

PARKS & TREES



100,000 trees to be planted in District Central by 2017 end, says DMC chairperson

District Municipal Corporation (DMC) Central has devised a plan to gradually replace existing *conocarpus erectus* – a mangrove plant species that is deemed harmful to Karachi's environment – with an environment-friendly tree species. This was stated by DMC Central Chairperson Rehan Hashmi on Monday at a seminar on environmental protection at the Karachi Medical and Dental College (KMDC).



Hashmi informed the audience that around 100,000 trees and plants would have been planted in the district by December, 2017, out of which 8,000 saplings have already been planted.

LCS' tree plantation drive hopes to boost ecosystem

Four water tankers have been procured by District Central to water trees in the district, the chairperson said, adding that the DMC would supply around 20,000 gallons of water daily to conduct plantation drive in the district. Hashmi said DMC Central is looking after 150 parks, out of which beautification of 37 parks has been completed.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Mayor Dr Arshad Abdullah Vohra lamented the lack of resources to the city's administration for sanitation and waste disposal. Karachi generates 12,000 tons municipal garbage on a daily basis out of which only 4,000 is disposed of, he said.

Karachi requires plantation of another 20 million trees, said Senator Khushbakht Shujaat. A campaign should be launched to spread awareness among children to properly dispose of waste, she suggested.

Anti-encroachment drive launched in District Central

National Forum for Environment and Health President Naeem Qureshi bemoaned the fact that the city was deprived of around 15,000 plants and trees in the last five years due to poorly planned mega civic projects, including reconstruction of major roads. Every concerned quarter in the city should come forward to prevent tree cutting for the sake of civic development, he said. Environmentalist Rafiul Haq on the occasion gave suggestions to safeguard the environment of the city, while youth parliament president Rizwan Jaffar stressed the need for motivating youth to actively take part in the plantation drive in Karachi.

In his concluding remarks, Leader of the Opposition in the Sindh Assembly Khawaja Izharul Hassan promised that he would actively take part in the plantation drive in DMC Central. It is obligatory upon every individual and institution in the city to take practical steps in order to make the city clean and green, he summed up.

(By Our Correspondent, The Express Tribune, 15, 01/08/2017)

SC irked by govt's failure to make reverse osmosis plants operational

The Supreme Court (SC) expressed on Wednesday displeasure over the provincial government's failure to make the reverse osmosis (RO) plants near Manchhar Lake functional and complete the Right Bank Outfall Drain (RBOD) project.

A two-judge bench, headed by Justice Gulzar Ahmed, granted the provincial advocate-general (AG) two days to submit details of the current status of the RO plants and RBOD project.

While hearing a suo motu case regarding contamination of water in one of Asia's largest freshwater reservoirs, the judges were irked when they were informed that the RO plants meant to provide clean drinking water to the fishermen community were non-functional, while salaries were also not being paid to their staff.

Block CNICs of absconders, orders Supreme Court

The bench inquired from AG Zamir Ghumro why the government had no money to pay salaries to staff when it was apparently spending billions of rupees on the project. The AG informed the apex court that the administrative control of the RO plants was being transferred from a private company, Pak Oasis, to the provincial public health engineering department, which delayed the salaries. He assured that the matter will be resolved soon.

The judges told the law officer that they were hearing the matter so that problems faced by the people are addressed rather than multiplied. The bench observed that such issues should immediately be resolved without any delay.

AG Ghumro informed the SC that only three out of the 39 RO plants installed around Manchhar Lake were not functioning.

Illegal constructions in Sindh irk apex court

A deputy attorney-general for the federal government informed the bench that the RBOD project had been approved at a recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council and will be executed within the stipulated time. The bench directed the AG and DAG to submit reports within two days on the current operational status of the RO plants and the RBOD project.

Thatta forest lands

Meanwhile, the same bench directed a Thatta district and sessions judge to carry out inspection of forest lands in Thatta district and submit a report within a week.

Islamic culture centre in Karachi to be restored, orders SC

The provincial government had approached the apex court pleading to order action against the 'mafia' that had allegedly encroached upon the forest lands.

