocks so that maximum oil traces were absorbed and then water jets were used to clean the rocks.

"Part of cleaning has also been done with the help of skimmers. But we are not satisfied with its performance and have asked for boom barriers to contain the oil slick affecting the coast," he said.

Meanwhile, a PMSA spokesperson stated that a committee was being set up to analyse facts on the ground and ascertain the source of oil spill.

(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 15, 29/10/2018)

### **Fishermen question Sindh govt's absence amid 'messy' beach clean-up**

"This village is part of Sindh not Balochistan. But it seems that the Sindh government doesn't own it. Relevant officials have not announced any compensation for the losses fishermen have suffered because of this tragedy."



These sentiments were shared by a number of fishermen Dawn spoke with on Monday during a visit to Mubarak village, a coastal neighbourhood whose shoreline was badly affected by a recent oil spill and is currently undergoing a clean-up operation.

Located some 46 kilometres from Saddar, the coastal locality is very much part of Karachi's District West and Keamari Town.

"There has been no visit by fisheries department officials, the district council chairman, area MPA or even Fishermen Cooperative Society officials, which receives five per cent commission from fishermen on each catch," said Khuda Bakhsh, an old resident of the village.

*Demand that they be compensated for their losses and people behind the oil spill be punished*

He also criticised the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) which, he said, should have deputed its staff at the site.

"While Balochistan Environmental Protection Agency officials have visited the beach thrice, apart from the Hub assistant commissioner, since the spill occurred, we haven't seen Sepa staff here," he said.

Fishermen, though appreciative of the clean-up operation, demanded that an independent investigation be held into the incident and responsibility be fixed for the oil spill.

"We demand that people behind the incident be arrested and fishermen be compensated for their losses," said Sarfaraz, the area councillor.

According to him, most villagers are dependent on fishing and can no longer earn their livelihood because their fishing nets had been ruined by the oily sludge and that fish rates had fallen following the incident.

**'Messy' clean-up**



Towards the shoreline, one could see two groups engaged in cleaning the beach; the rocky side was being taken care of by Pakistan Navy personnel, all in safety gear, while on the opposite side a number of villagers were seen collecting deposits of oil sludge without properly protecting themselves from the sticky substance.

Their clothes and bodies were covered with black oily stains. Apparently, there was no coordination between the two groups.

Upon inquiry, they said that they had been engaged by Byco Petroleum Pakistan Limited (BPPL) to clean the beach.

"They have registered our names and each of us would be paid Rs2,000 for the job," Sabir, a young villager, told *Dawn*.

Asked how they would get rid of the stains, they said that they would "use petrol and diesel to wash away oil from their bodies".

When concerns relating to safety were raised with Rehan Sajjad, a BPPL official present at the site, he said: "Your concerns are genuine and these will be addressed tomorrow [Tuesday] when we resume our work. Actually, it's our first day and I didn't have any idea about the nature of the problem here."

He conceded that villagers should have been trained and educated about handling oil sludge before getting them involved in the operation.

However, he added, the company was under no legal obligation to carry out beach cleaning and was doing so under its corporate social responsibilities.

When similar concerns were raised with Commander Rao Abid of Pakistan Navy, heading the beach clean-up operation at the site, he said that the company should have provided protective gear to the villagers and that he would play his part in that regard.

On beach cleaning exercise, he said the third phase had started on Monday and a major part of the oil slick had been removed, both manually and mechanically. The removed sludge was being taken away for disposal by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation for incineration.

"A major challenge has been to remove hard oil traces from the rocks as it's tough to prevent removed content going back into the sea with high tide. But I think we have managed to overcome this to a great extent," he said, adding that the operation was likely to be completed later in the day.

Answering a question about equipment assistance PN sought from some oil companies to remove oil traces, he said it was not the PN's job to maintain an inventory for oil spills. Oil importing and exporting companies all over the world were required to maintain such equipment and train staff to meet such an emergency.

