

# NEWSCLIPPINGS

*JANUARY TO JUNE 2021*

## TRANSPORT



### Urban Resource Centre

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## Roads in metropolis lack basic safety features, says CM

Roads in Karachi lack basic safety features and are not regularly maintained, which reduces accessibility and mobility, particularly for women, the elderly, and people with disabilities, noted Sindh CM Murad Ali Shah with reference to the Karachi Neighbourhood Improvement Project on Tuesday. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of a 4.9-kilometre-long road, extending from Fishermen Chowrangi to Ibrahim Hyderi, the CM recalled that a rapid assessment was conducted by the World Bank in 2014. The findings noted that urban environment in the metropolis had been declining. Subsequently, the Karachi Neighborhood Improvement Project was initiated in 2017 by the Sindh government, said Shah.

Three neighbourhoods of the city - Saddar, Malir and Korangi - are being upgraded under the project, he said.

According to Shah, Ibrahim Hyderi was selected for development due to the dense and vulnerable population of the area, housing an old fishing villages but lacking infrastructure. The area has a population of around 400,000, and yet, access through the road was almost non-existence due to poor carriageway conditions, he noted, adding that rains had caused further dilapidation.

Now, the existing roundabout has been developed as a public space, said Shah, adding that the dual carriageway, a park and streets have also been built. The work has been completed to improve access to the village for both vehicles and pedestrians, with slopes, junctions and mid-block crossings, and LED lighting.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 06/01/2021)

## Karachi's Burnes Road to remain traffic-free in evenings

The city administration has announced to keep the renowned food district of the city, Burnes Road, traffic-free in the evenings in a move to provide better and relaxed environment to visitors at the eateries that dot the area and avoid inconvenience.

An official said that a notification issued by the additional deputy commissioner II announced implementation of the fresh orders from January 10 (Sunday). According to the fresh orders, no vehicle would be allowed to enter Burnes Road after 7pm allocating evening time to pedestrians only.

"A notification has been issued by the Additional Deputy Commissioner II, according to which the decision will take effect from January 10," said the official. "The notification says that [Shahrah-i-Liaquat] from Fresco to Court Road, will be closed for vehicles at 7pm and traffic coming from Arambagh will be diverted to M.A. Jinnah Road and People's Square. Similarly, the road from Fresco Chowk to Fatima Jinnah Women's College would be designated for pedestrians, whereas residents of the area would be issued special stickers for their vehicles to enter."

A portion of the road, he said, would be dedicated to deal with emergencies. The district administration on Jan 10 would mark both sides of the road enabling the food outlets to extend their operations in a way that did not block the way for pedestrians.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 07/01/2021)

## Burns Road being pedestrianised

One of Karachi's oldest food streets, Burns Road, is being pedestrianised and will be closed for traffic in the evenings, from 7pm, January 10 onwards.

Commuters will also be restricted from parking their vehicles in the street after the stated time from January 10.

Meanwhile, residents living in the street's vicinity will be issued stickers for their vehicles, and only vehicles with the stickers will be permitted to be parked in the street.

Besides, vehicles will be allowed to travel on a patch of the street in case of emergency situations and valet parking will be available at both ends of the street to facilitate visitors.

The street is being pedestrianised on the directives of South deputy commissioner (DC) Irshad Ahmed Sodhar.

In a notification issued on Wednesday, the DC instructed the relevant officials to close the street - a strip of Sharae Liaquat extending from Fresco Chowk and Court Road intersection- for traffic from 7pm, after which traffic on the right side of the street will be diverted towards MA Jinnah Road and that on the left side towards Peoples Square.

According to the notification, three streets on either side of Burns Road will also be pedestrianised.

The South DC further told The Express Tribune that no restaurants would be allowed to encroach the street following its pedestrianisation.

"It is our responsibility to provide a clean and healthy environment to citizens," he added. "Besides, the initiative has also been taken to support the business community."

Claiming that Burns Road was the first spot in the city that was being pedestrianised, he said all buildings along it would be illuminated after 7pm and pavements running along it would be renovated.

Arambagh assistant commissioner Imran Nazir said that all pre-partition heritage buildings on the street will also be properly cleaned and others will be painted.

"We are making all necessary arrangements [for the street's pedestrianisation]," he assured.

The DC claimed that heritage experts had been consulted and heritage buildings on the street would be clean as per their advice.

Appreciating the move, a restaurant owner running an eatery on the street said, "It is a great initiative and we welcome it."

He added that the lack of parking space affected traffic flow on the street, in addition to disturbing business.

"Visitors face difficulties even while walking on the street," he complained.

Similarly, Tahir Khan, who lives near Burns Road, was of the view that pedestrianisation would see the return of the street's lost glory.

"At present, people hesitate to visit it as it remains crowded and congested, while the [relevant] authorities continue to show a lack of interest in making things right," he said.

(By Sameer Mandhro The Express Tribune, 04, 07/01/2021)

### **PMTA works out Rs1.9bn annual electricity cost for Orange Line**

As Rs1.9 billion have been estimated for annual electricity billing for the operation of Lahore Orange Line Metro Train, the Punjab Mass Transit Authority (PMTA) has reportedly received more than Rs80 million bill for December last.

The amount of monthly bills is expected to increase gradually with rise in temperature in coming months. The authorities concerned have started implementing a plan to save electricity, *Dawn* has learnt.

"We have worked out Rs1.9bn annual billing for the entire operation (over Rs150m per month on average). But since start of the train operation from Oct 25 last year, the monthly bill ranged between Rs80m and Rs100m. It will increase with rise in temperature because of air-conditioners," an official source told *Dawn*.

The trains alone are running on 750 volt (direct current --DC) that is supplied to them through a central iron/steel line, called third rail. The third rail runs parallel to both tracks (Dera Gujran to Ali Town and vice versa. Besides the trains, the other allied systems run on 500 volt DC. Thus the entire system is being run on 750 volt DC with uninterrupted supply of total 74MW through two grid stations - one near UET (GT Road) and another near Shahnoor Stop (Multan Road).

*Receives Rs80m December bill; evolves power saving plan*

Though Pakistan Railways used the electric traction system between the Lahore-Khanewal section for several decades by supplying electricity to the locomotives through the overhead copper cable, it gradually wound up the project following frequent cable thefts. However, the system being introduced to run the Orange Line is the latest one in which power is supplied through central line which is also called the third rail.

The official says the Lahore Electricity Supply Company (Lesco) is charging bills/units to Orange Line under one of the C categories (single point supply for the purchase of electricity in bulk by distribution licensee and mix load consumers not falling in any other consumer class).

"Under this category, the Orange Line is charged Rs14 and Rs21 per unit in normal and peak hours respectively. Thus the average per unit cost is Rs18 (use of power in winter, summer, autumn, spring etc)," he adds.

He says the government is also making efforts to bring down cost of electricity by getting tariff for Orange Line changed through discussions with the Lesco management.

To a question, he says, the PMTA has started implementing the electricity [cost] saving plan by getting escalators used by the elderly passengers alone. The officials are trying to make use of escalators by the elderly passengers after "we learnt that kids residing in the localities situated nearby the Orange Line stations started using them [for fun]. So the officials have switched off the escalators and will switch on when elderly passengers or patients use them," he says.

The official says under the saving plan, 'unnecessary' use of ACs and lights will be controlled by assigning special tasks to the officials concerned. "The authority will try to reduce annual cost to Rs1.5bn or so."

According to a Lesco official, the reading is taken on 5th of every month after which the Iqbal Town and Baghbanpura divisions issue bills.

(By Khalid Hasnain *Dawn*, 02, 08/01/2021)

### **Burnes Road food street becomes pedestrian-only during evenings**

On Sunday at 7pm, Burnes Road looked just as busy with its bright-coloured eateries, ear-splitting hustle and bustle and unruly traffic. The piece of information that attracted history buffs and foodies' attention was that, as per instructions and intentions of the district administration (South), a particular strip of the historic road would be made pedestrian-only.

It did look, though, as something out of the ordinary was about to transpire on Sunday: one side of the road from the Urdu Bazaar street to Fresco Chowk was closed by putting up barriers there — the side from where the traffic flowed towards the chowk. There was a group of valets waiting for cars to come. What cars? Perhaps VIPs were about to arrive. Or perhaps even the general food lovers were expected to set foot in the food street.

Some part of that strip was being (re)carpeted. The flow of vehicles on the other side of the road, where there were no barriers, was the usual. It meant that the implementation on the plan had begun.

A salesman at a restaurant that specialises in juicy, meaty rolls, Mohammad Khan, confirmed that the process of pedestrianisation had started. "It's good. They've arranged for car parking on one side. So the hubbub caused by the noisy traffic will be minimised now. People can park their cars over there and come into the main food street to eat whatever they want to eat ... kebabs, rolls, nihari, biryani ... whatever."

*Residents say it's a good scheme, provided it's done right*

The idea doesn't seem to have detractors. Even the residents who these days don't like to give their names to the media agreed that it's a worthy scheme provided it's carried out in the true spirit and without any vested interest. Is there a way to gauge that, though?

Nowadays, Burnes Road is known for its scrumptious, mouth-watering desi food. What about its history? Well, when the British held sway in this part of the world, there used to be a certain Dr Burnes who successfully treated Mir Murad Ali Khan — a rais, one of the chiefs in the region — after he had fallen ill. In those days, having a physician was a bit of a medical novelty.

This is one account of how the road got its name. There are other accounts as well, which might not shed a good light on the doctor. What cannot be doubted is the fact that today Burnes Road is Karachi's most cherished food court, so to say ... traffic or no traffic. (By Peerzada Salman Dawn, 13, 12/01/2021)

### **Court seeks written reply from transport dept over 15,000 buses**

The [Sindh High Court](#) sought on Thursday a written reply from the transport department on a plea seeking the introduction of 15,000 new buses in [Karachi](#) amid a shortage of public transport and absence of mass transit facilities in the city.

Sindh Governor Imran Ismail's reply on the plea was submitted to the court at the hearing.

The plea stated that no one had been addressing the problem of the lack of public transport in Karachi and that in the absence of "adequate" public transport facilities, qingqis were used as an alternative. It also claimed that "transport mafia" had been setting and collecting fares of its own will. The plea held the Sindh government responsible for the dire state of public transport in Karachi.

In his reply, the governor stated that a deadline for the completion of Green Line bus rapid transit project had been set and infrastructure for the project was ready. He said phase-II of the project's civil works was expected to reach completion by March 2021. The governor also assured in the reply that the federal government would extend complete support to the Sindh government to run Green Line buses and that the project, worth around Rs11 billion, would be handed over to the provincial government.

Besides, the focal person of the transport department informed the court that works on Red Line and Orange Line BRT projects was underway.

He, too, assured that the Green Line project would complete soon.

At this, the court remarked that these details should be submitted in writing and adjourned the hearing.

#### **'Compensation due'**

Separately, the court summoned the Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) secretary in a plea seeking the payments of compensation to the victims of the Baldia factory fire and their families.

According to the petition, those who survived the tragedy must be paid compensation, in line with the International Labour Organisation convention.

The Sindh government has paid just Rs300,000 in compensation thus far, even when Sindh Information Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah had announced that the victims would be issued monetary compensation. It contends that victims should be paid the compensation as a lump sum. The plea further states that the German company for which Ali Enterprises- the factory where the deadly fire had erupted- had issued Rs600 million to be paid as compensation.

The petitioner's lawyer, Advocate Usman Farooq, informed the court that Rs650 million was yet to be paid to the victims and their families, even after the compensation was announced by Sindh Information Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah on May 1, 2018.

