

PARKS & TREES



Fruit-bearing trees being grown along Mai Kolachi bypass

Driving through the Mai Kolachi bypass, one is in for a pleasant surprise. There are newly-planted saplings lined on either side of the main road.



On closer inspection it was discovered that they were mostly fruit trees, including tropical almond, cheeku, jamun and mulberry trees. The remaining trees which do not bear fruit would grow up to provide plenty of shade as they happen to be neem and gulmohar trees.

Most of the trees bear white labels mentioning Project Rise, a Dawoodi Bohra initiative, as the donors of these trees.

'God forbid, if a tree dies, we will also replace it'

Speaking to Dawn, Zohaib Tahir, a spokesman for the Dawoodi Bohra community, said that they had specially thought of planting indigenous trees along the road. "We wanted to plant local trees but among all the local species we selected the ones which we planted after consultation with horticulturists. We wanted to make sure which trees would do well in the area as it is quite near the coast too," he said, adding that planted some 500 trees in the area.

"Then we wanted to plant more fruit trees," he added. "The reason to be doing that was to bring back birds to the area. There are so many local bird species here which relish the fruits of these trees," he said. "They may also build nests in the trees as all of them are going to grow up to be big bushy trees, providing ample shade."

Asked why they didn't think of planting mango trees when planting the other fruit trees, the spokesman laughed and said that then the people, especially kids, would stone the trees for the mangoes. When reminded that they would still be eating the cheeku, jamun, mulberries, etc, he said that would most probably be happening. "But the trees would provide fruit for all. The humans will take what they see and the birds will feed on what they can find," he said.

He also said that till the saplings grow into trees and even afterwards they will all be the responsibility of the Bohra community which planted them. "We are watering them, providing fertilizer for them. And if, God forbid, a tree dies, we will also replace it," he said.

"But for now we have nature on our side because after we planted the saplings last week, the Almighty sent us rain. It has really helped the saplings take root," he added.

It is said that the trees would soon turn the Mai Kolachi Bypass into a model road with rows of shady, green, fruit bearing trees.

The beautifying of Mai Kolachi is a part of the Sindh government's Green Karachi initiative. Adviser to Sindh Chief Minister on Law, Coastal Development, Climate Change and Environment Barrister Murtaza Wahab said they wanted to make Karachi a pollution-free metropolis as they plant hundreds of trees in different areas across the city.

A Karachi Port Trust spokesman said that while the trees have been planted by the Dawoodi Bohra community, the Karachi Municipal Corporation had taken the responsibility of repainting the footpath borders on the road.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 15, 05/09/2019)

Sindh govt to replace Metropole Hotel with modern park for children, elderly

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has decided to acquire the Metropole Hotel land to prevent the construction of a high-rise on its place and instead develop a modern park for children and elderly people.



He also decided to acquire a portion of the Sindh Club on the corner for widening of the left turning of the road from the Metropole Hotel towards Clifton to ease traffic flow. He directed the commissioner of Karachi to talk to the owners of the hotel and the Sindh Club management for acquiring their lands and report to him within 10 days.

These decisions were taken by Mr Shah while presiding over a meeting on Wednesday here at Chief Minister House. The meeting, attended by Minister for Local Government Nasir Hussain Shah, CM Adviser Murtaza Wahab, P&D Chairperson Nahid Shah and experts of the P&D and other departments, also discussed the need to construct two underpasses — one at the Metropole traffic signal and the other at the Avari Hotel to make signal-free the passage for the traffic coming from Clifton to Saddar and for the traffic of Saddar towards Cantt Station, respectively.

Commissioner given 10 days to negotiate with hotel owners, Sindh Club management for land acquisition

Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister said that the Metropole Hotel land was located in the centre of the four most important and busy roads where traffic volume remained considerably high almost round the clock and as such "construction of any high-rise building on the land of the hotel would cause further congestion of traffic in the area and will create serious environmental issues."

