

PARKS & TREES

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Minor girl killed as Askari Park ride collapses in Karachi

A 12-year-old girl, Kashaf Dukhtar, was killed and 25 others injured when a ride, being operated on a trial basis, in Karachi's newly-inaugurated Askari Amusement Park broke apart on Sunday night.



"It was around 40-feet above the ground when it crashed," an eye witness Aslam told *The Express Tribune*. "There was a loud bang and people ran here and there," he said, adding that the park's management suddenly disappeared from the scene.

Video footage of the horrific incident surfaced on social media soon after the incident, in which visitors can be seen rushing to the scene to try to help those trapped after a part of Discovery, the frisbee pendulum ride that can spin a complete 360-degree revolution, collapsed to the ground. This type of ride features a circular gondola that rotates as it swings back and forth. Riders are seated on the gondola facing inward or outward, depending on the model.

The 30-acre park near Karachi Central Jail, which once used to be teeming with vegetable and fruit vendors which gave it its colloquial name, Old Sabzi Mandi, is now home to "Askari Amusement Park", which opened to the public on the first day of Eidul Fitr.

No checks and balances

Two days before opening, the park's managing director, Shafqat Jafri, had told *The Express Tribune* that the machinery had been imported from China. On a query regarding safety checks, he had said that no officials had visited the park yet as there were no laws governing such rides in the country. The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) team, he had said at the time, would visit the park in a few days.

For his part, Karachi Commissioner Sauleh Faruqi, while visiting the park after the incident on Sunday night, failed to identify which government body kept a check and issued NOCs to such parks. "For rescue and defense, we have Civil Defense," he told *The Express Tribune*. "But there's no organisation for inspection [of such parks]."

Faruqi added that the Commissioner Office's administration team, along with the police, had been deployed and the park would remain closed until the inquiry was completed. "The injured have been moved to Liaquat National Hospital," he said, adding that their treatment cost would be borne by the provincial government. "Experts will be on taken board for the inspection," he assured.

Meanwhile, the civil bureaucracy and the caretaker government seemed to jolt into action following the incident. Caretaker Chief Minister Fazlur Rehman and Sindh Police chief Amjad Javed Saleemi took notice of the incident and issued directives for inquiry reports to be submitted to them. The chief secretary, Maj (retd) Azam Suleman Khan, went a step further and ordered the closure of amusement rides across the province for the next three days. The rides, he ordered, would be opened to the public after technical inspection within the three days.

(By Oonib Azam *The Express Tribune*, 04, 16/07/2018)

Park management booked for teenage girl's death in carousel collapse

PIB police on Monday registered a case against the administration of Askari Amusement Park, where the collapse of a carousel on Sunday night caused the death of Kashaf Samad, a teenage girl, and injuries to 24 others, including women and children, officials said.



An FIR (123/2018) has been registered on charges of unintentional murder, said Gulshan-i-Iqbal SP Ghulam Murtaza Bhutto.

He said the FIR was registered on behalf of the state as the victim girl's father, Abdul Samad, refused to get the case registered against the park administration. The father in his note told the police that he did not want to lodge an FIR. The SP said that the police waited for the parents for the whole day to get the FIR registered.

The police have invoked Section 319 (punishment for qatl-i-khata) and Section 337 (H)1 (punishment for hurt by rash or negligent act) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

'The rotating machine was manufactured with substandard material'

Sources said that the owners of the park were reportedly trying for a "patch-up" with the victim's family.

Meanwhile, Karachi East DIG Amir Farooqi told Dawn that preliminary investigations into the incident showed that the Askari Park administration was guilty of criminal negligence as they installed the rotating machine manufactured with "substandard material" and did not maintain it properly.

Besides, the DIG said the park administration also did not have any proper arrangement for rescue efforts, which caused the teenage girl's death and injuries to several others.

Initial probe

A senior official familiar with the probe told Dawn on condition of anonymity that initial findings showed that the shaft with which the two sides of the machine were attached snapped from the spot it was connected with rivets.

The officer added that it happened either due to substandard material or design fault as one side became too heavy to balance with the weight on the other side.

Meanwhile, a PIB police official on Monday said that they received information at around 10.30pm on Sunday that a carousel in Askari Amusement Park situated on University Road in Gulshan-i-Iqbal had collapsed in which several people were injured, who were taken to hospital for treatment.