According to him, the Sonehri beach has not been affected by oil spill, Bhit Khori has been cleared while an inspection of Manjhar Goth would be carried out.

Apart from lack of coordination, one serious gap highlighted during this exercise was the fact that though companies provided their equipment for containing and removing oil sludge to the navy, they did not have trained manpower to use those machines.

The source of the oil spill reported last Thursday has not yet been determined and an inquiry into the incident is pending.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 15, 30/10/2018)

## Climate change

IN something of a heartening report, the International Panel on Climate Change said on Monday that the ozone layer in parts of the stratosphere has recovered at the rate of about 1pc to 3pc since the turn of the millennium. At the projected rates, according to this UN-commissioned study, the northern hemisphere and mid-latitude ozone layer may heal by the 2030s, followed by the southern hemisphere in the 2050s and the polar regions by the 2060s. This is the result of concerted action under the internationally agreed-upon action vis-à-vis the Montreal Protocol that came into being over 30 years ago, as an answer to the science that discovered that CFCs and other ozone-depleting substances are tearing up the vital ozone layer that protects the planet from ultraviolet radiation.

Encouraging while this may be, the same report also says that despite these gains, climate change is for real: more powerful hurricanes, worsening drought in many parts of the world, melting glaciers, and rising sea levels are just some of the anticipated outcomes. And, according to the IPCC report, these will be occurring at an ever faster pace until damaging activities around the planet are halted, and the effects eventually compensated for. This should come as sobering news for every country. Where Pakistan — which is not one of the major polluters that contribute to climate change but that is still one of the countries most vulnerable to it — it should be a clarion call for planning and taking action. On its way to becoming perhaps one of the most water-stressed countries in the world, Pakistan is amongst those that are likely to bear the brunt of climate change and its outcomes — particularly given its agrarian economy. And while there is a Ministry of Climate Change in place, action or planning appear to be precisely what are missing. At what point will real issues that affect millions be recognised as more pressing than political squabbling?

(By Editorial Dawn, 08, 07/11/2018)

## Cabinet approves phase-wise ban on plastic bags across Sindh

The Sindh cabinet on Saturday decided to impose a phase-wise ban on use of polythene and plastic bags in the province, with Sukkur being the first district where such bags would be banned within next three months.

The meeting of the cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, was held at the New Sindh Secretariat with all provincial ministers, advisers and special assistants, Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah, Inspector General of Police Kaleem Imam and other officials in attendance.

After the meeting, CM's Adviser on Information and Law Barrister Murtaza Wahab briefed reporters that the government had decided to implement the Sindh Environmental Protection Act under which non-degradable polythene bags could not be purchased, used, manufactured or imported.

He said that the ban would be imposed in phases within three months. In the first phase, Sukkur region had been selected and in the second phase a complete ban on non-degradable polythene bags in Karachi and Hyderabad regions and rest of Sindh would be implemented, he added.

The cabinet was told that a normal plastic bag took 400 to 1,000 years to degenerate and almost every piece of plastic ever made still existed in the environment. The amount of plastic waste had been increasing about 10 per cent each year for the past 20 years. *The enforcement of the ban on polythene bags will first begin in Sukkur; Murad bans purchase of new vehicles for cabinet members for three years*

CM Shah said his government had promulgated the Sindh Environment Protection Act 2014 and its Section 14(3) stated that "no person shall import, manufacture, stockpile, trade, supply, distribute or sell any scheduled plastic product which is non-degradable". The cabinet discussed the issue saying an abrupt ban on plastic bags might cause loss to traders involved in the business. The CM asked Environment Minister Taimur Talpur to discuss the issue with traders.

### List of prisoners sought

The cabinet took up the issue of human rights of the terminally ill prisoners languishing in various jails of the province for their early release.

The home department had sent a list of 27 terminally ill inmates, which was forwarded to the health department for constitution of a medical board.

The board recommended 12 cases, including one of a condemned prisoner. The other one was an Indian national, thus, his case had been sent to the federal interior ministry. The third one had been released from Hyderabad in July. Four of the prisoners are under trial and their premature release cases were forwarded to the cabinet for approval.