Mr Shah said the construction of a beautiful park for children and elderly people would be best for environment of the city which was getting more and more polluted. "Onward all the projects," he said, would be developed keeping in view the environmental conditions of the city, capacity of the roads and sewerage system and provision of all other facilities.

Referring to the traffic jam issue on the left turning of the road from Metropole towards Clifton as the traffic going towards Club Road stops at the traffic signal and blocks the entire turning and causes frequent traffic jams, he suggested that a portion of the Sindh Club on the corner also be acquired for widening the left turning of the road.

Two underpasses planned

The chief minister said that there was a dire need for two underpasses, one on Abdullah Haroon Road at the Metropole Hotel traffic signal to make the traffic coming from Clifton to Saddar signal-free and the other may be constructed at the Avari Hotel towards Fatima Jinnah Road to give signal-free passage to the traffic from Saddar towards Cantt Station.

The chief minister directed P&D Chairperson Nahid Shah to prepare estimates and proposals for both the underpasses and submit to him for further action.

He said he was also considering construction of an underpass on Club Road towards Sultanabad to get the traffic between both the hotels signal free.

Bridge over causeway

The chief minister said that the destruction of Korangi Causeway by hill torrential deluge had created serious problems for the people of Korangi.

It has completely disconnected Korangi from the Defence area. The alternative route being used by the people of Korangi was passing through the industrial area where traffic jams were a routine matter.

He said he wanted to construct a bridge on the causeway so that the flow of traffic and movement of the people could be hassle free. He worked out a map of the area and decided to prepare a detailed plan after adopting engineering solutions.

The chief minister was told that the Yellow Line project had also suggested construction of a flyover from Baloch Colony bridge to Korangi. This would also cover the causeway.

At this the chief minister directed the P&D department to consult with Yellow Line project people and meanwhile he would construct a bridge on the causeway. "I would prepare its sketch keeping in view all the traffic requirements of the area and hand it over to the P&D for moving forward through their experts," he said.

(By Habib Khan Ghori Dawn, 15, 05/09/2019)

Official neglect ruining park developed in Benazir's name

Many of the glass panels of the most beautiful structure, a gallery for display of arts and crafts, in Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Park are missing altogether, a recent visit to the park in Clifton shows.



Several of the cement benches with round pedestals lie about broken into pieces. The cement fencing running along the boating basin has collapsed at places with the debris still lying nearby. The exquisite bobbing pathway made from dovetailed plastic blocks for a joyful walk on the water body is damaged and ripped from its roots. The jogging track paved with sturdy planks sits mercilessly denuded of the wooden pieces in big patches.

Piles of rotting, stinking garbage and rubble along the quay wall are growing in height, length and breadth with nobody caring to contain the mess.

Every time you visit the park after a few months' break, you will find it in a worse condition than your previous call. But this visit to the one of the most exquisite parks of the country found the recreational facility in a horrible state.

Then president of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari had predicted a 100-year life for the park

Incidentally, the plaque at the main gate bears the name of Liaquat Ali Khan Qaimkhani, the former director general of parks, Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, who has landed in the National Accountability Bureau net for amassing assets beyond his known means of income.

Earlier this park was open to families only. The distinction is no long maintained. So, more men can be seen loitering here than women and children enjoying themselves in peace. An occasional passing vendor also raises his voice to hawk his goods.

Even motorcyclists can be spotted riding about with impunity. When a rider was stopped and asked if he knew it was not permitted to ride a motorbike inside the park, he said he was aware of it. But "they (men at the gate) allow people in as they like. They are my acquaintances (jaan pehchaan walay hein)," he remarked with a smile and rode away.

Long unkempt grass shows it has not been mowed for a long time though around four dozen gardeners are reportedly employed for the job. Pieces of trash, particularly the ubiquitous polythene bags, cling to the tall strands of grass and plants.

Iron exercise fixtures are rusting and losing their parts both to corrosion and vandals. The ruthless vandals and thieves seem to escape the attention of the six watchmen, working three each in day and night shifts. Or are they paid to turn a blind eye to such destructions?