He further claimed that the affected persons were no longer receiving pensions promised to them.

At this, the court summoned the EOBI secretary at the next hearing on February 21, seeking an explanation on the matter. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 22/01/2021)

### **Security for cricket match at NSK causing traffic nightmare for Karachiites**

The return of Test cricket to the metropolis has been causing serious difficulties to the people, especially those living in adjoining areas of the National Stadium Karachi (NSK) as the security plan issued by authorities has suggested almost a lockdown-like situation in one of the busiest areas of the city, it emerged on Friday.

The traffic plan for the first Test match between South Africa and Pakistan to be played at the NSK from January 26-30 would lead to strict security and traffic arrangements.

A statement issued by the Karachi traffic police said all roads leading to the NSK would be closed from 9am till 6pm and an alternative route would be provided.

"Road users are requested to use alternative routes to avoid any inconvenience," it said.

"All kinds of traffic coming from Nursery will not be permitted to move towards the Habib Ibrahim Rehmatullah Road towards National Stadium (Sir Shah Suleman Road). These vehicles will be diverted towards Drigh Road Sharea Faisal, left turn Rashid Minhas Road, Millennium Mall to NIPA."

On the other hand, it said that the traffic coming from Rashid Minhas Road will also not be permitted to proceed towards the NSK. These vehicles, it said, will be diverted towards NIPA, Askari-IV (Millennium Mall), Drigh Road to Sharea Faisal or Millennium, NIPA to Safoora Chowrangi or NIPA to Gulshan Chowrangi to Sohrab Goth.

*Civil society request SHC chief justice to take suo motu notice of the situation*

"Route from Liaquatabad via Hassan Square flyover will also be closed for all kinds of cars and no one will be allowed to proceed towards the Stadium Road," said the statement. "Traffic will be diverted from flyover towards University Road to reach their destination. The traffic from University Road towards Stadium Road from New Town Chowrangi turning will also be diverted."

It said that the traffic will be diverted towards Jail Chowrangi, Shaheed-i-Millat Road or straight to Peoples Secretariat Chowrangi. Public coming to Aga Khan Hospital and Liaquat National Hospital will be allowed from New Town police station side.

#### **Civil society slams road closures**

Civil society members, human rights and labour leaders have condemned the traffic mismanagement in Karachi and cordoning off the residential areas around NSK on the pretext of security for a few cricketers playing or practicing at the stadium.

In a joint statement issued here on Friday, Karamat Ali of Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research, Habibuddin Junaidi of Peoples Labour Bureau, Nasir Mansoor of National Trade Union Federation (NTUF), Farhat Perveen of NOW Communities, Liaquat Sahi of the Democratic Workers Union of State Bank of Pakistan, Nazim F. Haji, Majyd Aziz and others demanded that the security be restricted to inside the stadium premises only.

They pointed out that whenever a match or net practice of national cricket team was held at the NSK, residents of KDA Scheme, Gulshan-i-Iqbal, Dalmia Road and Gulistan-i-Jauhar suffered heavily due to traffic jams on main roads and logistic nightmares. The periphery around the NSK is closed down with containers and movement of people is restricted. The residents thus become prisoners, they added.

Two main hospitals — Aga Khan and Liaquat National — are also located in the affected areas and a large number of patients could not reach hospitals, they said.

They said this heightened security on Friday had caused heavy rush on the University Road, which was choked and full of vehicles because the roads connected to it were sealed off in the name of security.

As the spectators would not be allowed inside the stadium anyway, then why was there so much security around the National Stadium, they asked.

They urged the chief justice of the Sindh High Court to take suo motu notice of this uncalled for security arrangement for the net practice of players and order removal of the containers from all lanes and streets.

"The citizens of Karachi also demand that if this type of security was there for a few players then whereas the norm for cricket matches? We don't want any matches in Karachi if it is held at the cost of mental agony of residents. Hold matches and play in Rawalpindi, Multan or Lahore, or better still, play in Dubai, Sharjah or Timbuktu," the statement concluded. (By Dawn Reporter 13, 23/01/2021)

### **‘Patients, doctors suffering due to roads’ closure’**

The Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) has said revival of cricket has become painful for the citizens of Karachi due to poor planning of the authorities concerned.

Secretary general, Pakistan Medical Association (Centre), Dr S.M. Qaiser Sajjad, in a statement on Monday said that PMA enthusiastically welcomes international cricket and players in Pakistan. It will absolutely boost the soft image of the country and will provide immense leisure to the cricket lovers.

Unfortunately due to the ill planning of the administration this cricket revival has become painful for the people of Karachi due to road blocks for security reasons. The people living around the stadium are miserably distressed because of this traffic mess.

Dr Qaiser Sajjad said this traffic muddle due to cricket activity has resulted in turmoil these days for the people of Karachi. During practice sessions and the Test match between South Africa and Pakistan starting from Jan 26 people will go through a hard time due to closure of roads around the stadium, while there will be immense traffic jams in the city.

He explained that two major hospitals and a few smaller institutions along with isolation centre for Covid-19 at Expo Centre are located in the area. These traffic jams will create havoc for the patients visiting these health facilities for emergencies and treatment. Moreover it will be difficult for doctors and paramedics to reach their hospitals to serve sick people.

People going to their workplaces and coming back to their homes have also been facing hardships due these traffic jams. Moreover closure of roads around the stadium increases the traffic flow at University Road and Rashid Minhas Road which results in heavy traffic jam on both roads.

In this scenario PMA suggested the authorities shift National Stadium out of city, while requesting the authorities to come up with such appropriate traffic plans that do not make the lives of the public difficult. Only close the roads at the arrival and departure of players; let these roads remain open for traffic during the players’ stay at stadium, it has been suggested.

(By PPI Dawn, 13, 26/01/2021)

### **Road safety**

It is estimated that over 1.2 million people around the world are killed in road accidents while in Pakistan over 15,000 people lose their lives every year. Even though road safety is a major issue, not many are aware of its severity. The problem, which seems to be intensifying by the day, needs to be addressed at an urgent basis in order to save lives.

In an attempt to do so, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society has launched an initiative to raise public awareness about road safety. Apart from promoting the idea of ‘Individual Road Safety Commitment Cards’, the project aims to tackle post-crash response time by providing first-aid training to traffic and motorway police so that maximum lives can be saved. While the wholesome initiative is a step in the right direction and also aims to achieve the SDGs, the issue of road safety, however, encapsulates multiple different factors that need to seriously be considered.

The transport system and road infrastructure in many major cities across Pakistan are dilapidated. Roads and bridges are worn out while gutter lines and manholes remain open. Furthermore, thousands of ramshackle busses and rickshaws violate multiple vehicle safety laws, which in any other country would never be allowed to run. Petty corruption in the form of bribes allows commuters to break traffic rules. It also merits a mention that Pakistan’s policy shift in the late 1970s, from railway to roadway as the major mode of transportation, introduced heavy vehicles for which highways were not designed. All this coupled with the lack of design safety awareness with regard to the construction of underpasses, bridges and roundabouts has added to the complexity of the problem.

Little is being done to prevent horrific accidents from occurring on a daily basis. The need for a well-designed transport system and the importance of road safety not only promote safety for citizens, but also play a crucial role in economic development and defence. A safe and well-connected country encourages national growth.

(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 14, 27/01/2021)

### **Mauripur Expressway approved**

The Mauripur Expressway, water and sanitation and desalination projects were approved on the public-private partnership mode on Thursday as the 32nd meeting of Public Private Policy Board was held at the Chief Minister’s House.

Along with the expressway, the board approved the Link Road to Korangi, Hub water supply project of three million gallons per day (MGD) from Dhabeji to Special Economic Zone, the Lyari sewerage system, the Lyari Development Authority’s Scheme 42, a five MGD desalination plant and construction of canal from Nabirsar to Vajira on the public private partnership mode.

#### **Expressway**

The meeting agreed that the Mauripur Expressway is to be an eight-kilometre-long two into two lane project from Mauripur Expressway to Y-Junction. It would have a two lane one-way Interchange at ICI bridge.

The expressway is intended to provide speedy access to the Karachi Beach area and would be completed in two years, said Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, adding that this would bring an end to traffic congestion in the area.

The board approved the project and gave directives for tenders to be floated.

#### **Link Road**

The board also gave the go-ahead for the PPP unit to launch the Link Road to Korangi project for investor solicitation. The Link Road is to be an 11.5km two into two lane road and is to provide quick access to the Korangi Industrial area. The project is slated for completion in two years from when it begins. Construction of internal roads and a bridge within the city are to be completed under the project.

#### **Water supply**

Besides, the meeting was apprised that the Karachi Hub water supply system consisted of broad components such as the Hub Dam constructed in 1981 with a live storage capacity of 656,000 acre feet. The eight-kilometer main canal owned and operated by the Water & Power Development Authority (WAPDA) coming from Hub Dam.

The board was informed that the head regulator has been installed at the point at which the main canal splits into the Karachi Hub Canal, going towards the metropolis, and the Lasbella Canal, going towards Lasbella district in Balochistan. It was stated that 63.3 per cent of the incoming water is allocated to the Karachi canal while the remaining 36.7 per cent is supplied to Lasbella.

The meeting was apprised that the Karachi Hub Canal is a 22.4km stretch with a capacity of 100MGD from the head regulator to the city and is being operated by the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB). The canal stretch has significant erosion and structural failure that causes water losses. Besides, the meeting was informed, there are two pump houses to transmit the water from the canal through the rising mains to the filtration plant. However, the old pump house is not functional and the new one has surpassed its design life.

It was further discussed that the two-kilometre-long pipes that carry water to the filtration plant are 38-year-old and have not been replaced since. The filtration plant has a treatment capacity of 80MGD but is mostly not functional. It has a solar power plant with a capacity of six megawatts (MW).

The meeting decided that the provincial government would talk to WAPDA authorities to share the cost of the project while giving its approval.

Besides, a project comprising the laying down of a water pipeline from Dhabeji to Special Economic Zone of 10 million imperial gallons per day (MIGD) and 20MIGD to areas in South district was approved.

Besides, the board approved funds to hire a consultant for the Lyari Sewerage Rehabilitation Project to revamp the sewerage system of the area. Besides, the board approved the project to revive LDA's Scheme 42 and develop infrastructure and utility networks under the PPP mode.

Moreover, a five MIGD desalination project was approved under the PPP mode. The project entails a desalination plant that will utilise seawater using reverse osmosis technology, primarily to meet the water needs of Clifton and DHA areas.

The policy board also approved the proposed transaction structure, risk matrix and signing of the concession agreement pertaining to the Nabisar to Vajihar water project.

(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 29/01/2021)

### **Scores of houses razed, many others marked to make way for Malir Expressway**

The name of the place from where reports are emerging about demolition of 40 to 50 houses of Christians, to make way for the Malir Expressway, is said to be Gulshan-i-Maryam. No one, if asked for directions around Memon Goth in Malir, would be familiar with this place but when if asked about location of the Christian settlement, anyone would direct you to head up to Jam Kando and take the little broken road on the right after passing the dried river's bridge.

It was a long and bumpy ride. When the language of the locals changes from Balochi to Punjabi, you have the feeling that you are finally on the right track. Three young men riding a motorcycle and carrying petrol in two-and-a-half-litre cold drink bottles offered to take us to the place. And then came into view the work of the bulldozers, the razed houses, the piles of bricks and concrete from toppled walls and smashed roofs. The houses that were still standing had markings in red on their outer walls.