The cabinet approved their premature release on humanitarian grounds. The chief minister also asked Prisons Minister Nasir Shah to send a list of prisoners still languishing in jails for want of surety and also provide him with a list of foreign nationals in jail.

### Armoured vehicles allowed for top officials

Discussing the use of luxury vehicles, the cabinet approved a proposal to authorise the governor, the chief minister, speaker, chief justice of the Sindh High Court, chief secretary, IGP, two additional IGs use of armoured vehicles.

Any provincial ministers or officers identified to have a threat would be provided an armoured vehicle available in the pool.

The chief minister was told that there were 28 vehicles of 1,800cc available in the pool for ministers. Most of the vehicles have already been allotted to ministers.

The CM asked the chief secretary to notify a ban on the purchase of new vehicles for ministers, advisers and special assistants for next three years. The new ministers would use vehicle available in the government pool.

#### **Body formed to review draft rules for Sindh police**

The cabinet also approved three bills for their introduction in the assembly for legislation.

They were the Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Institute of Trauma (SMBBIT) Karachi, the Sindh Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases, and Sindh Institute of Child Health And Neonatology, (SICHN) Karachi.

The cabinet was informed in Sindh there was no such institute to treat victims of accidents and injuries, thus, the trauma centre was established in Karachi. "The centre is successfully providing services and is an autonomous institution. The trauma centre, which has been named as SMBBIT, would establish its satellites across Sindh and serve as a teaching institute."

The cabinet was informed that the SICHN, Karachi would also establish its satellite centres as had been established by the NICVD and serve as a teaching hospital and offer diplomas in various related sectors.

The cabinet also discussed the draft Sindh Police (Posting, Transfer & Tenure) Rules 2017 and constituted a committee comprising Barrister Wahab, Energy Minister Imtiaz Shaikh and IGP Imam to review the document and give their recommendations before it was sent to the assembly for approval.

The recruitment rules of IG prisons and DIG prisons were also discussed. It was informed the caretaker government had amended Rule 890 for which it had no mandate. The cabinet restored the original Rule 890 with slight amendment. It reads: "The Inspector general of prisons shall be appointed by promotion from amongst the deputy inspectors general of prisons."

#### **Food dept wants Rs7.6bn subsidy to retire debt**

The food department requested the cabinet to fix the price of wheat. The cabinet was told during 2018, the food department procured 1.4 million metric ton (mmt) of wheat at the support price of Rs3,250 per bag.

It requested the cabinet to approve the issue price of wheat at Rs3,150 (packed in PP bag) and Rs3,250 (packed in jute bag) and a subsidy of Rs7.656 billion might also be approved to retire the commercial banks' borrowing.

The chief minister constituted a committee to meet with traders and others and give its recommendation for fixation of price.

The cabinet, on the recommendation of the selection committee, appointed Iqbal Nafees Khan as the managing director of Sindh Civil Servants Housing Foundation (SCSHF) for two years.

(By Hasan Mansoor Dawn, 15, 11/11/2018)

### **Sindh govt plans to do away with plastic nuisance**

Waking up to the environmental degradation, the Sindh Cabinet on Saturday decided to ban polythene and plastic bags in the province in phases. During the first phase, the ban has been imposed in Sukkur district and it will be implemented within the next three months.



"The ban may cause loss to traders, but nothing is above a healthy environment," said Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah while chairing the meeting at the Sindh Secretariat.

"We are starting the ban from Sukkur and later will expand it to other districts," Adviser to the CM on Information Barrister Murtaza Wahab said while speaking to the media.

Provincial ministers, advisers and special assistants, Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah, Inspector-General of Police Dr Kaleem Imam and concerned provincial secretaries, were among those who attended the meeting.

The cabinet was informed that a regular plastic bag takes 400 to 1,000 years to degrade and it is a startling fact that almost every piece of plastic ever made still exists in the environment. The amount of plastic waste has been increasing by around 10% each year for the last 20 years.