Paan peek, or the crimson spittle, the city's sorts of trademark, is a common ugly sight.

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah had recently announced his government's plan to turn the crumbling Metropole Hotel into a modern park for children and the elderly. Even if a spot surrounded by whirling heavy traffic could be turned into a recreational spot, there is little sense in allowing an existing one to 'rust in piece' and building more of its kind.

Proper maintenance of the park is a real challenge for the Sindh government. If it cannot do so, there can be no stronger proof of its failure in governance. It cannot blame the Karachi Development Authority or the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, which might be administering it, for what it should own and adopt as a legitimate PPP baby. It is literally at a stone's throw from the Bilawal House. It is named after the former leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party, around whom the PPP politics revolves. PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Aseefa and Bakhtawar might also have seen the fallen part of the boundary wall while driving out of their palatial home and past the park. However, the boundary wall is camouflaged by greenery and is the only part of the park that is in a somewhat reasonable condition. Knowing well that their bosses will never step inside the park, officials get away with their criminal neglect.

The park was inaugurated by Almas Parveen, a senator of the Pakistan Peoples Party from Lyari, in 2010 in the absence of Asif Ali Zardari, who could not make it to the event. The park was a befitting tribute by the PPP government to its slain leader Benazir Bhutto.

In a statement at the inauguration, Asif Zardari, the then president, had predicted a 100-year life for the park. If it continues to disintegrate at the pace it does, it can hardly survive for another decade.

Spread over 152 acres, it cost Rs870 million to the provincial exchequer when it was completed. Much more has been spent on its 'maintenance'. This is the first park in Pakistan where American grass was planted. Reportedly, some of the saplings were also imported.

In 2017, Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar visited the park and promised to help improve its condition. A year or so ago it was reportedly taken from the KMC and given in the KDA control.

Its deterioration probably began when a young man was killed at the Rangers' hands on June 10, 2011. That scary episode, which had gone viral on social media and had made headlines in the electronic and print media, would have kept many families away from the park for a long time.

(By Naseer Ahmed Dawn, 13, 30/09/2019)

Restoration of Kidney Hill Park expected to complete soon in Karachi

Following the apex court's orders, steps, including the initiation of a plantation drive, have been taken to convert the otherwise neglected Kidney Hill Park in Karachi into a picturesque amusement spot.

The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) has completed the geographical analysis and landscaping of the park, which preceded an ongoing plantation drive at the recreational facility. Authorities monitoring the park's renovation aim to plant more than 10,000 trees in its premises in the coming two weeks, and the number is expected to increase to 100,000 over the next few months.

With the current pace of the renovation work at the park, it is expected that it will be opened for public soon.

As of now, wild-growing bushes, which once spread across the park's area, have been trimmed and pavements have been levelled. Also, garbage and rocks that previously littered the pavements have been removed with the help of heavy machinery.

According to Metropolitan Commissioner Dr Saifur Rehman, who is monitoring the park's renovation on a daily basis, trees that are being planted in the park include the royal poinciana, sacred fig, madras thorn, wild almond, fig, neem, guava, chikoo, cluster fig, banyans, coconut, babul, date palms, mango, pomegranates, custard apple and grape. He said that different paths inside the park have been paved so that the visitors will be able to reach the hilltop easily and take a bird's eye view of the city.

Four main gates are also being constructed to be installed at the park's entry points and the number plates for the gates will be mounted within the next few days, he added.

Dr Rehman said that after renovation, smooth pavements, benches, clean drinking water, proper lighting, walking tracks and a children's play area will be available in the park. However, he added that "KMC doesn't have enough funds. So, we want to beautify the park, which extends over an area of 62 acres, using minimal resources and within minimum possible time."

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 05, 06/10/2019)

Sindh govt proposes 'Adopt a Park' scheme for parks' rehabilitation

Sindh Chief Secretary Syed Mumtaz Ali Shah said on Saturday that the provincial government has decided to engage the civil society, schools and other organisations in the rehabilitation of parks which have been cleared of encroachments in Karachi, through an 'Adopt a Park' programme. He said this while presiding over a meeting at the Sindh Secretariat.