#### **'We have lease papers'**

"We were told that ours is an illegal colony. But we have lease papers issued to us in 2011," said Ruth, a resident of the area whose own home, which her family had moved in about a year ago, was intact. "Yes, it was saved after we all came out to raise a hue and cry. But for how long, I wonder," she said.

*Sindh govt justifies demolition by declaring Christian community's Gulshan-i-Maryam an illegal settlement*

Patras, a neighbourhood elder, said that those who came to demolish their houses on Jan 20 turned up without any prior notice. "They said they were to clear the area to make way for a big road or expressway, and started bulldozing all the under-construction structures," he said.

The Malir Expressway, an ambitious plan, is said to connect DHA City, Bahria Town, etc, to the main city, in particular the DHA and Clifton areas.

Patras said that everyone in Gulshan-i-Maryam came out of their small homes when they heard the noise of the houses being bulldozed. "Somehow that had an impact. Then we were told to go back to our houses for they won't demolish any houses in which people lived. They also warned us against constructing and new houses here," he said.

"I was one of the first people to have moved here 12 years ago. At the time, we paid Rs50,000 each for a 120-yard plot and built our small houses. Now these unfortunate folk whose under-construction houses were demolished had already spent around Rs100,000 to Rs200,000 on their property," he shared.

When asked why they were living so far away from the city, Aslam Fauji, another old resident, said that this was what they could afford. "We are poor people; we can't afford to have dwellings in the city. We work hard but only have this jungle to call our settlement. For work, we travel the long distance to the main city every day in the absence of any transport means in this middle of nowhere. There is not even a petrol pump anywhere nearby and we buy open petrol for our motorcycles," he said.

#### **Expressway is 'not for poor'**

Asked if the Malir Expressway would also benefit them, Patras shrugged and smiled sadly. "They are out to remove us from here to build the expressway, so how will it benefit us when we are not even here? It's a catch-22 situation. This is for the posh localities coming up here, not for us poor folk," he said.

Elizabeth, another resident, said that even though the bulldozers are gone now, they all feel very insecure. "The demolition took place over two days on Jan 20 and 21 under the supervision of two police mobiles. Then they said that they will come again on Jan 25. We were prepared to lie down before the bulldozers if they turned towards our homes this time. None of us went to work that day and intended to put up a joint front," she said.

"Thankfully, they didn't do anything other than marking all our houses. They spared our church," she said gesturing towards a small St Mary's Catholic church. "But are all of these houses in their way? Why else would they mark them all?"

Safia, another resident, said that there were some 150 houses that had been constructed in Gulshan-i-Maryam by the poor Christian community that lived there.

"Gulshan-i-Maryam had no proper roads, no water lines, no sewerage lines, no power, no gas. For cooking, we burn the branches of wild plantation. Other than our houses that were constructed a few years ago, there are also around 300 little under-construction houses here, several of which were razed last week. Our people had saved up, little by little, to only have a roof over our heads but that, too, might be taken away from us now," she said sadly.

#### **Sindh govt's version**

When contacted for comment on the issue, a spokesperson for the Sindh chief minister informed Dawn that the residents of Gulshan-i-Maryam were illegal squatters.

"Had they been living on legal land leased out to them, they would have received proper letters letting them know about government's plans for the expressway," he said.

"The government doesn't send out bulldozers to raze legal property. These people seem to be victims of the land mafia that sold them unoccupied land against some money. The government will see what can be done for them," he concluded.  
(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 01/02/2021)

### **Foodies enticed back by vehicle-free Burnes Road in Karachi**

Scores of families have gathered at Burnes Road, a century-old food hub in Karachi, to grab a taste of traditional Pakistani cuisine.

While some are waiting for their sajji, chicken or lamb marinated in simple spices, attached to skewers and roasted over coals, others are hunched on plastic chairs outside restaurants enjoying items such as biryani (rice and meat), nihari (meat stew) and kebabs.

Many are also having their after-meal desserts such as gulab jamun, rabri, and ice cream.

The downtown street had long been a food hub for Karachiites, Pakistanis all over and even foreigners.

Traffic congestion, decaying structures and a deteriorating law and order situation, however, diverted the loyal clientele to other parts of the sprawling cosmopolitan, home to more than 20 million people.

But a recent restoration and renovation of the 200-meter (656-foot) two-way street have brought back the "lost glory."

While the crumbling structures have been repaired and repainted, vehicles have been barred from entering the site post 7pm since January 10.

Visitors now park vehicles at dedicated parking spaces, and only area residents and shopkeepers are allowed to bring in their automobiles.



"I'm here after years. It looks completely different," Mohammad Malik, a visitor, told Anadolu Agency as his wife and children devoured fried kebab at Waheed Kabab House. "It's clean, safe and attractive. You can freely walk on either side of the road without any fear," he said, referring to the law and order situation in the port city, which has significantly improved in recent years.

"Pizza, burgers, and other fast food items may be the in thing nowadays but [traditional] desi food is insatiable," said Waqas Ali, a final-year engineering student. "Safe, clean and colorful atmosphere, sumptuous food, and a balmy night... what else do you want?"

#### **Return of business**

"This transformation has given a fresh lease on life to my business," said Iqbal Waheed, whose father, Abdul Waheed, established this restaurant in 1961.

Waheed has also renovated his restaurant, now with a proper dine-in arrangement for families as well. "We have made it better, which has brought back the customers," he said.

Mohammad Khalid, who works at Delhi Rabri House, shared a similar view. "The number of customers has increased thanks to a conducive environment," he said as buyers lined up at different glass counters.

"There is no noise or smoke from buses, taxis and rickshaws. Only revelers and food," he said.

#### **History**

City historians say the street derives its name from a British doctor, James Burnes, who served the colonial regime in the first half of the 19th century in the southern Sindh province, of which Karachi is the capital. According to Arif Hassan, an architect and city planner, Burnes Road was planned in 1870, and it initially served as an artillery training and practice center for the British Army.

"Burnes Road earned the reputation of a food hub after the partition of India in 1947 when around 80,000 Delhiwalas [people from the Indian capital Delhi] migrated to Karachi and settled in this area," Hassan told Anadolu Agency.

Following communal riots in 1948, he said, Hindus left for India, leaving space for Delhiwalas, who then introduced Indian varieties, including haleem (blend of spices, meat, barley and wheat) and paan (betel leaf with areca nut). Before the rise of Burnes Road, the adjacent Ram Bagh (now Aram Bagh) was Karachi's key meeting point, he added.

(By Anadolu Agency The Express Tribune, 04, 02/02/2021)

### **Decision on BRT**

THE Supreme Court decision to set aside a Peshawar High Court judgement ordering a NAB investigation into the Peshawar BRT scheme must have come as a relief to a provincial government dogged by the controversy generated by its flagship project. The move to stop the NAB probe comes in response to an appeal filed by the KP government. In July 2018, the Peshawar High Court had directed NAB to investigate the incessant delays and irregularities in the award of contracts and the project's cost. In a separate case in 2019, the high court had asked the FIA to investigate any potential wrongdoing related to the project. This was also challenged by the KP government in the Supreme Court which has granted a month-long extension to its stay order on the FIA probe. The highly publicised, multibillion-rupee Bus Rapid Transit project had sparked concerns due to the long delays in completing it and the mismanagement during its construction. The KP government's own investigation team had raised serious questions over the feasibility of the project, especially as the cost went from Rs49bn to over Rs68bn. In April 2019, the team in a 27-page report had highlighted a number of issues with the BRT project. The report had brought to light challenges pertaining to the mismanagement of development funds, political hubris and improper design and planning by the authorities, along with mass-scale public inconvenience to the residents of Peshawar. In fact, it indicated the project had misused public money through negligence in the execution of the construction.

The BRT project was announced by the KP government just months before the 2018 general elections, and there were rash promises that it would be completed within six months. Several deadlines, design changes and tens of billions of rupees later, the project was finally opened for the public in August 2020. However, soon after, the mass transit system witnessed more problems as a few buses caught fire and operations were hampered. The question that then arises is this: if the government's own inspection team recommended a probe into the construction of the BRT, why did the provincial administration think it necessary to challenge the high court's decision? Would it not have been better to investigate the concerns raised and find solutions that could have put to rest the misgivings? After all, transparency in public works underpins a people's trust in their government.

(By Editorial Dawn, 06, 04/02/2021)

### **'Malir Expressway will affect Karachi's green areas'**

The construction of Malir Expressway will not just displace scores of families, but will also affected the green areas that are source of fruits and vegetables to Karachi, maintained a committee comprising persons affected by ML-1, Malir Expressway and demolition drive along Gujjar nullah raised the concern on Wednesday.

The committee voiced the concerned during a press conference at the Karachi Press Club on the day.

Pakistan Institute of Labour, Education and Research director Karamat Ali, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan chairperson Asad Iqbal Butt, Mahnaz Rehman of the Aurat Foundation and others spoke on the occasion.

The speakers demanded on the occasion a public hearing on the construction of Malir Expressway and anti-encroachment drives along Gujjar nullah, Manzoor Colony nullah and the paths of Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) and ML-1.

Local residents need to be consulted at the hearing on the said projects and initiatives, the speakers stressed.

They also demanded alternative accommodation for 1,100 families displaced following the launch of the KCR and arrangements for the same for those affected by Malir Expressway and demolition of structures along Gujjar and Manzoor Colony nullahs.

This was promised by Pakistan Peoples Party chairperson Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the speakers called to the mind.

The speakers lamented that it had been a year since families were displaced from the path of the KCR, and they still hadn't been provided alternative accommodation.

Similarly, those affected by the demolition drive along Mazoor Colony nullah too haven't been consulted on the matter.

There is no record of how many families will be affected by the construction of ML-1 in a city and no assurance of alternative accommodation has been given to families fearing displacement, they added.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 11/02/2021)

### Shortage of public buses

Lahore is no different from Karachi in terms of public transport availability. Things are similar all over Punjab. The Lahore Transport Company bus service has ceased operation on more than 30 routes. The metro train service, which cost billions, has also failed to cater to the needs of commuters. Now these trains are carrying far fewer commuters than their capacity due to the lack of feeder buses. For a population of more than 15 million, Lahore has only 55 feeder buses for the metro bus service, which covers only one route.

Motorcycle rickshaws, commonly known as Qingqi, are filling the gap created due to the unsatisfactory state of public transport. These rickshaws are unregulated and so the authorities have little control over them. The transport department has failed in its attempts to regularise and rationalise them owing to the lack of coordination between the relevant departments. Qingqi rickshaws have been involved in 136,768 traffic accidents in the province between January 2018 and December 2020, leading to many fatalities. This is because most rickshaw drivers are untrained and overloading on these vehicles.

The provincial transport minister has promised to replace Qingqi rickshaws with four-wheeler electric vehicles. However, this seems to be impractical considering the shortage of electricity in the country. Why are government departments failing to do their duty the way they should? Surprise raids by officials and ministers would drive their subordinates to address public issues efficiently? We, the people, have never heard of such raids, unfortunately. Even absolute monarchs toured cities and villages in disguise to see how their officials were serving the people. Recently, the PM office has issued show-cause notices to several officers of the Punjab bureaucracy for their alleged inefficiency. This initiative from the top would set in motion the system of surprise raids. At present there is no check on officials; they are free to make people run around endlessly. No one asks them what they are getting their salaries for?

(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 14, 17/02/2021)

### Roads near stadium won't be blocked during PSL matches, SHC told

Police authorities on Wednesday assured the Sindh High Court that two main thoroughfares near the National Stadium Karachi (NSK) would remain open during Pakistan Super League (PSL) matches.