It was pointed out that use of plastic bags rose to 43 billion in 2005-6 and it further increased to 55 billion in 2007-8. There is a 15% annual growth of the production of plastic bags while the estimated use of plastic bags in the country by 2018-19 would be 140 billion, it was stated.

CM Shah said that his government has promulgated the Sindh Environment Protection (SEP) Act, 2014 and its Section 14(3) reads, "no person shall import, manufacture, stockpile, trade, supply, distribute or sell any scheduled plastic product which is non-degradable and can't be broken down by natural process."

#### **Pre-mature release of prisoners**

The cabinet took up the issue of the rights and pre-mature release of terminally-ill prisoners in different jails of the province. On the instruction of the government, the home department had sent a list of 27 terminally-ill prisoners which was forwarded to the health department for constitution of a medical board. The board recommended 12 cases for release, including a condemned prisoner and an Indian national, whose case has been sent to the interior ministry. Another prisoner was released from jail in Hyderabad in July, 2018. Meanwhile, four of the prisoners are under trial and their pre-mature release cases were forwarded to the Cabinet for approval.

The request for pre-mature release was approved on humanitarian grounds. The CM also directed Jails Minister Nasir Shah to send the list of the prisoners who were still languishing in jails for want of surety and also provide him with a list of foreign nationals in jail. "I want to take necessary action on humanitarian grounds," he said.

#### **Vehicles purchase banned**

The Sindh Cabinet approved a proposal to authorise the governor, chief minister, speaker, Sindh High Court chief justice, chief secretary, IG and two additional IGs to use armoured vehicles. The ministers or any officers identified to be under threat would be provided an armoured vehicle available in the pool.

The CM was informed that there were 28 vehicles of 1800 CC available in the pool for ministers. Most of the vehicles have already been allotted to ministers. On this, the CM directed the chief secretary to notify a ban on the purchase of new vehicles for ministers, advisers and special assistants for the next three years. The news ministers would use vehicles available in the government pool.

#### **Bill approved**

Meanwhile, three bills were approved for introduction in the assembly. They included: the Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Institute of Trauma (SMBBIT), Karachi, Sindh Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases and Sindh Institute of Child Health And Neonatology (SICHN), Karachi.

The cabinet was informed that trauma was increasingly recognised as a global public health epidemic. The World Health Organisation has predicted that trauma would rise from the ninth leading burden of diseases in 1990 to the third leading cause in 2020 worldwide. According to the WHO's 2011 factsheet, over 19% of the world's fatalities on the road occur in low income and middle income countries.

In Sindh, there was no such institute for victims to cope with accidents. Therefore, a trauma centre was established in Karachi. The centre, SMBBIT, is successfully providing services and now under an autonomous status, it will serve as a teaching institute.

Similarly, the SICHN will also establish its satellite centers as has been established by NICVD and serve as teaching hospitals and offer diplomas in different but concerned sectors.

#### **Police rules**

Sindh cabinet discussed the draft of the Sindh Police (Posting, Transfer & Tenure) Rules, 2017 and constituted a committee comprising Barrister Wahab, Energy Minister Imtiaz Shaikh and the IG to review the draft and give their recommendations so it could be sent to the Sindh Assembly.

The recruitment rules of the prisons IG and DIG were also discussed. It was pointed out that the caretaker government has made an amendment in Rule 890 for which it was not the competent authority. After discussion, the Cabinet restored the original Rule 890 with a slight amendment. The new rule is, "the inspector-general of prison shall be appointed by promotion from amongst the deputy inspector-general of prison."  
(By Hafeez Tunio The Express Tribune, 04, 11/11/2018)

### **‘Govt committed to protecting environment’**

The Sindh government is working to ensure that development of energy projects does not lead to a compromise on environment, said Environment Minister Mohammad Taimur Talpur while speaking as the chief guest at a consultation meeting held on Tuesday at a local hotel.