Briefing the meeting, Karachi Commissioner Iftikhar Shallwani said that there are 1,578 parks in Karachi, of which 217 were encroached. Out of the encroached parks, illegal structures have been removed from 138 parks and 78 are yet to be cleared of encroachments, he added.

Corroborating the figures stated by Commissioner Shallwani, Shah said that the provincial government cleared encroachments from 138 parks during anti-encroachment operations conducted in different areas of the metropolis, and warned that the encroachments are likely to reappear if parks are not rehabilitated and maintained properly.

"In order to sustain these parks, the provincial government has decided to engage the civil society in rehabilitation activities through a public-private partnership model," he said. For this purpose, he proposed to launch an 'Adopt a Park' programme.

Participating in the programme "will instil a sense of ownership [of the park] among the public and will give the people an opportunity to serve the community," said the chief secretary. Such models are also being implemented in other countries to facilitate the maintenance of parks, he added.

He compared the 'Adopt a Park' programme to the Sindh government's 'Adopt a School' programme. The provincial government has been running the 'Adopt a School' programme, which lets private-sector organisations and individuals adopt and manage a public school, he said. Schools running on this model are monitored by the Sindh Education and Literacy Department and Sindh Education Foundation, which also provides technical assistance for running the facilities, he added.

According to Chief Secretary Shah, the 'Adopt a Park' programme will function in the same way as the 'Adopt a School' programme, and the adopters will be provided technical assistance and expertise by the government departments, particularly Sindh Forest Department.

He further informed the participants of the meeting that no commercial activities will be carried out on the parks' premises, no civil construction or fencing will be allowed in the parks and public will be provided complete and easy access to the recreational facilities, as ordered by the Supreme Court.

During the meeting, the attendees also exchanged views and made recommendations regarding the proposed policy draft of the 'Adopt a Park' programme, following which, Shah constituted a committee, headed by Commissioner Shallwani, to formulate a policy draft for the programme. Besides Shallwani, the committee comprises Local Government Secretary Roshan Ali Sheikh, Metropolitan Commissioner Dr Saifur Rehman and representatives of different schools and organisations. Once prepared, the draft will be referred to the Sindh Cabinet for approval.

School Education Secretary Ahsan Ali Mangi, Private Institutions Director General Mansoob Hussain Siddiqui and parks director general also attended the meeting.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 05, 13/10/2019)

Can Kidney Hill Park be Karachi's Daman-e-Koh?

If tracts of land were people, then in Karachi, parks would be second-class citizens. The facilities or land earmarked for them seem to suffer a similar fate for the most part. Where parks should be treated as a valuable environmental and entertainment resource given the dearth of both in the city, all greedy land developers see is an opportunity for encroachment.



Located at a stone's throw from Rangoonwala Hall and Bahadurabad Chowrangi, Kidney Hill Park suffered the same fate for decades. After its doors were closed to the public some 50 years ago, the land it was established upon was illegally occupied by both public and private entities.

That is until the start of this year when the Supreme Court ordered a massive anti-encroachment drive in the city. As part of efforts to clear out land occupied by encroachers, city authorities demolished illegal structures erected within Kidney Hill Park premises, which included, rather surprisingly, an entire colony for Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) staff.

With the park land now free, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation has been keen to re-establish Kidney Hill as a state-of-the-art urban forest on a par with Islamabad's Daman-e-Koh. For the past month-and-a-half, the officers and staff of KMC, the Horticulture Department, Karachi Zoo and the city's municipal services have been working to beautify the park.

A makeover in progress

According to officials, all unkempt trees and shrubs have been groomed, while the trails have been cleaned and flattened to make them easier to traverse. Stray dogs have also been removed from the park with the help of the Edhi Welfare Foundation, they said.

"We are currently in the first phase of the project and carrying out departmental work," Municipal Commissioner Dr Saifur Rehman told The Express Tribune. "We are currently planting trees – we plan to plant as many as 10,000 in phase one – and clearing out the various park trails," he said.