However, teenage girl Kashaf Samad was pronounced dead on arrival at the Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi. Relatives took away the body without allowing doctors to fulfil their legal formalities, said police surgeon Dr Aijaz Khokhar. Her funeral prayer was held in Bahadurabad. Later, she was buried in a local graveyard. Talking to the media on the occasion, the victim's parents said they would get an FIR registered against the park administration.

The grief-stricken mother demanded that such parks be closed down as for them earning money appeared to be more important than human life.

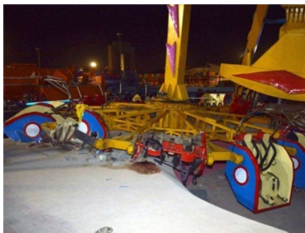
The police and hospital officials said that around 24 persons, including children and women, were injured in the incident. One injured, Ibrahim, 23, who sustained wounds on his left leg, was admitted for treatment at the CHK while three other persons were discharged after first aid from the hospital.

Dr Seemin Jamali, executive director of the JPMC, told Dawn that 11 injured persons were brought to the hospital and were discharged after they were given first aid.

Eight other injured persons were taken to the Liaquat National Hospital and most of them were discharged after first aid. A statement issued by the commissioner's office said that among the injured only four were admitted for treatment. Of them, Kifayat had received serious injuries. He was operated upon and now his condition was out of danger, said the spokesperson. (By Imtiaz Ali Dawn, 17, 17/07/2018)

Police register FIR against Askari Park management

Kashaf, the 14-year-old girl who lost her life in an accident at the newly-inaugurated Askari Amusement Park, was laid to rest at Essa Nagri Graveyard on Monday. Her funeral prayers were attended by a large number of people, including family, friends and well-wishers. Later in the evening, the PIB Police registered an FIR, no.123/2018 against the park's management for unintentional murder and negligence.



Kashaf, the eldest of six siblings, was among the hundreds of visitors at the park at the time of the incident. Less than a week before the incident on June 12, she had celebrated her 14th birthday.

Wearing a black and yellow dress on Sunday night, the 14-year-old sat on multiple rides – the last one proved fatal. Her family had decided to go to the newly-opened Askari Amusement Park, where all her siblings and grandparents had tagged along as part of Kashaf's birthday celebrations.

The festivities turned sour when Kashaf decided to try out Discovery, the frisbee pendulum ride that features a circular gondola and rotates as it swings back and forth. The ride was being operated on a trial basis on Sunday. Suddenly, the ride broke apart and crashed to the ground, killing Kashaf on the spot and injuring over two dozen others.

Kashaf's family watched helplessly as she breathed her last. Her father, who was in China on a business trip at the time of the incident, was informed over the phone. "I had no idea about the incident," narrated the victim's father, Abdul Samad. "She was everything for me. Who should I hold responsible?" he questioned.

The hapless father even expressed gratitude that the life of his son had been spared. "My younger son was also insisting to go on the ride with Kashaf but thankfully, he was unable to due to his age," he explained. Samad returned to the country on hearing the news on Monday, just in time for the funeral.

The family is demanding the authorities to take strict action against those responsible for the accident. "Money is everything for them," lamented Kashaf's mother. "They are not compromising on the price of tickets, but they don't seem to care for the safety standards."

Meanwhile, the PIB police's initial investigation report suggested the ride broke apart at its fulcrum. "The swing collapsed after its bolts came apart," the report states.

Committees formed

Sindh chief secretary Major (retd) Azam Suleman Khan has formed a committee to investigate the incident, with Deputy Commissioner East tasked to compile a report within 24 hours. Meanwhile, parks across the province will remain closed until they have undergone technical inspection.

Karachi Commissioner Saleh Farooqui also took notice of the incident and assured that legal action would also be initiated against the park's management. The commissioner added that he was also looking into how the park managed to get an NOC to operate.

On the other hand, police officials said that most of the injured were discharged from hospitals after being administered first aid. One person, identified as Kifayat, is admitted at Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre in critical condition.

According to park management, they have summoned the Chinese engineers who installed the swing that had been imported from China.

(By Faraz Khan The Express Tribune, 04, 17/07/2018)

Askari Park used 'substandard' carousel despite inspection team's warning

Experts and officials have found serious flaws in equipment, maintenance and operations of the Askari Amusement Park, where the collapse of a carousel had caused the death of a teenage girl last month, it emerged on Tuesday.

They have identified that the affected ride, with poor quality of welding, was not "brand new" and also marked "unsatisfactory" by the park's inspection team, but the management continued to use it.