However, the focal person of the Sindh home department, SP Traffic (East) and other police officials further said that at the time of arrival and departure of players they would make some security arrangements for a limited period.

When a two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar took up a petition against closure of roads around the NSK during matches, an assistant advocate general argued that the cricket series between Pakistan and South Africa had come to an end and thus the petition had become infructuous.

He submitted that the home department had also communicated different routes for public convenience in the media during the matches.

However, the lawyer for the petitioner submitted that now the PSL would start from Feb 20 and again the home department and police started blocking roads causing grave inconvenience to the public at large.

*Police say some security measures would be taken for arrival, departure of cricket teams*

The counsel further maintained that a road from the Karachi central prison to Nipa traffic intersection and Sir Shah Suleman Road heading towards Dalmia had been blocked.

However, the officials gave a clear statement that neither these roads were currently blocked nor it would be during the PSL, but some security arrangements would be made for a limited period at the time of arrival and departure of teams.

They undertook that the roads in question would not be blocked during the PSL.

The bench disposed of the petition since the provincial law officer also supported the joint statements.

**Plea for mangroves' protection**

A federal law officer on Wednesday requested the same bench for time to file a reply regarding protection of mangroves in the islands of Bundal and Buddo along Karachi's coast.

The lawyers for petitioners said that they did not want to press the clauses of their petitions regarding a presidential ordinance that had lapsed as per the statement of an additional attorney general.

However, they said the petitions also contained prayer clauses about protection of mangroves at Bundal and Buddo.

The bench adjourned the hearing till March 31 after the additional attorney general sought time.

The petitioners had challenged the ordinance to establish an authority for offshore islands of Sindh and Balochistan and particularly Bundal and Buddo islands.

**Cultivation of vegetables using sewage**

The SHC on Wednesday asked the petitioners to verify a progress report filed by the district administration about action taken against cultivation of vegetables through sewage in Malir and Korangi.

The additional deputy commissioners of Malir and Korangi districts filed reports in compliance with an earlier order passed on a set of petitions against cultivation of vegetables not fit for human consumption.

Both additional DCs submitted that they had cleared the areas while 25 cattle farms had also been dismantled in the Malir riverbed.

The bench directed the petitioners and their lawyers to confirm such reports and come prepared on March 25.

(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 18/02/2021)

**Public transit dream gone sour**

FIVE years since field work was initiated in February 2016, the struggle continues to make operational only the Green Line of the Karachi BRT project (now called the Trans Karachi Breeze project). This continuing delay and rising concerns regarding the quality of work should not come as a surprise. The Karachi BRT project is a classic case study of how not to implement a primary urban mobility project and stands as a sad testament to the causal factors behind the city's long-standing failure to implement a viable public transit system.



Since the mid-1970s, planners and policymakers have considered various public mass transit options, ranging from LRT to BRT, and the revival of the Karachi Circular Railway. Till the initiation of the Karachi BRT project, no plan transited to work on the ground. However, what is actually happening raises more fears and apprehensions rather than giving confidence to the public that Karachi's mobility challenges will be

effectively addressed and resolved.

Some months ago, Bloomberg, a US-based news agency, quoted from a study defining the public transport system in Karachi as the worst in the world. A recently conducted Diagnostic Report by the World Bank indicated that the public transport constituting only five per cent of the vehicle load carries 42pc of the travelling public with 45 passengers competing for a single bus seat in Karachi. This while 1,000 new vehicles are added to the streets every day. So why the fear that the Karachi BRT will not overcome these challenges to make Karachi a public transit-friendly city?

The project got off to a faulty start with planning not sourced from a centralised authority, with the result that the proposed 'lines' have been addressed mostly in isolation. A centralised authority, now mandated to own and manage the project Trans Karachi Breeze has only just started to come out of its long hibernation. As such, an overarching vision that could have enabled synergised pathways for smooth planning and implementation has never existed. The authority earlier tasked with organising matters, the Sindh Mass Transit Authority, from the very beginning struggled to articulate a well-calibrated vision, while city agencies like the KMC sat on the sidelines, rendering critical institutional interfaces more dysfunctional.

*The Karachi BRT project got off to a faulty start with planning not sourced from a centralised authority.*

Lack of viable vertical and horizontal synergies created legal and institutional imbalances that have seeped into the project's DNA. The Green Line is funded by the federal government while its feeder, the Orange Line, is being funded by the Sindh government. The Red Line is being funded by the Asian Development Bank, while the Yellow Line's funding is being negotiated with the World Bank. As funding sources are a mix of local and foreign, technical design and related social and environmental safeguards do not find compatibility. The Green Line is considered a 'first-generation' design, as also the Orange Line, while the Red Line complies with 'third-generation' design requirements of the BRT. The Green Line is silent on matters like inter-modality while the Red Line offers feeder transport options such as bike-sharing. So citizens of the same city, depending on their route preferences will be availing differing levels of services. Are those using the Green and Orange Lines 'lesser' citizens of the state?

Globally, urban design is now promoting the greater spread of Non-Motorised Transport — walking and bicycling. The Karachi BRT provided an opportunity to leverage NMT as 'inter-modality' modes linking with the BRT primary modality mode, particularly as most of the primary routes of the Karachi BRT, are not providing viable 'access'. Other than in the Red Line, this consideration is missing, which could discourage use. Then mobility projects are not just about getting people from point A to B. They have a larger urban

livability improvement and sustainability agenda where they trigger improved environment, economic prosperity and more inclusive cities — these can be seen wherever improved access leads to, for example, the revival of decaying public spaces. Here another opportunity is lost as the Karachi BRT has not been coupled with the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) planning.

Wherever such projects have been successful, a critical element has been strong behaviour change strategy embedded in the overall planning process. Not so here. How will people be incentivised to change travel modes? No thought has been given to this important consideration. In fact, this shortcoming is further compounded by counterproductive government policies and practices. Car financing and auto loans have surged in recent years, primarily to facilitate the Uber/Careem mobility models while imports of cheap motorbikes are at an all-time high. So while a public transit project is being rolled out, citizens are getting easy access to personalised mobility modes.

Despite existing project imbalances, there is still time to rationalise inconsistencies, and limit the damage done. The governance architecture needs the fine-tuning of existing policy instruments, administrative mechanisms and the creation of interfaces with city-level agencies. This can happen if emphasis is placed on promoting NMT where agencies such as the KMC develop and implement frameworks like an urban street design manual for the city in collaboration with professional bodies. Shortcomings including the lack of inter-modality options, particularly for the Green and Orange Lines, can be addressed by connecting primary mobility modes with 'feeder' options.

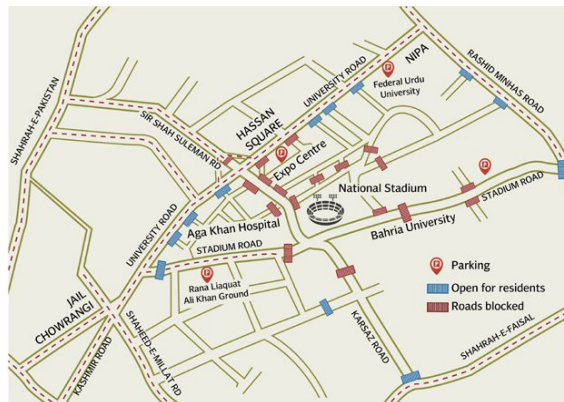
For Karachi BRT to have a wider 'urban livability' footprint, all BRT lines should have TOD plans in place so that improved access leads to rejuvenating decaying public spaces, reviving historical districts, the creation of pedestrian districts in busy commercial areas and facilitating greater employment opportunities. There needs to be an enabling space for transitioning from automobile usage to public transit and that can only happen if the authorities in charge reach out to the ultimate users and discourage policies that are hampering a smooth transition.

However, all this requires strong political will and a broader shared vision that can guide these mobility interventions towards the goal of achieving sustainable urban mobility.

(By Farhan Anwar Dawn, 06, 19/02/2021)

### Karachi traffic police issues PSL diversion plan

The city's traffic police have issued a traffic diversion plan ahead of the Pakistan Super League matches, with the tournament set to begin today.



According to a notification issued by the traffic police, four areas have been demarcated for the spectators to park their vehicles and a shuttle service has been arranged to transport them from the allotted parking spaces to National Stadium Karachi. Moreover, the notification states that the spectators are to produce their Computerised National Identity Cards and tickets to gain entry into the stadium.

#### Parking spaces

Of the four parking areas for spectators, one has been developed in an open ground near the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST), another at the Expo Centre, a third one in the Gharib Nawaz Football Ground and another at Rana Liaquat Ali Khan Girls College, situated opposite Aga Khan University Hospital.

Spectators arriving from Central and West Districts are to park their vehicles in the ground near FUUAST and those approaching the venue

from South and Korangi Districts are to park their vehicles at Expo Centre, in the ground situated near the centre's Gate 1.

Spectators from South and Korangi Districts will be able to approach the designated parking spot after passing by the Baitul Mukarram Masjid and then taking a U-turn.

Meanwhile, Gharib Nawaz Football Ground has been designated for spectators arriving from East and Malir Districts and those coming from Tower, Saddar, Clifton and Defence Housing Authority are to park their vehicles at Rana Liaquat Ali Khan Girls College.

#### Blocked roads

As per the traffic diversion plan, Stadium Road, Habib Ibrahim Rehmatullah Road, Hassan Square Flyover and the artery connecting Stadium Road to the University Road will remain closed for traffic. However, vehicular traffic will be permitted on University Road, Shaheed-e-Millat Road and Rashid Minhas Road.

Arrangements have also been made to ensure that heavy vehicles are not permitted on arteries leading to Sohrab Goth from Nipa, Hassan Square from Liaquatabad no. 10, University Road from PP Chowranghi, Stadium Road from Karsaz and New Town from Millennium Mall.

According to a traffic police spokesperson, only the residents of areas located nearby the blocked roads will be allowed to take the closed routes to approach their homes, after showing their CNICs. Those residing in the vicinity will be able to approach their residences after crossing the New Town Police Station, where traffic police officials have been deployed to guide them further.

**Security arrangements**

In order to prevent any security hazards, 696 Special Security Unit (SSU) commandos, two SSPs, eight DSPs, sharp shooters and other law enforcement agencies' officials have been deployed at sensitive points across the city.

According to a statement issued by the Police Security and Emergency Service Division, the country's first Special Weapons and Tactics team, comprising highly trained commandos, will be deployed at SSU headquarters, ready to deal with any untoward situation. In addition, 40 SSU police mobiles, with 30 cameras installed on them, will be patrolling the areas near the National Stadium. Besides, SSU officials have been assigned to guide spectators at the parking grounds and National Stadium.

The traffic police have appealed to citizens to cooperate with officials and follow their instructions to avoid any inconvenience. Citizens may also call on traffic police helpline, 1915, or their Whatsapp number, 0305-9266907, for further guidance.

\*WITH ADDITIONAL REPORTING FROM APP

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 20/02/2021)

**Four young friends die in University Road car crash**

Four young friends were killed in what police described as a horrible accident that took place on University Road in Gulshan-i-Iqbal in the early hours of Monday.

While some reports said that the driver of a fast-moving car tried to avoid hitting a motorcyclist and in the process his car collided with the pillars of a pedestrian bridge, Mobina Town SHO Shahid Taj said that the accident took place because the vehicle went out of the driver's control due to rash driving.

The police said the accident occurred at around 2am.

