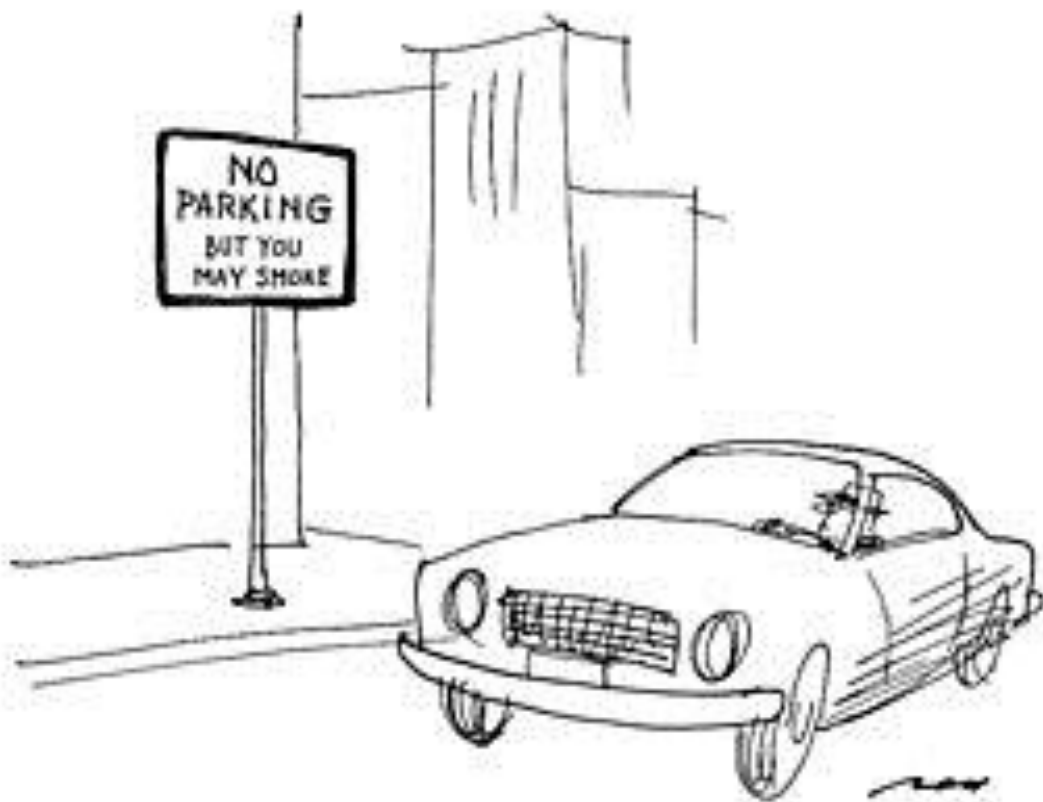


# PARKING



## Parking for millions

Drive through any thoroughfare in Karachi and on every second step, you will find a man wearing a yellow cap, often accompanied by a high visibility vest, jump in front of your car and direct you to an empty parking spot. If you park your car or motorcycle there, the man will hand you a torn receipt, which would bear a random serial number, the name of the issuing authority and the fee, which can vary between Rs30 and Rs50 for a car and Rs10 to Rs20 for a motorcycle.

If at the time of parking your vehicle, you somehow manage to evade payment, you would come back to find one of the windscreen wipers standing erect. This is a reminder, more for themselves, that they must collect what they believe to be rightfully theirs before you can drive off.

Against the said fee, all citizens get is a kind of assurance that their car or bike will not be lifted by the traffic police. However, there is no guarantee that their vehicle will not be stolen or harmed as the disclaimer – ‘parking at the owner’s risk’ – is already written on the receipt.

### The issuing authorities

There are 17 land controlling agencies in Karachi that are empowered to collect parking fees within their jurisdictions. Main roads fall under the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), while inner streets under the District Municipal Corporations (DMC). Meanwhile, cantonment boards charge the fees for parking in their respective areas.

There are more than 40 parking sites under the KMC, which have been outsourced to private contractors through tenders. Similarly, the DMCs have also given the charged parking sites in their jurisdictions to contractors.

The parking fee approved by the City Council is Rs5 for motorcycles, while Rs20 for cars. This is almost never the case, however, as citizens are charged Rs40 to Rs50 for parking their cars at most of these sites. In this way, millions of rupees are collected from citizens on a daily basis. Furthermore, the collected amount does not even go to the government treasury, with the contractors pocketing most of it.

### Illegal sites

Notwithstanding the situation at the officially notified parking sites, there are over 200 illegal sites operations in the city. There is no record of these unauthorised parking spots available with the KMC or any other land-controlling agencies.

The majority of these are operations in East, South and Central districts, which are home to most of the business centres and government offices and thousands of citizens park their vehicles in these areas on a daily basis. Almost the whole of the Saddar area, Tariq Road, University Road and other business hubs of the city are under the control of this parking mafia.

According to the rules set by the City Council, the parking contractors are not authorised to charge the parking fee on Saturdays and Sundays. On the contrary, the mafia is even more active on these days in the commercial areas as people come for shopping, dining out and other activities with their families, which boosts their earnings. Moreover, if you return to your parking spot late at night, you will see a man waiting for you in the dark to receive money, though it is illegal to charge the fee after 11pm. The mafia is so powerful that if a citizen refuses to pay them the due amount, they would get their car lifted with a lifter and would not be able to get it released until the fee is paid.

When The Express Tribune reached out to senior officials of the KMC to inquire about the situation, they gave the same old clichéd statements that “action is taken against the contractors charging additional amount and against the illegal parking sites”. (By Naeem Khanzada The Express Tribune, 04, 31/10/2019)