An investigation team formed by the Sindh chief secretary after the incident filed its report which revealed how the safety of people's lives was compromised for commercial interests.

The team also used expertise of individuals associated with the department of mechanical engineering, NED University of Engineering and Technology.

A probe team finds that the ride collapsed because of poor welding

In its report, the team stated that among other reasons the carousel, called "turtle ride", collapsed due to the "absence of proper rules and regulations".

"Unfortunately, the fly turtle ride was not brand new at the time of installation," it said. "The incident occurred due to poor quality of welding of flanges and bolts breaking and absence of proper rules and regulations. It is also important to mention that this ride was marked unsatisfactory for use from June 2 to [June] 8, 2018 generally by their [Askari Park] inspection team."

Kashf Samad, the teenage girl, was killed and 15 others, including children, were injured when the carousel at the Askari Amusement Park on University Road collapsed on July 15. The park is located inside the Old Sabzi Mandi and it was inaugurated during Eid holidays and had attracted huge crowds.

Inspection of all rides recommended

The report said that the parts of the affected ride, imported from China, were substandard with no proper quality checks.

"Fly turtle ride is no more useable," said the report. "Operation staff [of the park] was not well qualified. They were hired only on the basis of their experience. Number of checkpoints on daily inspection checklist, which comprised of nine different observations, was not signed specifically but generally by the management."

In view of negligence not only on part of the contractor but the operational and audit team, the probe team recommended that workability, fitness and safety of all other rides of the Askari Park should be inspected and checked by a technical team comprising members from the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, Sindh Building Control Authority and a professor from any renowned university before reopening of the facility.

"Well defined standard operating procedure (SOP) of operation and maintenance of all rides should be prepared and followed as per international standards and regularly inspected by respective teams on those parameters," the team recommended in its report.

Plea against commercial use of park

The Sindh High Court on Tuesday directed the management of the Askari Park to file comments till Aug 9 in a petition against using the park for commercial purposes.

Referring to the collapse of the carousel, petitioner Imran Shahzad submitted 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.

In the previous hearing, the bench had sought comments, but the counsel for the park management sought more time to file a reply. The deputy commissioner East and police already filed their reports about the incident.

(By Dawn Report Dawn, 17, 01/08/2018)

Enquiry report censures Askari Amusement Park management

The swing of the Askari Amusement Park which had a fatal crash on July 14 was 'not brand new', 'low quality material was used' and 'not properly welded', according to a report submitted by a committee formed by Chief Secretary Major (retd) Azam Suleman Khan to investigate the incident.



A 12-year-old girl, Kashaf Dukhtar, was killed and 25 others injured when a ride, being operated on a trial basis, in Karachi's newly-inaugurated Askari Amusement Park broke apart earlier this month. PIB Colony police had registered an FIR against the park's management for unintentional murder and negligence.

According to the report, Imran, one of the shareholders of the company managing the amusement park, informed that all the rides were installed by a Chinese expert. He presented before the committee the import documents, including the goods declaration form, billing of lading and certificate of origin.

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Goods declaration is a statement made in the manner prescribed by Customs, by which the person concerned, the importer or exporter, indicates the Customs procedure to be applied to the goods and furnish the particulars which Customs require for its application.

The import document shows that the swing was shipped from Qingdao in China and Sonia International at Al-Rehman Trade Centre imported the equipment in Pakistan, whereas Haji Muhammad Enterprise was the declarant of the shipment.

Column 42 of the goods declaration form includes the item description of goods then the name of the equipment as 'Electrical Fly Turtle Amusement Rides Game'. The name of the manufacturer was not mentioned in any of the import documents.

Imran stated before the committee that the ride was purchased from Zhengzhou Tongxing Amusement Equipment Co Ltd, located at Xingyang city, Henan in China. However, the report states that all products of Zhengzhou Tongxing Amusement Equipment Co Ltd were checked on the company's website, but the Electrical Fly Turtle Amusement Ride was not found in the product list of the company.

When Imran was asked to provide the assembly manual, product manual, operation and maintenance guidelines that usually come with any new product, he only provided a four-page printout of a document in Chinese along with English translation, which contained a brief introduction and the operation and precautions for the ride.

"Daily maintenance schedule and records were also provided to the committee, which reflected weak internal controls," the report reads.