The vehicle was badly damaged in the accident and all four occupants of the car died on the spot. The bodies were shifted to the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital for medico-legal formalities.

The victims were reportedly on their way home after having dinner somewhere in the metropolis.

An Edhi Foundation spokesperson identified the victims as Mohammed Moiz, 19, Rohan, 25, Asadullah, 20, and Taimur Khan, 25. They were all said to be friends and residents of Gulshan-i-Iqbal.

**Man axed to death**

A young man was killed and another injured in Shah Latif Town on Monday, according to police.

They added that Shahzad Ali, 30, was axed to death in Lashari Goth.

Area SHO Mohammed Ali Shah said the incident appeared to be an outcome of a family dispute.

He said the man was killed allegedly by his brother-in-law and the police had arrested the suspect.

In another incident, seven persons were injured when two groups fought with each other over a property dispute in Shah Latif Town. They wounded men were shifted to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre for treatment.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 23/02/2021)

**Roadside puncture workshops begin to disappear**

Once propped up along every highway and street corner in the city, makeshift puncture shops are soon becoming a thing of the past.

In recent years, owing to increased crackdown on illegal electricity connections and encroachment sites, a large number of Karachi's roadside puncture workers have had to close shop and search for other modes of employment. Those who remain however, complain of flailing business and inability to meet overheads amid strict policing and higher operation costs.

"Electricity connections are difficult to acquire now. So most mechanics on the sidewalk prefer closing shop and going home before dark, instead of working late hours. Those who do operate at night, are usually ones employed at fuel stations where electricity [supply] is uninterrupted," told Muhammad Imran, a local puncture worker.

Like several other businesses, Karachi's roadside puncture workers too have had a difficult time operating under coronavirus restrictions the past year. Although the sector had been struggling for quite some time now, the toil and trouble brought by the pandemic was the deathblow to a majority of outlets.

According to Imran, workers who had come from other cities and had been operating on Karachi's sidewalks for years, were forced to head back to their hometowns during worst of Covid-19. "At some point this [repairing tyres] used to be a lucrative profession and a skill transferred from one generation to another. But there's little money in this business anymore and too many loose ends. So now, children of old-hand puncture workers choose to opt out of their family business and go for more dependable professions like driving rickshaws and repairing auto vehicles," shared Imran.

Winters, per Imran, usually see less business in terms of puncture repair. It is the summer months when heat and increased friction causes tyres to swell and leak, leading drivers to seek repairs. But since peak summer months overlapped with the most stringent of Covid-19 restrictions, there were already less cars on the streets and lesser punctures to mend. "So there hasn't been much business this whole year while operating costs have shot up, which has been tough to deal with for most puncture workers," he lamented.

The reduction in the number of puncture workers has been a nightmare for the city's motor vehicle owners, especially those commuting at wee hours of the night. "Going through Karachi's highways is like running over a mine for motorcyclists. Tyres often go flat and not everyone can afford to install a new tube every other day," shared Habibullah, a delivery boy who often works late hours. "In such circumstances many of us depend on these roadside puncture workers to patch our tyres for a fraction of the cost. When they're not around, it can take us hours to push our vehicles to the nearest tyre shop or fuel station," he added.

However, unlike fuel station repair shops which use modern machinery, most roadside puncture workers do everything-from extracting tyre tubes to mending holes-by hand. "This makes the job quite labour intensive, but prices charged here are usually relatively cheaper. Although prices may vary from city to city, but as an eyeball figure, the puncture for motorcycles is usually fixed at a cost of Rs60 to Rs70. For car tyres it costs around Rs100 to Rs150 while repairs for heavy vehicles cost over Rs150 to Rs200," Muhammad Zafar, a puncture repair expert told The Express Tribune.

(By Aamir Khan The Express Tribune, 05, 24/02/2021)

### **Karachi to receive 80 new buses soon, SHC told**

The Sindh High Court was informed on Wednesday that Phase II of the Green Line Bus Project would be completed by March 2021 and 80 new buses are to arrive in the metropolis soon.

A two-member bench, comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Amjad Ali Sahito, was hearing a plea pertaining to absence of mass transit facilities in the city.

The federal government submitted a report stating that Phase I of the Green Line Bus project, comprising a 24 kilometre-long track, has been completed while Phase II of the project is expected to see completion by March 2021. The report mentioned that 80 buses are to arrive in Karachi soon and all tenders have been issued.

The report further stated that the contract for the Green Line and Orange Line buses has been made with China and 24 stations are to be constructed at a cost of Rs240 million. It added that the project, once completed, would be handed over to the provincial government. The Centre will fully cooperate with the Sindh government for the operations of the Green Line Bus service.

The court directed the petitioner to prepare arguments based on the report and adjourned the hearing till April 1.

#### **Local govt elections**

Hearing a plea pertaining to delamination of constituencies and local government elections, the same bench inquired about the notification pertaining to the population census.

The court was informed by the counsel representing the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics that the Supreme Court has recently issued orders and sought replies on why local government elections have not been conducted on time. He informed the court that all the provincial governments, except for the Sindh government, have submitted their replies.

Justice Mazhar inquired about the notification for census.

To this, the representative of the Council of Common Interest replied that the notification would be issued soon.

Following this, the court inquired of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan's counsel as to why they have filed a similar plea before the Supreme Court.

The bench directed the petitioner's counsel to ask his client what it is that they want. Besides, the court sought a report pertaining to the issuance of the notification regarding approval of the controversial 2017 census and adjourned the hearing till March 11.

#### **Missing persons**

Meanwhile, another two-member bench, comprising Justice Naimatullah Phulpoto and Justice Abdul Mubeen Lakho, summoned the Sindh chief secretary and the IGP over a set of pleas pertaining to the recovery of missing persons.

Irrked at the lack of progress thus far, the court asked what the problems were.

Investigating officers have not been able to trace missing citizens for years, the bench pointed out.

Several joint-investigation teams and provincial task force meetings have been held but to no avail, the court observed.

Should an investigating officer be punished if the task force's directive is not implemented, asked Justice Phulpoto of the home department's focal person. "Should an investigating officer be fired or demoted?"

The focal person replied that no action has been taken against any investigating officer thus far.

What is the use of such provincial task force meetings if their orders are not carried out, asked Justice Phulpoto.

During the hearing, the Pakistan Rangers' prosecutor, Habib Ahmed, informed the court that missing citizens have not been detained. The bench also expressed annoyance at the federal government's lawyer for failing to submit a report pertaining to detention centres. The court sought details at the next hearing slated for March 30.

\*With additional input from PPI  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 25/02/2021)

### Five years on, no sign of Green Line BRTS project's completion

As the federal government had given another deadline for opening of the Green Line bus rapid transit system (BRTS) project in July-August, any relief in the transport sector seems a distant dream for Karachiites who have been waiting for the project's completion ever since its groundbreaking was performed by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif on Feb 16, 2016.



The recent announcement came from Federal Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar, who earlier this month had said the prototype for a bus for the Green Line project would be completed by March and delivery of the buses would begin from June. He had expressed the hope that Green Line would start functioning by July-August.

However, shifting deadlines are not new for the people of Karachi who badly need a proper mass transit system in their city.

Despite fresh assurances, questions hover over the project five years on.

Karachi's major public transport project, which was estimated to be completed by the end of 2017, keeps getting new deadlines. Since the launch of the scheme, the battered roads on either side of the route have turned into a great source of nuisance for the commuters and for the shopkeepers doing their businesses.

*Asad Umar claims the project will start functioning in July-August*

In February 2016, then prime minister Nawaz Sharif had inaugurated work on the Rs16.85 billion federal government-funded bus project by performing the groundbreaking. Later, the project was extended by another 10 kilometres as initially sought by the Sindh government and the estimated cost crossed the figure of Rs24bn.

Starting from Powerhouse Chowrangi in Surjani Town, the bus service was to terminate at Merewether Tower after passing through Nagan Chowrangi, North Nazimabad, Nazimabad and Gurumandir, with more than 20 stations on its route to cater to 300,000 passengers on a daily basis.

At a sanitary ware market near Nazimabad Chowrangi, several traders had moved their shops during the construction of the project which left behind mounds of rubble.

Sajid Naeem said he preferred to shut his shop in 2017 and moved to a rented space nearby, thinking he would move back shortly.

"But it took almost three years," he said. "I incurred losses and bore extra cost to run my business. It is so disappointing that the cities like Lahore, Rawalpindi, Multan and Peshawar are serving their people much better transport facility than this commercial capital [Karachi] of the country."

The people of Karachi know the misery the lack of a comprehensive public transport system in their city causes. These miseries have been chronicled in a 2015 report by renowned city planner Arif Hasan with Mansoor Raza and the Urban Resource Centre. Titled Karachi: The Transport Crisis, it highlights the sorry state of the public transport sector of the country's largest city, which is on the verge of collapse due to a history of failure, negligence, inefficiency and lack of follow-through in both government and public-private partnership projects.

Similar facts were mirrored in a 2015 report of the DIG-Traffic which revealed that more than 50 per cent buses, minibuses and coaches in the city had disappeared from roads with some 200 routes being shrunk to only 80 over the past decade mainly due to an "increase in fuel prices and government apathy".

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 28/02/2021)

### 'Malir Halt-Numaish corridor to start soon'

The construction of a corridor from Malir Halt to Numaish, under the Red Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project, is expected to start this month, the arrangements for which are being finalised, Karachi Commissioner Navid Ahmed Shaikh was told during a meeting he was presiding over on Tuesday.

In the meeting, called to review the arrangements for the construction, transport secretary Shariq Ahmed called to the mind that the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council had approved the project so that it had two corridors - one extending across a length of 27 kilometers from Malir Halt to Numaish and another between Numaish to Merewether Tower - and over Rs70 billion had been allocated for the scheme.

Stating that the construction of the corridor connecting Malir Halt and Numaish was expected to start this month, the secretary further said 16 stations would be built along the corridor, which would run through Model Colony, Safoora Goth and Nipa, and pass by the Met Office, NED University of Engineering and Technology, Safari Park, Federal Urdu University of Science and Technology, Baitul Mukarram Mosque, Civic Centre, Askari park, Dawood University of Engineering and Technology and Society Office.

Addressing the meeting, the Karachi commissioner maintained that the Sindh government had been making all-out efforts to improve traffic management in the city and improve public transport.

"The Red Line project will help government achieve its goal of providing better transport facilities to citizens and improve the city's transport system," he said.

Besides, he directed civic agencies to extend their complete support to the project, so that it was completed on time. For the purpose, the commissioner constituted a work group of the relevant civic agencies and directed them to work in close coordination with the transport department and cooperate with it.

The group comprises officials of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, Karachi Water and Sewerage Board, district municipal corporations, traffic police, Traffic Engineering Bureau and K-Electric.

Moreover, the commissioner instructed transport department officials to consult and schedule meetings with the traffic police and Traffic Engineering Bureau to address the issues of traffic congestion and ensure that the construction of the Red Line project did not cause any problems relating to traffic.

Alternate should be allocated for both, vehicular and pedestrian traffic, during the construction, in consultation with the Traffic Engineering Bureau and traffic police, he stressed.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 03/03/2021)

### **Two-corridor Red Line bus project to be launched in Karachi this month**

As the city has been waiting for the start of the Green Line bus service for the last five years, the authorities on Tuesday announced launching the construction of Red Line — from Malir Halt to Numaish — this month.

A statement issued by the Karachi commissioner office after a meeting held to review the transport project suggested that arrangements for the launch of the Rs7 billion scheme's construction had been finalised.