"KMC is growing more than 25 types of plants in the park," said Karachi Zoo's Senior Recreation Director Mansoor Qazi. "We have planted 7,000 so far." He added that the plan envisions six types of forests within the park: "There will be a timber forest, a fruit forest, a creeper forest and a jungle-type environment. We will also have stretches with medicinal plants and bushes and shrubs."

According to Qazi, most of the plants have been sourced by KMC from its nurseries. In addition to that, Indus Motors, MUFG Bank and Al-Habib Bank have donated 3,500 plants. The medicinal plants and fruit trees being grown include banana, mango, dates, lemon, sapodilla, malta, papaya, coconut, blackberry, guava, apricot, fig, banyan, tamarind, morinaga and wood-apple among others.

Thousands of tonnes of litter have also been removed from park land as part of phase one, Municipal Commissioner Rehman said. "As many as 500 trucks lifted the garbage, dumped by both residences and businesses in the vicinity, from the park. We also plan to carry out a special cleanliness drive with civil society volunteers shortly."

He outlined that the plan is to create 12 corridors in the park. "These will be named after renowned Pakistani tourist spots, like Saiful Muluk, Karakoram, Rakaposhi and Dhoraji," he said. While no trees would be chopped down to make way for the corridors, the authorities will trim down shrubs and bushes around them. "All this work will be completed in a month and the park will be opened to the public."

Rehman added that four gates have been installed to restrict the movement of potential miscreants. "We have also deputed a city warden."

According to the municipal commissioner, a consultant will be hired in phase two to create a comprehensive plan for the park. "We want an aviary and an open enclosure on the pattern of Safari Park. We also want a play area for children and an artificial lake along with a cafeteria or canteen," he said.

Pushback from 'influentials'

The plan to re-establish Kidney Hill Park did not stay immune to resistance from other quarters. According to KMC officials, several influential individuals tried to pressure the corporation into giving up the initiative.

"It was a difficult phase, but Municipal Commissioner Rehman not only stood up to the pressure but made it very clear that this project was being carried out in accordance with the Supreme Court orders," said one KMC official. "Thanks to his stance, any resistance to the project has now subsided."

Much needed oxygen

Kidney Hill's urban forest is expected to make a significant addition to Karachi's otherwise sparse tree population. By itself, however, it will not be enough to improve the city's environmental conditions, according to experts.

"KMC's forestation efforts in Kidney Hill Park are a great step, but they should be followed up with a comprehensive plan to increase greenery in Karachi," said Horticulture Society of Pakistan Council (HSPC) member Rafiul Haq. "Not only should the plants being grown there be looked after persistently, but a massive plantation campaign should also be carried out on other vacant lands in the city."

According to Haq, Karachi needs at least 140 million trees to keep it from becoming an urban heat sink. "Due to numerous concrete structures, including high-rises, and road development, it has become more and more important to grow more trees. Concrete and the material used in roads releases heat for a long time, increasing temperature intensity in the city."

Kidney Hill, then and now

The land for Kidney Hill Park was allocated by the Karachi Development Authority (KDA) in KDA Scheme 32 in 1966. Owing to its geographical outline and the many natural hills in its vicinity, it adopted the peculiar name of Kidney Hill Park, which was later changed to Ahmed Ali Kidney Hill Park after KDA Senior Director of Planning, Ahmed Ali.

However, there's little KDA can be credited for besides allocating land and erecting a kidney-esque boundary wall around the public park, before handing it over to Karachi Municipal Corporation, which too failed to do much for the park in terms of development and maintenance and it was left for the howls of stray dogs and criminal elements to haunt for decades.

(By Syed Ashraf Ali The Express Tribune, 04, 30/10/2019)

Comments sought on plea against using Askari Park for commercial purpose

The Sindh High Court on Wednesday directed the city mayor and the management of the Askari Amusement Park to file comments on a petition against using the public facility for commercial purposes.