An additional advocate-general informed the apex court that the government had allotted 186 acres of agricultural land to landless citizens (haris) but some private persons had encroached upon the nearby forest land. He alleged that the encroachers were not allowing the forest department to use the lands for forestation purposes and pleaded to the court to order their eviction from the forest land. (By Our Correspondent, The Express Tribune, 14, 03/08/17)

Pakistan's first urban forest reaches greater heights

The satisfaction of having achieved his goal reflected in Shahzad Qureshi's face as he gazed at the trees he planted some 20 months ago.



Inspired by Indian eco-entrepreneur Shubhendu Sharma, whose company develops native and urban forest in cities, Qureshi immediately decided to implement the idea in Karachi in a park adjacent to Neher-e-Khayam in Clifton Block 5. Almost two years later, 95% of the saplings he planted are growing into healthy trees.

The forest is now 20 to 25 feet dense and it is almost impossible to freely move inside it due to its verdure of differing heights and sizes. The forest now also attracts different kinds of birds, insects and worms, which makes it bio-diverse. Colourful butterflies have also been spotted fluttering about.

The recent rain has also left its mark on the forest, as the lush greenery coupled with untamed foliage makes it seem like a true mini-forest.

Greener Environment: VC opens tree plantation campaign

The trees planted at the urban forest are neem, peepal, keekar, anaar trees, fig trees, sheesham, guavas trees, almond trees, kanair and gulmohar, among others and have grown 15 to 18 feet tall.

A little help

Qureshi shared the details of how Sharma assisted him in building this forest. He said Sharma practices Miyawaki methodology to plant forests, which help grow them 10 times faster than usual. He has played an integral role in growing more than 100 small-scale forests in different parts of India, Singapore, the Netherlands and the United States in homes, at schools and at factories to improve air quality and increase biodiversity.



The government should also invest in such projects, according to environmentalists.

Qureshi then contacted Sharma and invited him to Pakistan to work on a collaborative pilot urban forest project in Karachi, as more than 1,000 people lost their lives during the heatwave in 2015, which was largely due to the lack of greenery in the city. Sharma visited Pakistan in November, 2015 and worked on the project with Qureshi.

According to Qureshi, he planted around 1,280 plant sapling of 45 different species in an area of 400 square-yards and almost all of them were native to the environment. He, however, added that some of the plants, which include lemon and mango trees, were not successful as the area is very close to the sea and the soil is different from other parts of the city.

Bigger and better

Explaining his future plans, Qureshi added that many housing developers and non-governmental organisations have contacted him to build more urban forests to create a better environment and for now he is working on an area of 1,800 square feet in a housing society in Lahore.

Sindh budget neglects the environment, even on World Environment Day

"I am fond of improving the environment as an individual, where as my services are available for anyone if they need my assistance. I would love to work [on helping others save the environment] since working for the environment satisfies me," added Qureshi.

He shared that he plans to expand his 400 square yard forest to the total area of the park. The whole park will then be turned into a dense forest.

Putting weight behind his idea, Qureshi said that the idea of an urban forest can be very successful for the city, as there are still vacant spaces and huge parks left with poor foliage. Therefore, trees should be planted instead of replanting grass in these parks again and again, he said. He said that on a larger scale, such ideas can only be implemented by the government as they require huge amounts of funding. Nonetheless, we will continue to participate and do our bit to improve the city's environment.

Reactions

Residents of the area were surprised to see the growth of the trees. Muhammad Saad, who lives nearby said he remembered when, last year, they were planting the saplings and he had wondered why they were planting them so close to each other. Now it looks like a mini-forest, he exclaimed. (By SHEHARYAR ALI, The Express Tribune, 13, 07/08/2017)

'No parking will be allowed on main roads in Karachi'

The traffic police was directed by Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah to launch an operation to put an end to commercial activities in the basements of commercial buildings where the basements were approved in the layout plan for parking purposes.



The direction during a meeting at the CM House on Monday to resolve the city's traffic issues. The meeting was attended by Home Minister Sohail Anwar Siyal, Traffic Additional IG Mushtaq Maher, Home Secretary Qazi Shahid Parvez, Karachi Commissioner Ejaz Ali Khan, Traffic DIG Asif Aijaz Shaikh, Karachi Development Authority Director-General Nasir Abbas, Karachi Project Director Niaz Soomro, engineer Khalid, Traffic Engineer Bureau Senior Director Qazi Abdul Qadir and other officials concerned.