The missing elements, according to the report, was the design requirement, which includes risk assessment, stress analysis, stability test, balancing, lifting, braking system and risk reduction by prevailing design and safety measures.

The installation and commissioning guidelines were also not followed. The welding standards were low. The missing elements also included qualification and relevant work experience of the installation and commissioning engineers.

The document provided by Imran suggested horizontal calibration but the procedure of horizontal calibration and required tool for horizontal calibration were not mentioned.

It further mentions that no information is given about the dimension of the main bracket, bracket material and how to connect four lags of the turtle ride. There was no information about connecting bolts. The report stated that general testing, test for unbalanced load, test for electrical installation were missing.

On the field visit observation, the committee said that the ride was broken and found in two pieces. The number of broken and damaged bolts were scattered around and close inspection of the ride structure and ride bogies revealed that the ride wasn't brand new and low quality material was used.

Police register FIR against Askari Park management

The welding quality was very poor and porosity was observed in the welding and no proper welding SOPs were followed during the ride installation. "Loose nuts and bolts were observed. They were not properly torqued," the report reads.

In order to inspect the root cause of the incident, the broken part was examined and it was observed that the accident occurred due to the failure flange coupling connecting the ride with the balancing weight.

Flange coupling is used for slightly imperfect alignment of the two shafts. The pins are rigidly fastened by nuts to one flange and kept loose on the other. "Two thirds of the flange coupling and one third of the flange bolts were found broken. The flange was not properly welded with the structure. Other flanges and joints are also weak and distorted," it reads.

It was concluded in the report that the ride wasn't brand new at the time of installation and the operational staff wasn't qualified. "A number of check points on the daily inspection checklist were not signed," it reads.

The report added that the ride had already been marked unsatisfactory for use from June 2 to July 8 by the inspection team.

At the end of the report, it was recommended that the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), Sindh Building Control Authority and professors from renowned universities should inspect the workability, fitness and safety of all rides of the Askari Amusement Park. "One should frame rules and regulations for the entire country [after such an incident]" it concludes.

SHC seeks reply in plea against using space commercially

After the police and District Central Deputy Commissioner Ahmed Ali Siddiqui's report, the The Sindh High Court (SHC) gave on Tuesday a deadline till August 9 to the Askari Park management to file its comments on a plea against using Askari Park on a commercial basis.

During the hearing of the plea, held by a two-member bench on Tuesday, District East Deputy Commissioner Ahmed Ali Siddiqui and police presented a report to the court on the incident which claimed a life and injured many others.

The plaintiff's lawyer observed that ill-maintained swings at Askari Park pose a threat to people's lives.

Carving out a green belt from the park without a no-objection certificate and using it on a commercial basis is illegal, the lawyer argued, saying that the park's management should be asked to submit detailed replies on high-rise swings in the park.

Many of the city's parks are illegally occupied and those left are being used on a commercial basis, he argued, adding that leaving a 300 yard space vacant around expanded and latest swings is necessary. The lawyer said that the incident that claimed the life of a young girl and injured many others was due to the dangerous swings.

He lamented that the park management did not have the facility of proper first-aid to treat people in case of an emergency. After viewing the report and listening to the plaintiff's arguments, the bench directed the park management to submit its reply by August 9.

(By Oonib Azam, The Express Tribune, 04, 01/08/2018)

Private party to manage Safari Park

The City Council of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation approved on Wednesday the transfer of Safari Park management to a private company under the public private partnership mode.



The opposition leader, Karamullah Waqasi suggested that the matter of the transfer of Safari Park management should be sent to the committee concerned. He also called for initiating projects for water, sewerage and project on build, operate and transfer model.

Parks Committee Chairperson Hanif Soorti informed the council that steps were being taken to provide natural environment to animals in the Safari Park.

Only 4% of mayor's Rs27b budget for development

The council met with Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar in chair. The session turned hostile when the lone youth councillor of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Meraj, commented on the recent general elections, terming them free and fair. He also lauded the Election Commission of Pakistan.

The PTI member's remarks irked council members of other parties who stood from their seats and chanted slogans of 'shame, shame'. When the councillor asked the mayor to stop the strife, Akhtar asked him why he made such comments.

The mayor directed the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan Parliamentary Leader Aslam Shah Afridi to remove chairpersons of committees who were not taking interest in work and elect new ones.

(By Our Correspondent, The Express Tribune, 05, 16/08/2018)

Unmoved by past failures, DHA plants date trees in Phase VIII

Scores of date palms, bent towards the ground as if they are struggling to survive, can be seen to the right if one happens to drive toward Do Darya from the Village Restaurant at Sea View.