Impleading the Sindh chief secretary, Karachi commissioner, mayor, management of the park and others as respondents, the petitioner moved the SHC after the collapse of a carousel at the park last year leaving a teenage girl dead and many others injured.

When the matter came up for hearing before a two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Iqbal Kalhoro on Wednesday, the petitioner submitted that the replies on behalf of the Karachi mayor and the management of the park had not so far been submitted.

The counsel for both the respondents requested for time to file their respective replies.

The bench adjourned the matter till Dec 17 directing them to file their comments on the next date of hearing.

IO of Naqeebullah murder case ordered to appear in court on Nov 28

In a previous hearing, the deputy commissioner East filed comments on behalf of the commissioner stating that with the approval of competent authority (chief minister) the services and general administration department through a notification dated July 16, 2018 constituted a five-member technical committee to look into the incident in which a swing/ride at the park had collapsed.

The committee comprised DC East, SSP East, local government director, civil engineer of local councils concerned and mechanical engineer from a well-reputable university. The committee had already submitted a confidential report on July 21 last year to the chief secretary.

Similarly, the SHO of the PIB police station in his comments had stated that a swing collapsed on July 15, 2018 at the Askari Amusement Park in old Sabzi Mandi in which a girl, Kashaf, died and several others sustained injuries. A case was registered under Sections 319 (manslaughter), 337-H (punishment for hurt by rash or negligent act) and 34 (common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

Petitioner Imran Shahzad stated that the rides at the park were not properly maintained and posed a threat to visitors.

He maintained that the management of the park had ended the green belt and was using the premises for commercial purposes without obtaining a no-objection certificate.

Plea for Rao Anwar's bail cancellation

The same bench also directed the investigating officer of the Naqeebullah murder case to appear in court on Nov 28 in a petition filed by the father of the deceased seeking cancellation of bail granted to then SSP Rao Anwar by the trial court.

Mohammad Khan, father of Naqeeb, through his lawyer moved the SHC against the order of an antiterrorism court for granting bail to Rao Anwar.

The then SSP along with his subordinates has been facing trial before an ATC for allegedly killing Naseemullah, better known as Naqeebullah Mehsud, and three others in an alleged staged encounter in January 2018 in a Malir locality. The trial court had granted him bail in July last year.

The bench partly heard lawyers from both sides and directed the IO, SSP Dr Rizwan Ahmed, to appear in court on the next date.

The petitioner contended that Rao Anwar was very influential as it was evident from the fact that since his arrest he had been provided a VVIP and discriminatory treatment and was kept at his home instead of prison before the bail.

He further maintained that due to discriminatory and illegal favours being accorded to the suspect, he had been threatening the prosecution witnesses.

(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 15, 21/11/2019)

Big flag hoisted at Kidney Hill Park

A giant national flag has been hoisted by the city's municipal administration at the highest point of the under-renovation Ahmed Ali Park, better known as Kidney Hill Park, reinvigorating the scenic beauty of the recreational site spread over 62 acres.



Karachi Metropolitan Corporation's Municipal Commissioner Dr Syed Saif-ur-Rehman on Monday hoisted the 12x18 feet flag on a 40-foot high pole at the 209-foot highest point of the park that had become a haven for drug addicts and land grabbers.

The KMC under the supervision of the municipal commissioner had started the renovation work in the park a couple of months ago following the ruling of the Supreme Court against encroachments on amenity plots, footpaths and pavements.

The metropolitan commissioner told Dawn that the municipal administration had begun the development work at the park with the available resources, adding that the park would be a beautiful place to visit after renovation.

"The work has been under way for the past three months in the park which will be opened for citizens once the renovation is completed," he said.

Mr Rehman said that over 18,000 trees and saplings had been planted in the park and more were being planted to make a city forest here.

He said the trees being planted in the park included the royal poinciana, sacred fig, Madras thorn, wild almond, fig, neem, guava, chikoo, cluster fig, banyans, coconut, babul, date palms, mango, pomegranates, custard apple and grape.