"A meeting held under the chairmanship of Commissioner Karachi Navid Ahmed Shaikh reviewed the arrangements for the work to start construction on the BRT Red Line Corridor project from Malir Halt to Numaish this month," said the statement.

*One corridor will run from Malir Halt to Numaish and the other up to Tower*

"The transport secretary, Shariq Ahmed, briefed the meeting in detail about the project. He said that ECNEC had approved the BRT Red Line project comprising two corridors and allocated more than Rs7 billion for the construction, including a 27-kilometre corridor from Malir Halt to Numaish and the second corridor from Numaish to Tower."

The meeting was also attended by the deputy commissioners of East, South and Malir, chief executive officer of Trans-Karachi, senior officials of the Mass Transit Authority, traffic police, Civil Aviation, KMC, DMCs, and the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board.

"The meeting was told that the construction on Corridor One from Malir Halt to Numaish would be started expectedly this month for which arrangements had been finalised," it said. "The meeting was also informed that 16 stations would be constructed on this line which will run from Malir Halt to Numaish via Model Colony, Safoora Goth, King Cottages, Met Office, NED University, Safari Park, Nipa, Urdu University, Masjid Baitul Mukarram, Civic Centre, Askari Park, Dawood University and Society Office."

The Karachi commissioner, the statement added, told the meeting that the Sindh government was making all-out efforts to improve the traffic system in the city aimed at enhancing the quality of public transport and improving the traffic flow and reducing traffic congestion in the city.

"The Red Line project is part of BRT and it would help the government achieve its target of providing better transport facilities and improve the transport system," said the statement quoting the commissioner of Karachi.

"The commissioner asked the civic agencies to extend all their support to the project so the project is completed timely. The commissioner formed a working group of the civic agencies to work in close coordination and cooperation with the transport department."

The working group would have officials of the KMC, KWSB, DMCs, traffic police, Traffic Engineering Bureau and K-Electric, said the statement.



"The commissioner asked the transport department to consult and have meetings with the Traffic Engineering Bureau and Traffic Police to address the issues of traffic congestion and ensure that no traffic problems were faced due to the construction of the project," it said.

"He stressed the need to provide alternative routes to the vehicular and pedestrian traffic during the construction with the consultation of TEB and Traffic Police."  
(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 03/03/2021)

### **The terrible tale of Karachi's pedestrian bridges**

Dangling in the air with gaping holes and missing railings, the ramshackle condition of Karachi's pedestrian bridges are a perennial hazard for the city's residents. Rendering what was once meant to assist pedestrians in crossing busy thoroughfares, into little more than dilapidated dens for drug addicts and street vendors. Owing to this, pedestrians in the city's busiest districts have to manoeuvre through life-threatening traffic, instead of using purpose-built footbridges when crossing roads.

The relevant authorities have blamed their negligence on exhausted funds.

The repair and maintenance of footbridges has been affected severely ever since the Supreme Court imposed a ban on billboards and hoardings on public property which came into force in 2017. Previous city governments constructed 13 pedestrian bridges on build-operate-transfer (BOT) basis, in collaboration with private companies on various busy roads and generated revenue to meet the cost by installing billboards under an agreement.

After the last city government's dissolution, these BOT pedestrian bridges were placed under the Karachi Development Authority (KDA) Traffic Engineering Bureau's (TEB) supervision. Under an agreement, private companies still own the bridges and are responsible for their maintenance. However, since the Supreme Court ban on billboards, maintenance and repairing of pedestrian bridges has been badly affected because of loss of revenue.

According to a survey conducted by The Express Tribune, there are 120 pedestrian bridges across the city. The KDA maintains 94 while the remaining 26 bridges are under the care of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) and cantonment boards. However, most if not all of these bridges, despite the millions spent on their construction, remain inaccessible to most citizens. Women and students in particular complain of drug peddlers and the homeless taking control of these public facilities after nightfall, and they avoid using them.

"The Traffic Engineering Bureau hasn't inspected any of these bridges in the past five years, citing unavailability of funds. Neither has it carried out repair or maintenance work. As a result, several bridges like the one at the University of Karachi's Silver Jubilee Gate and other places are falling to pieces," a KDA official said on the condition of anonymity. "Entire floorboards are missing from the Silver Jubilee Gate bridge staircase. The bureau had to close the bridge after a video highlighting the issue went viral."

The first pedestrian bridge under BOT was constructed in front of Urdu Science University Gulshan-e-Iqbal Campus, in former city nazim Naimatullah Khan's tenure. Ramps for the disabled were also built on it. However, six years ago these ramps were demolished by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation's anti-encroachment department.

According to Sindh Outdoor Advertisers Association (SOAA) Chairperson Irfan Hashmi, Armada, a company which built the bridge had also installed a strong fence worth lakhs of rupees under the pedestrian bridge. However, a few years ago, during construction of University Road under aegis of the Sindh government, the contractor demolished the fence but did not reinstall it. "Which is why citizens continue to manoeuvre through busy traffic instead of climbing the bridge and often suffer accidents," he added

Referring to drug peddlers camping on footbridges, TEB Senior Director Khalid Hafeez said that dealing with them was the responsibility of respective police stations. "We have a dearth of funds but private companies do some repair works as and when needed. Fences are frequently stolen and sheets are installed by philanthropists and good Samaritans to keep people safe. The sheets however obstruct visibility of movement on the bridge, which is why women are usually afraid of using these bridges at night," commented Hafeez.

According to Hashmi, bridges built under BOT basis, should qualify as private property. The biggest hurdle in the installation of advertisements on BOT pedestrian bridges, he said are district municipal corporations, whose officers do not allow advertisements for their own ulterior motives. "If we are allowed to put up billboards again, we will resume bearing the expenses of maintaining these bridges, in addition to requesting the police and city administration to remove peddlers and addicts," he told The Express Tribune.  
(By Syed Ashraf Ali The Express Tribune, 04, 05/03/2021)

### **Man, daughter die as water tanker hits motorcycle**

A man and his minor daughter were killed and his brother was injured when a fast-moving water tanker hit their motorcycle near A.O. Clinic in Nazimabad on Sunday evening, said police.

The incident enraged onlookers who set fire to the water tanker. The truck driver managed to escape from the site.

Nazimabad SHO Faisal Rafiq said the victims suffered critical injuries and taken to the nearby Abbasi Shaheed Hospital, where doctors pronounced the man and his daughter dead on arrival.

Later, the girl was identified as Sidra. The names of her father and his brother could not be ascertained immediately.

The water tanker was destroyed in the fire before arrival of firefighters, said a fire brigade official. After the incident a severe traffic jam was witnessed in the the area and approach roads.  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 08/03/2021)

### **Rickety roads increase cost of production: industrialists**

The repair and rehabilitation work of roads and revamping of drainage system in the SITE area has not yet started despite approval of funds for the work by the Sindh government six months ago, which has worsened the state of infrastructure in the main industrial hub of the country.

In September 2020, the chief minister approved Rs1.037 billion for the said works in the SITE area on demand and protest by industrialists.

These funds were allocated for the reconstruction of 19 roads in SITE.

The KDA was given the job to rehabilitate two of these roads while the remaining 17 roads were to be built under the Karachi Mega City Project.

The revised PC-I of the roads allotted to the KDA has not yet been approved despite the passage of more than three months.

"Under these conditions, it has become very difficult for industrialists to reach their factories. Even pedestrians are facing a lot of difficulties in reaching their destinations. Not only this, many transporters have refused to pick up export consignments from the factories in SITE area while those who agree, demand four times more freight charges. The increase in freight and transportation cost has a direct impact on the cost of production, thereby making exports uncompetitive in the international markets," said Abdul Hadi, president of the SITE Association of Industry in a statement.

Mr Hadi expressed serious concerns over delay in starting infrastructure restoration work in the SITE area and appealed to the chief minister of Sindh to take notice of the situation and issue directives regarding the uplift work on an urgent basis.

The association chief mentioned that due to completely destroyed infrastructure in the SITE area, incidents of overturning of loaded trucks and vehicles had become a routine which was not only causing financial losses to factories, but also posing a threat to precious lives. He pointed out that many people had suffered injuries in such incidents. In addition, due to rickety roads, robbery incidents have also increased in the area.

Mr Hadi urged the chief minister to take personal interest in resolving the issues of the SITE area and issue immediate orders to the departments concerned to start infrastructure uplift work.

He also appealed to the chief minister of Sindh to issue notification of the oversight committee as per his commitment and give representation to the SITE Association of Industry in the committee for monitoring quality of the uplift work.  
(By PPI Dawn, 14, 08/03/2021)

### **Improved auto sales**

PAKISTAN'S automotive industry has posted a robust growth in the Covid period. The new data from PAMA, the automotive manufacturers' association, for the first eight months of the present fiscal, ie from July to end February, shows that the sale of passenger cars, jeeps, vans, pickup trucks, etc recorded a 24.3pc year-on-year jump to more than 113,905 units. The number doesn't show the sales of one of the more aggressive new players, Lucky Motors. The two- and three-wheeler segment also expanded by 17.3pc year-on-year to 1.27m units. The sales of tractors more than doubled. But the manufacturers of buses and trucks saw their sales plummet. The automotive industry's growth reflects an overall uptick in domestic economic activities after Covid-19 lockdown restrictions were lifted. The hefty reduction in interest rates that pushed auto financing has also played a major role in the turnaround in car sales. Car leasing jumped by Rs51bn in the seven months from July to end January. The automotive industry had been facing strong headwinds on tough economic conditions spawned by IMF-mandated economic stabilisation policies even before the country was hit by the coronavirus. Industry was shrinking on plunging sales as the government took unsuccessful actions to document the economy. However, the new impetus to the sale of cars and other automobiles in recent months has engendered hopes of an early revival. Total industry sales, barring trucks, buses and two- and three-wheelers, are projected to spike to half a million units over the next five to six years if the current growth momentum continues.

With several Chinese carmakers presenting their brands and investing in local assembly in Pakistan to take advantage of the tax concessions given in the 2016-2021 auto sector policy, the automobile industry is undergoing significant change as customers get more choices and old players come up with new and better models. The interest shown by Chinese automobile companies in introducing their electric cars at discounted prices and the expectation that Japanese carmakers will bring in hybrid vehicles could usher in more changes in the auto landscape and intensify competition. With the existing auto policy having attracted new Korean and Chinese automobile brands, the next policy for 2021-26 must focus on incentives for auto exports and the introduction of smaller, affordable, entry-level cars for middle-class consumers, especially working women. Additionally, the government also needs to ensure that carmakers pay special attention to complying with automotive safety to protect passengers.  
(By Editorial Dawn, 06, 13/03/2021)

### **Drones inducted to check traffic violations on highways**

The Motorway Police have started using drones technology to check violation of traffic rules along main highways and keep a check on traffic movement.

With the induction of the new technology, the Motorway Police charged more than 1,500 drivers for violating traffic rules in the Jamshoro sector, said an official.

He said the campaign was launched following directives from IG Motorways Dr Kaleem Imam and DIG South Ali Sher Jakhrani who announced zero tolerance, mainly against one-way violation, and use of all resources to keep a check on such offences.

“One-way violation leads to serious and fatal accidents,” said sector commander Jamshoro Farhan Ahmed. “In ten days of campaign, we charged some 1,660 light, heavy and public transport vehicles for violating one-way rule. Under the defined laws, if a driver is found committing the same offence again, he should be booked and arrested.”

An official of the Motorway Police said the trial operation of drone technology to conduct road patrolling and traffic monitoring was launched last month. The technology, he said, offered an easier, faster, and cheaper system to patrol highways, especially their difficult-to-reach sections.