The trees are a result of a plantation drive conducted by the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) on Khayaban-e-Abubakar and Khayaban-e-Faisal in Sector E-8 in DHA Phase VIII. The date trees were planted despite several such failed ventures in Karachi in the past by the Sindh government, besides several other land owning agencies of the metropolis and the DHA itself.

According to environmentalists, the climate of Karachi is not suitable for date trees, which is the reason all earlier attempts to plant them on roads of the provincial capital failed.

Go green: Minister plants tree in Murree

At least 300 date trees that were planted by the provincial government between Civic Centre and Safoora Chowrangi on University Road last year completely dried up, costing around Rs60 million to the national exchequer. The recently planted trees in DHA also appear to be losing their vitality and at least four of them have already fallen.

DHA Horticulture Department Additional Director Lt Col (retd) Toqeer Mehmood told *The Express Tribune* that the trees were planted three months back by the directorate of DHA Phase VIII and the horticulture department had no role in the plantation. He refused to further comment on the issue. However, a source in the horticulture department said that along with date trees, neem and amalbas trees were also being planted in the vicinity.

"Basically, the DHA phases I to VII had a single horticulture department and the Phase VIII and DHA City, which is Phase IX, had a separate directorate," the source said, adding that all the plantation work was carried out by that directorate.

The source disclosed that the separate directorate was merged with the rest of the DHA last month. However, the plantation was carried out before the merger.

A fallen date palm. Photo: Athar Khan



"The contractor hasn't followed the procedure of plantation for these date palms," the source said, adding that the chances of their survival are bleak.

No official of Phase VIII directorate was available for comments.

Expert's views

According to horticulturist Tofiq Pasha, coconut and date trees were planted several years ago on the main Sea View Avenue, now called Abdul Sattar Edhi Avenue, all of which died. "After failing to plant it along the Sea View Avenue, the authorities planted coconut saplings wrapped in green net in plastic drums and dug the drums into the sand on the beach," Pasha said. "They also died of course."

It is the taxpayers' money that is being spent on the whims of those in power, the horticulturist said.

Date trees planted on University Road dry up

When asked why palm trees survive in coastal areas of Sri Lanka and Thailand, Pasha said they were tropical places which received heavy rainfall. It yearly rains 300 inches or more in these places, he added. Scanty rainfall and salt-laden winds at the Karachi coast make it difficult for the trees to survive, he said.

According to Pasha, Sri Lanka and Thailand were tropical coasts of the Indian Ocean. "Of course, coconuts grow there," he said, adding that the coasts of Arabian Sea were sub-tropical coasts that received scanty rainfall. "It's a desert; no rain almost. Our coast line gets battered for five months with high velocity, salt-laden winds."

Regarding Dubai, Pasha said air in Dubai does not have as much content of salt as Karachi does, due to which palm trees survive on its coast. He added that a resilient plant like *conocarpus* can also not survive in the salt-laden coastal winds of Karachi.

The expert lamented that the authorities uproot what nature has provided and replace it with everything else under the sun. "The *ipomoea* creeper [morning glory] that grows here naturally, can be grown on fences on the divider of the avenues. Another row of this can be planted along the boundary walls of apartments. They will climb up if provided support of wire or string and cover the walls. They have pretty purple flowers and they will also help reduce heat absorbed by walls," he explained. He also mentioned *peelu* as one of those trees that may survive if planted near the coast.

(By Oonib Azam / Photo: Athar Khan, *The Express Tribune*, 05, 27/08/2018)

Sindh forest dept directed to focus on linear plantation and urban forestry

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has directed the forest department to start linear plantation and urban forestry by planting trees along roads, canals and strategic installations.



He issued these directives while presiding over a meeting on Tuesday to review performance of the forest department at CM House.

Our cities have become heat islands, the CM said, stressing the need for an effective tree plantation drive. He added that social forestry, which is the management of trees on non-forest lands, was also the need of the hour.

Forest Additional Chief Secretary Sohail Akbar Shah briefed the CM on the performance of his department. He said that out of 123,478 acres of encroached land of the department, 17,187 acres had been retrieved. The CM directed Sohail to start planting forests on the vacated land and pursue the pending cases in courts so that land could be retrieved from encroachers at the earliest.