KMC anti-encroachment department officials said that over 20 acres of the park's land were encroached upon by a housing cooperative society that had obtained a stay order. However, they said, the stay was vacated by the Sindh High Court and 17 bungalows constructed on the park's premises were demolished.

The Kidney Hill Park, which remained inaccessible to citizens for over three decades, has been named after Prof Ahmed Ali, an eminent writer and poet.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 15, 26/11/2019)

SHC seeks replies from Askari Park authorities, mayor

The Sindh High Court (SHC) directed the administration of Askari Amusement Park and Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar on Tuesday to submit their replies regarding commercial use of the park within four weeks. A two-member bench comprising Justice Syed Hassan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Kausar Sultana was hearing the plea against the commercial use of Askari Amusement Park.

The plea states that the rides at the park pose a risk to the lives of citizens as they are badly maintained. It argues that the removal of greenbelts from the parks' premises and the use of the space for commercial activities is illegal. The plea refers to an incident in the park in 2018 when a swing collapsed resulting in the death of a 12-year-old girl and injuries to several others. It argues that space of 300 yards should be left vacant as a safety measure. The plea further states that the park management has no proper first-aid facilities to tend to people in case of an emergency.

The park administration and Akhtar asked the court for an extension to submit their replies. The bench granted a four-week extension and adjourned the hearing indefinitely. The court also sought documents of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) from the petitioner. At the previous hearing of the case, the police and the deputy commissioner had submitted their report before the court.

Fake domiciles case

Another two-member bench, comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Agha Faisal, sought a reply from the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) with regards to the issuance of fake domiciles. The court also summoned Federation Director Chaudhry Muhammad Farooq for assistance. The bench was hearing the plea filed by MQM-P leader Khawaja Izharul Hassan against the issuance of fake domiciles.

Hassan and others appeared before the court. The former Katchi Abadis director maintained that the federation should be made party in the case. At this, the bench inquired whether the federation had been nominated as a party in the plea. Hassan replied that his plea has no connection to the Centre.

The bench observed that domicile was a provincial issue and asked what connection the Centre had with the plea. There is no opponent in the plea as everyone agrees that fake domiciles should not be issued, remarked the bench.

The court sought a reply from NADRA, summoned Farooq, and adjourned the hearing till January 17.

Extension granted

Meanwhile, a two-member bench comprising Justice Iqbal Kalhoro and Justice Abdul Mobin Lakho granted an extension to the petitioner's counsel to file an amended plea pertaining to the cancellation of the accused's bails in Naqeebullah murder case.

The bench was hearing the petition seeking cancellation of bail of former Malir SSP Rao Anwar and other accused in the case. The petition maintained that the subordinate court had overlooked several legal aspects while granting bails.

The petitioner's counsel sought an extension from court to file an amended petition on the grounds of Naqeebullah's father's – the petitioner – death.

The court accepted the counsel's request and adjourned the hearing till January 13.

Non-payment of pension

Another bench comprising Justice Muhammad Shafi Siddiqui and Justice Dr Zulfiqar Ahmad Khan summoned the finance director of Karachi Development Authority (KDA) in the case pertaining to non-payment of pension to KDA employees.

The petitioner's counsel, Advocate Shoan Nabi, maintained that his client has not been paid pension since he retired. The counsel told the court that his client had served in KDA in Lines Area for 35 years.

The bench expressed annoyance over the absence of the KDA's counsel and asked what became of the authority's funds. The provincial assistant advocate-general stated before the court that KDA's funds have been spent. At this, the bench remarked that this was not the court's concern.

The court summoned KDA's finance director in a personal capacity and issued notices to the parties. The hearing was adjourned till the first week of January.

Damages claim for 'wrongful' imprisonment

Separately, a citizen who spent four years in jail, allegedly because he was mistaken for Lyari-based gang member Baba Ladla, filed a damages claim in the high court. The petitioner, Baba Noor Muhammad, has sought Rs5 million from the police and the Karachi Electric Supply Company (KESC – now known as K-Electric) in damages.