The event was organised as part of stakeholder consultations for an environmental social impact assessment study (ESIA) pertaining to a proposed gas pipeline project.

The 800-km-long proposed North-South Gas Pipeline Project would be constructed in next two years from Nawabshah to Lahore to supply up to 1,200 million standard cubic feet per day (MMSCFD) of re-gasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG).

This particular pipeline segment would be connected to Gwadar-Nawabshah terminal that would import 0.6 billion cubic feet per day RLNG to the country.

Expressing government's commitment to protect environment, Mr Talpur said: "The government will fully support projects like the North-South Gas Pipeline for energy security but at the same time we will ensure that no harm is done to environment."  
(BY The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 17, 05/12/2018)

## Cost of climate change

Maximising profits and minimising costs has been the topmost priority of any business industry. Resultantly, one of the major phenomena of this driving force has been introducing inexpensive materials to create cheap plastic alternatives. While corporations sought to minimise their costs, the damage consequently brought upon the environment has been expensive.

Pakistan has suffered significantly. According to a new report, the Global Climate Risk India 2019, Pakistan lost out on \$384 million last year due to catastrophic climate events. As our politicians struggle to rescue the country from the constant economic downturn, a reconfiguration in strategy and reassigning priorities might be in order.

Focusing on climate change, if not out of concern for the environment and the wellbeing of future generations, for economic reasons is logical. Environmentally-friendly practices will have far-reaching positive impacts and reduce the need for appendages such as dams in the long run. The requirement of providing clean water to the growing population is not to be undermined here but scientific findings should be consulted in the quest to provide households with water.

In order to win over the population to support the mitigation of damage to our environment, two changes need to be adopted. First, a general awareness needs to reach the masses, like on the benefits of planting trees, reducing the sale and use of plastics, and encouraging consumers to rely less on industries that cause heavy detrimental impact to the environment, such as meat farming. The second change is through policy. As the government works on economic policies to encourage international trade and increase investor confidence, local regulations on the use of plastic bags, straws and industrial practices would facilitate the battle against climate change to reduce financial damage.

(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 16, 09/12/2018)

## SC asks DHA to ensure public access to beaches without any hindrance

The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) to make sure that the seafront would remain available to the public for recreational purposes without any encroachment or hindrance.



The direction came from Justice Gulzar Ahmed, who was chairing a meeting of all stakeholders at the apex court's Karachi registry on the second consecutive day to review the progress of the ongoing anti-encroachment drive in the metropolis.

The meeting was attended by the chief secretary, home secretary, transport secretary, Karachi commissioner, senior officers of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, Karachi Development Authority, Karachi Water and Sewerage Board, Sindh Building Control

Authority, Pakistan Railways, DHA, Civil Aviation Authority, Karachi Port Trust, police and Ranger, Pakistan Coast Guards, cantonment boards and others.

*Coast Guards says barricades on Sarwar Shaheed Road removed; CAA told to build park in front of airport*

Sources told Dawn that the apex court's judge directed the representatives of the DHA to ensure that no constructions that may restrict, or hinder, access of the public to the beaches be allowed.

He made clear that the DHA had to make sure that the seafront would remain available to the public for amusement without any encroachment.

### Drive against encroachment to continue

Judge Ahmed also directed officers of the KDA, DHA, cantonment boards and others concerned to self-regulate themselves with regard to the issue of encroachments in the city so that the ongoing operation would continue without any discrimination.

He appreciated the role of the departments and civic agencies concerned for carrying out the operation against encroachments from public parks and playgrounds, footpaths, amenity plots, storm-water drains, etc.

He also appreciated the police and Rangers for providing full assistance to anti-encroachment staffs.

The apex court's judge also directed the officials to clear all amenity spaces, which had been encroached upon, and set up big public parks on the retrieved land.

He also directed all concerned to ensure plantation on the land retrieved from the encroachers as a 'gift' to the people of the city. The SC judge directed the Civil Aviation Authority officials to identify the encroachments within their territorial jurisdiction and make sure that the same were removed strictly in accordance with the laws/rules.