SC orders DHA to demolish 39 illegal shops in Gizri

The chief minister said he was not happy with the present traffic management system. "I am witnessing traffic jams on almost all important roads of the city," he said, adding that commercial plazas in Tariq Road, Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Aisha Manzil, Clifton, Sharae Faisal and other areas have turned their parking lots, constructed in basements, into shops and godowns.

"This is a sheer violation of the rules and defiance of the government's writ. I will not allow this kind of attitude," he warned. He directed the home minister to arrange police support for the Karachi commissioner and traffic DIG to remove illegal business activities set up in basements that were only meant for parking.

Traffic plan devised for Youm-e-Ali procession in Karachi

"Why do you [traffic DIG] allow parking of vehicles on main roads such as on Tariq Road and in Clifton and other areas?" he asked Shaikh, saying that no parking will be allowed on main roads.

He directed Maher and the traffic engineering bureau to work out a detailed plan for removal of traffic bottlenecks from around Metropole Hotel and submit the plan for approval to him within a week. The issues of other traffic bottlenecks, identified from time to time, must also be resolved, Shah said.

Karachi is spread over an area of 3,527 square kilometres with a 10,000km road network, Maher said, while giving a presentation to the CM.

Goods transporters stage strike

"The city's population is about 23.7 million and around four million vehicles are registered with an increase of 1,186 vehicles per day," Maher shared.

The chief minister asked Maher to identify traffic choking points in the city.

On this, Maher said there were 26 choking points, including one in District South, three in District Central, one in District East, four in District West and three in Malir.

Shah directed Maher to give him a comprehensive plan for the smooth flow of traffic at the 26 choking points. The chief minister directed Maher to sit with the traffic engineers and prepare a comprehensive plan for the smooth flow of traffic.

Why expanding roads will not ease traffic in Karachi

During 2017, the traffic police have so far challaned 1.37 million vehicles for violation of traffic rules and imposed Rs322 million in fines, against which Rs278.8 million has been recovered so far, Maher said.

At present, only 2,525 policemen are regulating vehicular traffic in two shifts, he said. Therefore, 1,262 police personnel have to cater to the traffic needs of the city in each shift.

On this, Shah commented that 4,227 newly-recruited policemen were on training and this shortage of police personnel would be over after completion of their training.

He constituted a committee under Maher, Shaikh, Soomro and Qadir to review each and every route or road, arrangement of signals and other such factors and give their plan to resolve the situation.

On August 2, the Supreme Court directed the Defence Housing Authority administrator to ensure immediate demolition of as many as 39 shops that were illegally built in the basement of a commercial plaza in Gizri neighbourhood that was earmarked for a parking lot. (By Our Correspondent, The Express Tribune, 13, 08/08/2017)

Back to life, historical Jahangir Park awaits formal reopening

The historical Jahangir Park in Saddar is set to be opened to public after months of renovation and rehabilitation by the Sindh government, which has spent Rs200 million on the project, said an official on Monday.

The project was initiated after Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah paid a surprise visit to the park in August last year and directed the authorities concerned to renovate the facility, which had turned into a garbage dump due to official neglect.

"The renovation has been completed," said Niaz Soomro, the additional secretary of local bodies. "The total cost of the renovation is estimated to be around Rs200m and we hope the project would add value to the city's park culture and visibly change the landscape of the city's busiest neighbourhood," he said, adding that the chief minister is expected to inaugurate the renovated park. Iconic park had been encroached upon and turned into a rubbish dump

The six-acre park with the trees nurtured therein was donated to the people of Karachi by a Parsi philanthropist, Khan Bahadur Behramjee Jehangirjee Rajkotwala in 1893.

The park provided recreation to generations of Karachiites and later a cricket ground and a pavilion were built to further add value and people's interest to the facility. However, the park suffered neglect over the years due to a variety of reasons. The park was occupied by hundreds of pushcart vendors who razed its walls and grills to illegally occupy its land.

A portion of the park was later occupied by an illegal bus terminal of minibus owners and the remaining part of the facility remained a preferred choice of drug addicts and homeless people.

A turnaround was made possible after the August 2016 visit of CM Shah to the park and his instant orders. "In August the chief minister with his staff paid a surprise visit to the park without protocol and prior announcement," said an official privy to the details of the renovation project.

"He expressed his serious displeasure on the amount of litter in the park and lamented that the fruit and vegetable vendors and other shopkeepers working around the park had turned it into a garbage dumping ground. He then called a meeting of relevant officials and issued directives to the authorities concerned to construct a compound wall around the park and develop it properly. That led to the launch of Jahangir Park's renovation project."