“Drones can also cover large areas, drastically reducing staff and costs, and help officers make appropriate use of resources, time and money,” said the official.

“The drones could also be effective in search and rescue operations. Drones equipped with thermal cameras can guide police officers to track down and catch criminals more efficiently even in unfavourable weather conditions.”  
(By Newspaper’s Staff Reporter Dawn, 15, 17/03/2021)

### **France to provide Rs12.3bn soft loan for Red Line in Karachi**

The French government is providing a soft loan of Rs12.3 billion (65 million euros) for the bus rapid transit (BRT) Red Line project in Karachi.

To facilitate the credit, Ambassador of France in Pakistan Marc Barety and country director of the French Agency for Development (AFD) signed the credit financing agreement with Secretary for Economic Affairs Division Noor Ahmed in Islamabad to co-finance with the Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and Green Climate Fund.

The Red Line is proposed to connect with the Green Line, currently under construction, at the Numaish station for a seamless and connected operation. The Red Line services will then continue on the shared common corridor from the Numaish station till Merewether Tower.

*Project is supposed to connect to Green Line service*

The soft loan of Rs12.3bn for the project shows that the substantial financial effort made by the development agencies is aimed for a higher impact on people’s livelihoods. It will be one of the very first collaborative operations for AIIB and GCF in Pakistan on urban development, a French embassy press release states.

The project includes the construction of 26.6km BRT corridor in Karachi encompassing both the Red Line corridor (24.2km) and the common corridor segment (2.4km) as well as feeder and direct services routes to the nearby communities.

Beyond the 26.6km corridor infrastructure, the project is innovative in many ways, and on climate change mitigation the choice is made for the bio-methane hybrid bus technology, powered by a dedicated waste methanisation plant. This technology combined with the massive transport supply will further reduce CO2 emissions from the public transport system.

The holistic street approach for this urban development project is to include organisation and facilities for all the public space along the BRT corridor, whereas its gender and social inclusion dimensions are through the adoption of good practices in accessibility and gender mainstreaming.

In addition, the project includes a support component for the transition of the existing bus sector with the integration of informal operators into the new system, which is a prerequisite for their proper and full commissioning.

The project-related infrastructure includes 24 BRT stations and dedicated lanes in the median, improved mixed traffic lanes, bicycle lanes, parking, sidewalks, green areas, streetlights and proper drainage to climate-proof the corridor and other BRT-related infrastructure, including two depots, one staging facility, offices for Sindh TMTA and TransKarachi, a control centre and park-and-ride facilities.

(By Amin Ahmed Dawn, 13, 18/03/2021)

### **Sepa imposes fines on polluting vehicles**

The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa), taking action against polluting vehicles, conducted checking of vehicles on busy roads of Sukkur, Hyderabad and Karachi on Friday.

According to a press release, a total of 109 small and large vehicles were inspected in the three major cities of the province during which the amount of smoke and toxicity emitted from them was inspected with the help of latest equipment.

During the inspection, out of 109 vehicles, 36 vehicles were found to be emitting smoke beyond the prescribed limits and a total fine of Rs36,000 was imposed on them through the traffic police.

Proportionately, 30 per cent of the vehicles checked were found to be spreading pollution mainly due to substandard fuel consumption and improper maintenance of vehicle engines and silencers.

The operation was overseen by deputy director instrument engineering Sada Bakhsh while field teams from Sepa's regional offices in the three cities took part in the operation.

Sepa urges vehicle owners to keep their vehicles tuned regularly and keep their engine and silencer in good condition so that their emissions do not exceed the provincial environmental standards.

(By APP Dawn, 14, 20/03/2021)

### **Karachi becomes first Pakistani city to run electric buses**

Despite Federal Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry's claims of making the federal capital the first city to have environment friendly electric transport in Pakistan, his political rival Pakistan Peoples Party's government in Sindh took the lead and launched the country's first electric bus project in Karachi on Tuesday.

Sindh Minister for Transport Owais Qadir Shah inaugurated the project under public-private partnership. The electric bus will run from Tower to Sohrab Goth and the fare for one stop will be as low as Rs10. The project will begin with 10 bus stops. Sapphire Group's bus has a capacity of 37 seats.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, the provincial transport minister said that the electric bus would be run on a trial basis from Tower via MA Jinnah Road and Shahra-e –Pakistan to Sohrab Goth.

He said the fare will be Rs4 per kilometre and the public transport will run seat to seat, adding that the number of these buses will be increased on a monthly basis.

By the end of this year, Shah said, the number of these environment friendly vehicles will rise to 100. He said that progress has also been made on the Sindh government's own bus projects.

In Karachi, the PPP government has done a commendable job in every field, he maintained. "BRT projects will also complete soon. We are also going to trade 250 buses very soon."

Soon after the news started doing rounds on social media, the sci-tech minister took to Twitter to congratulate the Sindh government, specially Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah and his ministry, on their "remarkable step to add electric bus in Karachi Commuters system".

He said his ministry fully supports the Sindh government in this "futuristic approach" and expressed the hope that the Punjab and Kyber-Pakhtunkhwa governments will also take the same route as soon as possible.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 31/03/2021)

### **IGP seeks stakeholders' help to control prolonged traffic jams in city**

Taking notice of prolonged traffic jams in the city, Inspector General of Police, Sindh, Mushtaq Ahmed Mahar has asked the Sindh government to approach all stakeholders to chalk out a strategy to provide relief to motorists, it emerged on Wednesday.

The stakeholders' help has been sought as traffic blockades mainly occur due to plying of heavy commercial vehicles from Jinnah Bridge to Karachi Port and Keamari Oil Terminals, which cause congestion on three main adjoining roads where recently people were stuck for three days continuously, according to official sources and documents reviewed by Dawn.

Informed sources said that the IGP had recently written a letter to the Sindh chief secretary and additional chief secretary for home, drawing their attention towards the traffic jams.

It has been pointed out in the official communication that the "commercial traffic coming from all parts of Pakistan to Karachi Port and Keamari Oil Terminal (for loading/unloading of goods and oil) result in traffic jams."

*Writes a letter to draw attention of the Sindh chief secretary to the problem*

It has been stated that "the spillover effect of this traffic jam is the further traffic congestion and jamming on Mauripur Road, I.I. Chundrigar Road and Mai Kolachi Road."

This congestion and blocking of traffic on the roads "jeopardize the traffic management in district South during peak hours."

The letter revealed that this problem was occurring very frequently and the recent example was the jamming of traffic on March 13, 14 and 15.

“During daytime, the traffic chocking could not be normalised for the whole day, causing serious problems to the normal citizens moving on the roads.”

The provincial police chief contended that this “issue deserves attention from another angle i.e. if some incident/accident takes place within the premises of Oil Area of Karachi Port, the rescue apparatus needs open and clear roads approaching these installations for a quick response and rescue, which is impossible during traffic jams.”

Explaining the reasons behind the prolonged traffic jams, IGP Mahar said: “The whole problem emerges due to the fact most of the heavy commercial/loading vehicles coming from upcountry instead of going to Mauripur Truck Stand and Zulfikarabad Oil Terminal (ZOT) come straight to Karachi Port and Keamari Oil Terminal for loading/unloading.”

The IGP regretted that there was no mechanism of monitoring their arrival, reporting and further organised movement from Mauripur Truck Stand and ZOT to the port and Keamari Oil Terminal.

“This problem needs serious attention and immediate solution by involving all stakeholders, especially when the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the High Court of Sindh have issued very clear directions,” said the IGP.

He has suggested to the provincial government to call a meeting of all stakeholders to chalk out practicable standard operating procedures in the light of the courts’ order so that relief could be provided to commuters and other road users of Karachi. (By Newspaper’s Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 08/04/2021)

### **Sindh Cabinet okays Rs8bn plan to procure 250 electric buses for six cities**

The Sindh cabinet on Tuesday decided to take the issue of the acceptance of the results of the 2017 census to the provincial assembly and approved procurement of 250 diesel hybrid electric buses for intra-district operation.

The meeting that started at 10am and concluded at 5pm was chaired by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and attended by provincial ministers, advisers, Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah and others.

Other items on the agenda were devolution of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board to divisional level, withdrawal of the condition of producing Form VII to sell wheat to the food department and filing an appeal against a Sindh High Court decision under which regularisation of law officers and various others in grades 16 and 17 was declared illegal.

The chief minister told the cabinet that he had attended the meeting of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) through a video link on Monday in which Census-2017 was approved despite his dissenting vote.

*Sindh govt to challenge SHC decision to declare illegal over 1,400 appointments in grades 16, 17*

He added that he had told the prime minister that all the four provinces had serious reservations against the census and the exercise should be conducted afresh.

“The CCI since its inception has been taking consensus decisions, but this was the first decision which has been taken with a vote of dissent,” he told the cabinet and said that in such a situation he had to take up the matter in the Sindh Assembly.

The cabinet approved to take up the matter of the census in the assembly.

#### **Intra-district transport project**

Transport Minister Awais Qadir Shah said that his department had a plan to procure 250 diesel hybrid electric buses under the Sindh Intra-District Peoples Bus Service project.

He said that the buses would operate in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Larkana, Mirpurkhas and Shaheed Benazirabad, adding that the transport and mass transit department had hired a professional consultant and the project would cost Rs8 billion.

The cabinet approved the proposal and gave the go-ahead to the transport department to procure the buses.

The chief minister said that he would provide necessary funds to the department for the purpose and termed it good news for the people of the six districts.

#### **Wheat procurement**

Food Minister Hari Ram said that the food department had started procurement of wheat from April 1.

He said that more than 60 per cent of the crop had been harvested in the districts of lower Sindh.

He said that the policy guidelines were causing a delay in procurement. He proposed to the cabinet to waive the condition of producing agriculture pass book/Form VII, saying the waiver would attract the grower to get bardana from the food department procurement centres.

He said that the provincial government was offering an “attractive” price of Rs2,000 per 40kg and the growers were not only very happy but inclined to sell their produce to the government.

The cabinet approved the proposal and waived the condition of producing pass book or Form-VII for getting bardana.

#### **Draft bill to devolve solid waste body**

Local Government Minister Nasir Shah presented the draft Sindh Solid Waste Management Act 2021, which envisaged creation of a solid waste management board at each divisional headquarters.

Each board would be headed by the commissioner of the division concerned with the mayor of the metropolitan corporation as member of the board.

A managing director would run the function of the board.

The cabinet approved the proposal and referred the matter to the assembly.

Zakat and Ushr Minister Sohail Anwar Siyal told the cabinet that retired Justice Ghulam Sarwar Korie, who was appointed as chairman of the Sindh Zakat Council for a period of three years in Nov 2018, had resigned.

On his request, the cabinet approved the resignation and appointed retired Justice Mohammad Iqbal Mahar as chairman for the remaining period.

The cabinet also approved an amendment in the Zakat & Ushr Act 2011 under which a retired judge of the high court, or a retired civil servant in BS-20 or above, could be appointed as the chairman of the Zakat Council.

The livestock department told the cabinet that Sindh was maintaining 44.782 million head of animals and added that despite huge numbers of livestock, per animal production was very low as compared to other developing countries and that was mainly due to poor genetic potential.

The cabinet was told that 120 motorcycles were required for technical staff. The cabinet approved the proposal and sanctioned an amount of Rs238m for purchase of motorcycles and other equipment.

#### **Appeal against SHC verdict in regularisation case**

The chief minister told the cabinet that the SHC had declared the appointment of around 1,400 employees in grades 16 and 17 in many departments as illegal.