AJK president calls for forest conservation

The meeting was also informed that 64,498 acres of forest land had illegally been allotted in Hyderabad, Karachi, Sukkur, Thatta, Dadu, Larkana, Kandhkot, Khipro, Khairpur, Mirpur Mathelo and Tando Muhammad Khan. Murad directed the officer to cancel the allotments by fulfilling legal formalities.

The forest department also informed the meeting about its achievements. Sohail claimed that the department had developed new forests over 3,000 acres in riverine areas. He also informed the CM that the forest department had achieved conservation and management of Indus delta mangroves spread over 25,000 acres, establishment of linear plantation over 400 kilometres, growing of 4.54 million container plants and distribution of 9 million saplings during the monsoon season.

The department had also set a new Guinness World Record of planting 1,129,294 mangroves plants in one day on April 19 this year, the meeting was informed. To a query by the CM, the forest secretary said the certificate of world record was expected to be received before September 17.

Key challenges being faced by the department as mentioned by Sohail included reforestation on available areas in the state-owned forests, increase in tree cover on farmlands through farm forestry and getting encroached-upon areas vacated.

Experts call for planting more trees to beat global warming

The chief minister suggested that the forest department target establishing mangroves forests on potential blank areas and conserve about 250,000 acres of rehabilitated mangroves forests through community households. It was said that growth and stability of mangroves can only be ensured if fresh water is released downstream of Kotri Barrage.

The meeting was informed that forests on rangelands (barani lands) that spread over 1.13 million acres in desert and Kohistan areas were dependent on rainfall.

The meeting was also attended by Chief Secretary Major (retd) Azam Suleman, Planning and Development Board Chairperson Mohammad Waseem, Principal Secretary to CM Sohail Rajput, Finance Secretary Noor Alam and other officers.
(By Our Correspondent, The Express Tribune, 04, 29/08/2018)

What the duck!: Mayor promises big bucks for Karachi's Hill Park, but fails to deliver

Ever since he was elected mayor of Karachi, Wasim Akhtar has made several trips to Hill Park — a large municipal garden situated atop a hill surrounded by posh residential localities. Each time, Akhtar has made a show of announcing funds for the park's restoration and ordering its caretakers to refurbish it. The rhetoric, it seems has fallen on deaf ears.



Now, one of Hill Park's most popular attractions — a lake in the centre — has all but dried up due to the lethargy of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) and the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB). Hundreds of ducks who called the lake home for years look dehydrated and weary.

Minor girl killed as Askari Park ride collapses in Karachi

"There's no water in the parks' lake for months now," one caretaker told The Express Tribune. "The ducks are dying but no one cares. No one feeds them properly," he lamented, adding that the ducks are barely surviving on the leftover scraps of food thrown by visitors in the lake.

Food is not the only thing thrown into the lake, however. The dry lake is littered with empty plastic bottles and their caps. The iron grill surrounding the lake is broken at several places, due to which, stray dogs and cats sometimes venture inside to prey on the ducklings and sometimes even kill a duck. "Besides, scores of ducks have died in the past few months due to dehydration," says the caretaker.

Over the last few months, Akhtar has visited the park several times. Each time has brought with a new promise of increased funding. A sizeable amount has been allocated in the current budget for the uplift of Hill Park, he said on one such occasion. On another visit, he promised to restore the lake and its adjoining water fall.



The park is spread over 61 acres and was constructed in the 1960s. It is still one of the few large recreational parks accessible to the city's 20 million citizens. What makes it stand out is the fact that it is situated on a small hill and grants an eye-catching view of its surroundings.

According to the park's in-charge, Muhammad Mujahid, several meetings have taken place between KMC and KWSB for the restoration of water supply to the park's lake, but nothing has come out of them. "The line is damaged due to which very less water reaches the lake," he explained.

KMC's deputy director for parks Muhammad Hanif said that only if the KWSB provided them water with enough pressure could the lake be filled to capacity. He explained that the park was on an upward slope and when the KWSB releases water, the nearby residents suck it up through their pumps.

On a question regarding stray dogs devouring the ducks, he said it wasn't possible since their caretakers remained inside the park round the clock.

KMC's Director-General for parks and horticulture, Afaq Ahmed also blamed the KWSB, saying the water supply company never fulfilled their requirements. As a temporary measure, he said, the KMC pumps water to the lake through water tankers. However, Nadeem believes that at least 400 water tankers would be required to fill up the lake.