(By Imran Ayub, Dawn News, 15, 15/08/2017)

Jahangir Park officially opens its gates to the public

Almost two months after its completion, Jahangir Park was inaugurated by Pakistan Peoples Party Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Sunday.



Gifted to the people of Sadder in 1883 by a Zoroastrian philanthropist, Behramji Jehangirji Raj Kotwala, the park served as a recreational and political space for years before it deteriorated due to neglect.

While presiding over a meeting at the Sindh Secretariat last August, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah announced his intention to restore Jahangir Park to its former glory, otherwise it would turned into a parking site and dumping ground.

He concluded the meeting and then, accompanied by his then principal secretary Naveed Kamran Baloch, Planning and Development Chairperson Mohammad Waseem and Karachi Package Project Director Niaz Soomro, visited the park and vowed to restore it.

He directed the South deputy commissioner, who was also present, to remove the encroachments from the park so that restoration work could be started as soon as possible.

Shah directed Waseem and Soomro to prepare the park's PC-1 and get it approved by him. Subsequently, the chief minister approved the Rs200 million scheme.

Jahangir Park restored to its former glory

Work on the project started and was completed less than a year after it commenced.

The park is spread over five acres of land, with an amphitheatre, aviary, dinosaur park and library. It also features two reverse osmosis (RO) plants, each capable of producing 50 million gallons of water a day.

One RO plant is for drinking water purposes and is to be utilised by visitors. Residents of nearby localities also have the facility to take water to their homes. The other plant will provide water to maintain the lawn, trees, plants and flowers planted in the park.

The park also features its own security system under which closed-circuit television cameras have been installed, along with a command and control centre. These cameras would also cover the vicinity around the park.

The park was officially opened for the public on Sunday evening. Entry will be free for the first two weeks, after which the park administration will impose a nominal charge on visitors.

The Sindh government will maintain the park for the next through years via the scheme's project director.

The chief minister said that with the inauguration of Jahangir Park the soul of the late Behramji Jehangirji Raj Kotwala must be pleased. "Now it is up to all of us to take care of the park and maintain its beauty and restored glory," he said.

Safari Zoo Park gets 100 new plants

Shah said Saddar is the heart of Karachi and Jahangir Park is the heart of Saddar. "We have restored the palpitations of the heart and now, with the start of the restoration of old areas of the city, the whole of Saddar will be given a new look," he vowed. (THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE 13, 20/11/2017)

Renovated Jahangir Park inaugurated by Bilawal

Jehangir Park, rehabilitated and renovated at a cost of Rs200 million, was inaugurated by Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Sunday.



Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Mr Bhutto-Zardari said it was a historically important park and appreciated the Sindh government and Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah for paying due attention to its rehabilitation and renovation.

"Our region is faced with threats from global warming; keeping this in view, the Sindh government has undertaken many important projects to ward them off," he said, and made mention of projects like promotion of solar energy, strengthening of embankments of waterways to conserve water etc.

The PPP chairman also highlighted importance of education and awareness of healthy environment to ensure an improvement in the quality of life. He expressed his satisfaction over the provincial government's measures to provide educational, health and recreational facilities to the masses.

Mr Bhutto-Zardari went round different sections of the park along with CM Shah, Senior Minister Nisar Ahmad Khuhro, Information Minister Nasir Hussain Shah and Local Government Minister Jam Khan Shoro and lauded the quality and standard of the work carried out for the renovation.

MPAs Javed Nagori and Sania Naz, Syed Waqar Mehdi, Rashid Rabbani, DMC South chirman Malik Fayyaz and other senior party activists attended the ceremony. Earlier the chief minister in his brief speech thanked Mr Bhutto-Zardari for sparing time to inaugurate the park. He held out the assurance that many more projects would be completed soon to restore the city's lost grandeur as well as status of the 'city of lights'.

He recalled that the historical Jahangir Park had been ruined after it was turned into a dumping site and parking place due to neglect. He said the rehabilitation and renovation work was completed within six months.

The Jahangir Park land was donated by Khan Bahadur Behramjee Jahangir Rajkotwala in the 1880s. The park was originally named after Behramjee Bagh and inaugurated on the eve of Nauroze in 1883. (Dawn 15, 20/11/2017)