He also told the CAA officers to set up a public park on a piece of the land in front of Karachi airport.

Justice Ahmed observed that the Sea Breeze Plaza was in a dilapidated condition and asked the representatives of the cantonment board concerned to submit a report explaining the plan for its restoration or demolition.

The judge also sought a report from the authorities concerned about the legal status of the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

A representative of the Pakistan Coast Guards filed a report submitting that the barricades placed outside the Pakistan Coast Guards Officers Mess on Sarwar Shaheed Road had been removed in compliance with the directive of the apex court.

A day earlier, the apex court had directed the Rangers authorities to remove all those check-points set up on roads and that were no longer in use.

(By Naeem Sahoutara Dawn, 15, 19/12/2018)

### The Empress's five old trees

It seems that the hullabaloo created by those who seem to care a lot about Karachi's historicity — as soon as the anti-encroachment drive at Empress Market began — has now subsided. Empress Market is still there, although these days it cuts a weary, haggard figure.



Everybody knows how old the market is and who made it. The interesting thing is that sometimes, because of our love for the past, we tend to attribute unconfirmed and unsubstantiated stories to it — such as the one about the market being used as a place to shoot down mutineers in 1857. History requires corroboration. Perhaps Charles Ball's books will confirm that it happened. Perhaps it didn't. We don't know.

Nature, and the love that it bestows on such man-made wonders, does not need corroboration, or that kind of corroboration. Let's explain that: on the right side of the market (from where you can hop over to Rainbow Centre) there are five trees in an open space which are as integral to Empress Market as the shops in it. There are three palm trees, one neem tree and another whose type is hard to define. A shopkeeper, meat vendor to be precise, claims that these trees are at least a century old. He calls the three palm trees 'brothers'.

*'They would be in one line so that they could define the alignment of the roads'*

Again, it's not easy to authenticate this piece of information. But by the looks of it, they appear to be old enough to tell us tales of the days of yore, of the time when Karachi was a quaint little town. But the barren ground on which the trees now stand speak volumes for the way this historic place has been taken care of. There's not a single patch of green here.

Architect Dr Noman Ahmed says: "In colonial times, while landscaping buildings, they used to pay heed to the fact that the main view of the structure was not blocked. The palm or date palm trees were planted with a fair degree of planning. They would grow neem or bargad trees in the corners because they're big, sheltering trees. If you think about it, there was wisdom in it. The trees would be in one line so that they could define the alignment of the roads [around the building].

"As far as their aesthetic value is concerned, palm tree branches created a lovely contrast with the yellow sandstone [of the built environment]. It accentuated the cloudy weather of Karachi," Dr Ahmed says.

Indeed, that would be the case.

Today, however, what one notices is a scene that is in dire need of colour.

(By Peerzada Salman Dawn, 16, 28/12/2018)

### Factory owners told to facilitate SEPA inspection

The Supreme Court-mandated Water Commission head Justice (Retd) Amir Hani Muslim gave a final warning to factory owners to allow inspection and ordered the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) officials to file a case against owners who do not comply.

Sugar mills ordered to install in-house treatment systems

The commission's proceedings were held at the SC's Karachi registry. The issue regarding 33 factory owners not allowing SEPA officials to conduct inspection was discussed during the proceedings. The commission inquired where the SEPA director-general was, to which the counsel replied that he and the secretary were busy in a meeting.

The commission asked the SEPA official why hadn't a case been filed against factory owners who are not allowing inspection. Factory owners who were present said that SEPA officials haven't come for inspection ever and no notices were issued to them by SEPA.

SEPA officials however maintained that 33 factory owners did not allow them to enter the factories for inspection and around 130 factories had already been inspected.

Factory owners said that they should be informed prior the visit so that they are ready for it, and asked for a last chance from the commission.

The commission accepted their request and adjourned the hearing.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 05, 29/12/2018)