Govt plans to set up Pakistan Park at Quaid's Mausoleum

According to KMC's budget for 2015-16, Rs2.7 million were allocated for the lake's improvement and the same amount for laying an irrigation system at the park. The money does not seem to have been spent on the park at all.

Meanwhile, ornithologist at Karachi University's zoology department and a renowned bird expert, Dr Syed Ali Ghalib, believes that it is very difficult for a duck to survive without swimming in water. "It makes their life miserable even if they survive because they have a habit of swimming," he explained, adding that the ducks also feed on plants inside the lakes. He advised to relocate the ducks to parks where there is sufficient water for them.

(By Oonib Azam The Express Tribune, 04, 07/09/2018)

Suspended development work disfigures Karachi Zoo

The tussle between the provincial and local governments has made development work at Karachi Zoo come to a halt as rubble spread across the zoo has been ruining the experience of visitors.

The Pakistan Peoples Party-led Sindh government, during its last tenure, had approved a development scheme worth Rs29 million for the zoological garden after Aseefa Bhutto Zardari paid a visit to it. Work on the scheme was also initiated and many old structures in the zoo were demolished that were to be rebuilt.

However, when the time for construction came, work was apparently suspended due to the continuous power game between the PPP's provincial government and Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan's local government.

Since the development work came to a standstill when a lot of demolition had been carried out on the zoo premises, a visit to the zoo does not turn out to be a pleasant experience for many visitors. All toilets in the zoo except one were destroyed and have not been rebuilt, therefore, there is currently only one toilet for the thousands of visitors who visit it daily.

Similarly, lots of enclosures and old cages have been razed without any reconstruction. Due to this, dust levels are high in the air and debris is spread all around, which irks visitors.

Animals vulnerable to various diseases

According to statistics shared by zoo officials, around 3,000 to 4,000 people come to zoo on weekdays for recreation, while the number increases to around 7,000 on Sundays.

Passing the buck

Around four months have passed since development work stopped in zoo. Various authorities concerned have been blaming each other for the suspension of work.

A contractor maintained that work was stopped because of hurdles being posed by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation. We are not getting permission to lay down sewerage lines, he claimed.

The end of the last government's tenure and the caretaker setup taking charge is also being cited as one of the reasons behind the zoo's current predicament. Sources privy to the matter claimed that after the caretaker government was formed, release of funds was stopped which accounts for the work being suspended.

Meanwhile, Karachi Zoo Director Mansoor Qazi took the stance that no hurdles were being posed by the zoo administration. We want work to be completed as soon as possible so that visitors can enjoy the place.

Smuggling: K-P cancels animal, vegetable export permits

Qazi lamented that the zoo administration could not bring new animals as new enclosures had not been constructed. He claimed that the administration had been continuously asking the contractor to complete the work but was being told that the government had stopped releasing funds.

There is only one washroom for visitors and the entire zoo has turned into a rubble, Qazi said. The director appealed to the provincial government to take appropriate steps so that zoo is renovated at the earliest.

(By Naeem Khanzada The Express Tribune, 04, 10/09/2018)

At Rs20m, the grass in this park is dearer than gold

There is no concept of a public garden without trees. The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) does not, however, see it this way as they are renovating and developing the city's prestigious park by only growing lawns and trimming the shrubs.



KMC has been working on the renovation of the Bagh Ibne Qasim in Clifton for the last 18 months, which is meant to be open for public in December. Millions of rupees are being

spent just to grow the grass and trim the existing shrubs (conocarpus) with not a single tree being planted in the entire park.

University of Karachi Institute of Environmental Studies Assistant Professor Dr Zafar Iqbal Shams said, "If you get exposed to sunshine in any park, then what's the use and purpose of it," adding that KMC officials don't know the very definition of a park.

Mayor takes notice of Hill Park encroachment

Karachi has been badly affected due to the 'urban heat island phenomenon', which according to Dr Shams, is caused by the cemented and concrete structures in any metropolitan area that radiate the absorbed heat resulting in a rise in temperature of the area and its surroundings. A large number of trees are needed to fight this effect.

According to Dr Shams, a tree weighing one ton has the capacity to absorb an average of 500 kilograms of carbon. He added that parks should be environment-friendly. A 'tree-less' park has no benefit for the environment.

One of the benefits of trees, according to Dr Shams, is that they absorb water-soluble and toxic gasses from the atmosphere and give back oxygen for human consumption.