The petitioner has claimed that he was arrested in 1998 as the police believed he was Baba Ladla and six cases were registered against him. He states that he was acquitted by the court in all of the cases but KESC never restored his employment. He argues that he should be compensated for the four years he spent in jail and mentions that he has nine children.

His counsel, Advocate Shoan Nabi, maintained before the court that it was the incompetence of the police and other agencies, which resulted in the citizen being mistakenly arrested as Baba Ladla.

Sentence commuted

Meanwhile, a two-member bench comprising Justice KK Agha and Justice Zulfiqar Ali Sangi, commuted the death sentence awarded to a convict in a murder case. The sentence was commuted to 15 years of rigorous imprisonment.

Announcing the verdict, the court stated that the time already spent in jail by convict Bilal would be counted as part of his imprisonment.

A subordinate court had awarded the death sentence to Bilal in the murder case of citizen Waseem, who was killed in 2011.

Bails confirmed

Another bench headed by SHC Chief Justice (CJ) Muhammad Ali Shaikh and comprising Justice Omar Sial confirmed the interim bails of Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) leader Rauf Siddiqui and other accused in the case pertaining to illegal appointments in Sindh Small Industries Corporation.

The verdict on the bail pleas of Siddiqui and eight other accused, including Muhammad Abid Mushtaq Ali, Omar Bakhsh, Syed Omar Ali, Muhammad Naeem and Syed Ayaz, had earlier been reserved by the bench. Sarwat Fahim, co-accused in the case, had already been granted bail.

According to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Siddiqui and others made illegal appointments in the Sindh Small Industries Corporation from 2008 to 2014, causing losses to the finance department.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 18/12/2019)

Renovated Kidney Hill Park inaugurated

Ahmed Ali Park, better known as Kidney Hill Park, one of the most scenic recreational sites spread over 62 acres in the middle of the city near Bahadurabad, was on Saturday inaugurated by Mayor Wasim Akhtar after its restoration.

Karachi Metropolitan Corporation's Municipal Commissioner Dr Syed Saif ur Rehman, who supervised and monitored the restoration and renovation of the park, former CPLC chief Jamil Yousuf and others were also present on the occasion.

The Kidney Hill Park, which remained inaccessible to citizens for over three decades due to encroachments, was named after Ahmed Ali, an acclaimed town planner who was the chief town planner in the Karachi Development Authority.

Speaking on the occasion, the mayor said that environmental pollution in the city was touching a dangerous level. "Karachi contributes huge amount of Rs350 billion to the national exchequer, but still no attention is paid to resolving the city's issues," he said.

'Environmental pollution in the city is touching dangerous levels'

The mayor sought help of the business community to raise a voice for the city's issues and use influence for their resolution, adding that he alone could not bring improvement to Karachi.

He said the people of the city wanted their civic and municipal problems solved, and urged the federal and provincial governments to own the city.

Mr Akhtar said the KMC was doing its best for the betterment of the city despite an acute shortage of funds.

He said that the local bodies system was meant to make the country progress and prosper, but it was destroyed in the country only to benefit the National Assembly members.

He said that over 23,000 trees were planted in Kidney Hill Park to make the site a great urban forest.

The metropolitan commissioner said several parks were made, but the Kidney Hill Park was unique and unprecedented as it gave a sense of satisfaction. "Within a period of 80 days my team completed this project within available resources," he said.

A big national flag, hoisted at the highest point of the Kidney Hill Park, reinvigorated the scenic beauty of the recreational site. The 12x18 feet flag was hoisted on a 40-foot high pole at the 209-foot highest point of the park that had earlier become a haven for drug addicts and land grabbers.

The KMC under the supervision of the municipal commissioner had started the renovation work in the park a couple of months ago following the ruling of the Supreme Court against encroachments on amenity plots, footpaths and pavements.

The trees planted in the park included the royal poinciana, sacred fig, madras thorn, wild almond, fig, neem, guava, chikoo, cluster fig, banyans, coconut, babul, date palms, mango, pomegranates, custard apple and grape.
(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 15, 22/12/2019)