"Once I visited a park in Gulshan-e-Iqbal area where the KMC had constructed big cemented canopies and benches were placed under them," he said, criticising the builders and questioned why they could not grow trees with extended crowns that people could use for shade.

"There is a dire need to cool down Karachi, and that can only be done through planting trees of various native species to bring the diversity in flora. However, monoculture plantation is not sustainable," Dr Shams said, referring to the plantation of single-type plants (conocarpus) by previous mayor Mustafa Kamal.

Bagh Ibne Qasim has been closed for renovation since April last year. One of the officials working at the site told The Express Tribune that it was a barren land for which 600 labourers of the parks and horticulture department were called over from all zones of Karachi for renovation works.



Grass was grown, shrubs were trimmed, seasonal plants were planted and the boundary wall was restored. Currently, up to 300 staff members are working in two shifts to maintain the grass and shrubs in Karachi's biggest park, according to the official.

In fiscal year 2017-18, Rs20 million worth of grass was grown in Bagh Ibne Qasim and Rs12.3m worth civil work was done to renovate the existing boundary wall of Jahangir Kothari Parade.

In the current year, Rs 40m have been approved for the renovation, restoration and protection of the park in two phases with another Rs20m for restoration of irrigation and lighting system at the park.

Other KMC parks

Horticulturalist Tofiq Pasha Moraj said that it's unfortunate that no one would find a tree providing shade to the visitors in any of the KMC parks. "In my childhood days, people would visit parks during noon to sit under the shade of trees to beat the heat but now the department has introduced a new culture to visit parks only in evenings as there are no shade-giving trees," he said. Moraj said, "The KMC don't have qualified people who can plant trees. Either they choose wrong species or handle trees in the wrong way, so the trees planted by them ultimately die. It's like they don't have expertise in parks and horticulture department."

Murad Ali Shah vows to restore Karachi's parks

Ecologist Rafiul Haq said that the Bagh Ibne Qasim gives a nice view from the Kothari Parade with symmetry but that is not always enough. He said, "Maintaining the lawn in such a big area is a nightmare, but the KMC should also incorporate the missing general features of parks like fountains, rockery, jogging track and swings for the recreation of visitors."

The trees also play a vital role in increasing the biodiversity of the area and have dozens of practical benefits as they become self-sustaining after few years of being planted. KMC has, however, failed to plant trees in the newly-renovated park and have relied on cosmetic and short-term changes, Haq added.

Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar told The Express Tribune that the KMC has otherwise planted a large number of trees in Bagh Ibne Qasim on the pattern of Central Park in New York, which are in their rearing stage. "It's just the beginning and we have improved the situation as far as possible as we got the park in a sorry state," he added.

KMC Parks and Horticulture department Director General Afaq Mirza could not be reached despite repeated attempts to contact him.

(By Mudasar Kazi The Express Tribune, 04, 19/10/2018)

Development project: Efforts under way to rehabilitate Karachi Zoo

The Sindh government and the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) have decided to demolish more than 50 shops around the Karachi Zoo. Notices have already been issued to the shopkeepers and demolition work will begin soon. The Sindh government and KMC have reached a consensus for the beautification and renovation of Karachi Zoo to bring it on a par with

international standards. Rehabilitation and restoration work has already been started under Karachi mega projects by the Sindh government.

The decision of a large-scale operation against encroachments around the zoo and its gardens has been taken in this regard. More than 50 shops built on the zoo's land, between gate number one and gate number five, have been issued eviction notices by KMC's estate department.

Sources say that KMC has devised a strategy with regards to this project which includes the purchase of new cages, but due to the encroachments on gate number one, the work had been delayed and hence the decision to remove encroachments. The leases of shops within limits of the zoo have also been cancelled and soon the work to demolish them will begin. One zoo official also said that work on cage numbers four, seven and eight is swiftly under way, along with preparations to build washrooms by gate numbers four, five and one. New water lines have also been installed at the zoo and new sewerage lines will be installed in the coming days. The renovations will be completed by next month and the washrooms will open to public, they said.

According to sources, 50% of the grant that has been approved by the Sindh government has been utilised and if funds are not stopped, the renovations would soon be completed. They confirmed that work had been completed on the basic infrastructure. If the project continues at the same pace, Karachi Zoo will soon become a central attraction for locals and residents will have a better entertainment facility at their disposal by June 2019.

(By Naeem Khanzada The Express Tribune, 04, 16/11/2018)

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