He said that these employees were appointed without referring them to the Sindh Public Service Commission in 2008.

The cabinet after thorough discussions and deliberations approved a proposal to file an appeal in the Supreme Court against the decision of the high court.

The chief minister told the cabinet that the sub-committee of the provincial cabinet on financial matters approved the proposal of the agriculture department for provision of Rs500m funds during the current financial year for repair and maintenance of watercourses damaged during last year’s heavy rains.

He said that he had released the amount of Rs500m.  
(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 14/04/2021)

### **Karachi wardens deployed at 87 spots for better traffic flow**

Over 600 city wardens of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation have been deployed at 87 spots, including shopping centres and public places, in the metropolis to assist the traffic police during Ramazan.

Of the said spots, 15 are in Central district, 12 in South district, 25 in East district and seven in Korangi.

The city wardens have been deployed on the directives of Karachi Administrator Laeeq Ahmed, who told The Express Tribune that the purpose of city wardens’ deployment was to ensure the smooth flow of traffic and assist with vehicle parking.

The month of Ramazan sees an increased flow of traffic in the evenings due to the taraweeh congregations at mosques, moreover as the month advances there is extreme rush near the festive occasion of Eid, “The warden have been directed to assist with traffic management, particularly outside shopping centres and mosques,” he said.

The wardens have been instructed to assist the traffic police with traffic management from 12pm to 8pm every day during Ramazan. Besides, the wardens are to remain deployed outside hospitals throughout the day and have also been tasked with ensuring compliance with coronavirus-related standard operating procedures.

Moreover, the wardens have been deployed at major sports where taraweeh prayers are being held so as to provide security to worshippers.

(By Newspaper’s Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 05, 16/04/2021)

### Gang of alleged bike lifters arrested

The Anti-Vehicle Lifting Cell (AVLC) of Karachi police on Tuesday claimed to have arrested seven people on charges of motorcycle theft and allegedly recovered seven stolen motorcycles from them.

According to a police statement, the suspects were habitual criminals and wanted to police in various cases of motorcycle lifting, the news release said.

The suspects were identified as Rana Niaz Foji, Ashiq Ali, Tahir, Danish, Ali Haider Abro, and Ali Anwar.

Among the suspects, police claimed that Ashiq Ali allegedly bought stolen motorcycles and sold them in Sujawal and other towns near Karachi without documents.

Accused Ali Haider Abro's father had also been arrested and jailed 14 times in motorcycle theft cases while accused Ali Haider was an expert of stealing motorcycles on daily basis and had been arrested for the third time by AVLC. He was a resident of Tahir Sakhro town of Sindh and committed most of the crimes in Karachi's Bin Qasim, Quaidabad, Landhi, Malir and Khokhrapar areas.

Accused Niaz Foji belonged to a big gang and had expertise in motorcycle theft.

Accused Ali Anwar was a habitual criminal and accomplice of accused Ali Haider Abro. The AVLC recovered motorcycles bearing registration numbers KGC-0789 stolen from limits of North Nazimabad Police Station (PS), KBF-5004 lifted from limits of Liaquatabad PS, KIG-1415 from Saddar PS, RNQ-286 from Saddar PS, KOD-9990 snatched from Shah Latif Town PS, KLF-1129 from Korangi Industrial Area PS, KKA-376 from Landhi PS.

Raids were being carried out to arrest other accomplices of the accused while further investigations were also underway.  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 05, 21/04/2021)

### Green Line BRT inches a step closer to completion

After years of back and forth, the city's first Bus Rapid Transit system, the Green Line BRT, finally appears to be inching past the red light of bureaucratic and operational delays. The project is expected to see significant progress in the coming few days, including the installation of pedestrian bridge escalators at various elevated sections.

The escalator at the Nagan Chowrangi section is slated to open for public in the coming week, while a hundred buses for the Green Line and Orange Line projects, are due for import in June. Following which, both projects are expected to begin operations in August of this year.

According to Sindh Infrastructure Development Company Limited (SIDCL) Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Bilal Memon, a total of 21 stations have been constructed for the Green Line road corridor. "Each station includes stairs and escalators along with pedestrian bridges, which have been constructed to facilitate the commuters. Work on installing control panels in the said escalators is however, currently underway. The escalator installed at Nagan Chowrangi will be made operational this week, and will remain open for 12 hours a day. Following which, gradually all other escalators will also be opened, which will make crossing roads a much safer experience for the people" he informed.

Speaking further, the CFO said that the federal government will import 80 buses for Green Line and 20 for the Orange Line BRT by June, all of which will be new and will run hybrid-diesel technology. Trials of the new buses, he said, will begin in July, while upon successful completion of the testing-phase, they will be made fully operational by August.

It is to be noted however, that the Green Line BRT Project, which extends from Surjani Town to Jama Cloth Market is being constructed under the supervision of the federal government. On the other hand, the Orange Line BRT, which extends from Orangi Town Office to Board Office Chowrangi, is a project of the Sindh government.

Per details, civil work for the Green Line Project's Phase I in Gurumandir stands completed as of now, while electrical and mechanical work is in its final stages. However, part of Phase I at Numaish Chowrangi is still under construction. The work for overhead road above Numaish Chowrangi was completed a few months ago and it has been opened for traffic. All remaining work in the first phase is expected to be completed in a span of next three months.

Speaking further, Memon informed that the federal government has also started construction work along MA Jinnah Road, which includes Phase-II of the Green Line project, extending from Taj Medical Complex to Jama Cloth. "Since this is one of the city's oldest and busiest thoroughfares, the project management also has to consider a lot of traffic, heritage and legal concerns which may arise with the construction of the project. Thus this phase of the project will take some time and is expected to be completed by next year," he told The Express Tribune.

(By Syed Ashraf Ali The Express Tribune, 05, 25/04/2021)

### Murad orders urgent ban on intercity transport

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Thursday directed divisional administration to ensure enforcement of complete ban on intercity transport from Friday, adding that this ban would also apply to transport coming from other provinces.

"If any transport manages to enter any district it would not be allowed to go back to its original destination as long as the ban is enforced," he further ordered.

The chief minister took this decision while presiding over a Coronavirus Task Force meeting here at CM House.

The meeting was attended by relevant ministers, government officials and representatives of Corps-5, Rangers and the WHO.

At the outset of the meeting the decisions taken in the last task force meeting held on April 26 were reviewed.

The chief minister was told that as per decision micro or complete lockdown had been enforced in the areas where positivity of Covid-19 cases was more than 15 per cent.

Currently, micro-lockdown had been enforced in Karachi East and South and Hyderabad.

The CM was told that essential departments were only working on urgent and important matters.

The meeting participants were informed that some private offices were defying government instructions.

At this the CM ordered the commissioner of Karachi to seal such offices without delay.

The meeting was told that intercity transport was being closed from Friday, April 30, and intra-city transport would be allowed with SOPs.

The chief minister disclosed that he had spoken with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister about the decision of provincial task force regarding ban on inter-city passenger bus services and would talk to other chief ministers.

The CM was told that hospitals had stopped elective surgeries and OPDs were functioning as per decision of the task force.

The meeting was told that complete ban on indoor and outdoor dining in restaurants had been enforced, except takeaway and home delivery services.

#### **Covid positivity ratio**

Health Minister Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho told the meeting that during last seven days, 29,981 tests were conducted in Karachi against which 3,148 cases were detected constituting 10.50pc positivity rate.

She said in Hyderabad 7,919 tests were conducted against which 1,246 cases were diagnosed that came to 15.73pc positive ratio. In Sukkur, 4,152 tests were conducted which detected 316 cases that constituted 7.61pc ratio.

The health minister said that in other districts of the province 58,554 tests were conducted which detected 1,847 cases.

#### **Bed occupancy**

The meeting was informed that there were 666 ICU beds with ventilators, of them 50 were occupied and 454 were vacant.

There are 1,872 ICU beds with oxygen facility, out them 343 are occupied and 1,529 are vacant.

There are also 1,374 low-flow beds, of them only 25 are occupied and 1,349 are vacant.

The commissioner told the chief minister that 28 vaccination centres were set up in Karachi, including five in Central, six in East, four Korangi, three Malir, four South and six West.

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 30/04/2021)

### **Traffic police introduces bicycle squad**

Traffic Police Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Iqbal Dara inaugurated the traffic police bicycle squad in Saddar on Friday. The squad has been introduced to cope with traffic congestion and other issues obstructing the flow of traffic in the trade hub of the metropolis. Dara said while addressing the inauguration ceremony that introducing the bicycle squad of traffic cops was direly needed because reaching the hotspots was impossible for traffic police officials during the traffic jams in Saddar.

He claimed that traffic police officials would be able to pass between the cars queued up on the roads while riding bicycles. According to Dara, the bicycle squad, equipped with walkie-talkies and other accessories, will patrol from Fawara Chowk to Mobile Market and from the Bambino traffic signal to Atrium Mall, and will be able to lift vehicles parked in areas restricted for parking or double parking. DIG Dara also inaugurated a mobile toilet set up in a truck and mobile traffic section on the occasion. He said that the truck would move across the city and could be called at the required spot to facilitate traffic police officials.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter 04, 01/05/2021)

### **Week-long ban on passenger transport services from tomorrow**

The Sindh government on Friday announced a ban on all kinds of public transport across the province from Sunday (tomorrow) for one week putting restriction on movement of all such vehicles even during Eid holidays.



The move indicates an almost lockdown-like situation for at least seven days when businesses would also remain closed under the recently defined measures by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) to contain the spread of coronavirus.

The fresh announcement came from the Sindh transport and mass transit department, which said that the move was made following directives from higher authorities who decided to impose further restrictions on the advice of health experts amid growing number of Covid-29 cases.

However, the provincial government allowed a limited movement of rickshaws, taxis, private vehicles and ride-hailing services for short distance travelling.

“The ban shall be effective for all kind of public transport vis-à-vis within city, intercity and interprovincial with effect from May 9 up to the evening of May 16, 2021,” said a notification.

*Private vehicles, rickshaws, taxis and ride-hailing services are allowed with half seating capacity*

#### **Exemptions for ‘short distance travel’**

Giving exception to certain kind of vehicles, the same notification added that “private vehicles with half seating capacity, taxis, cabs, rickshaws for essential short distance travels meant for medical care and purchasing of essential items with 50 per cent occupancy of seats and [following of] SOPs [standard operating procedures]”.

The provincial government announced the new set of restrictions as part of the national “Stay Home - Stay Safe” drive during the Eid holidays amid the third wave of coronavirus.

It also issued the list of measures being actively implemented during the Eid holidays including closure of all parks, beaches, picnic points and recreational activities spots for at least a week.

“Whereas, considering the usual festive activities traditionally undertaken on the eve of Eidul Fitr it is apprehended that such activities related to Eid are very likely to contribute to the spread of disease and accordingly it was decided at the National Command Operation Centre (NCOC) to take further measures to reduce mobility during forthcoming Eidul Fitr and the guidelines ‘stay home- stay safe’ as discussed at NCOC are adopted for this purpose,” said a home department notification issued on Friday.

“The same measures were also discussed and decided during the Covid-19 task force meeting dated 6th May, 2021 chaired by the chief minister, Sindh keeping in view the disease spread in the country in general and the province of Sindh in particular,” it added.

#### **No ban on goods transport, charities**

The new measures, however, exempted the transportation of goods from the ban. Markets, businesses and shops would remain closed during the next week from tomorrow except essential services.

In its notification, the home department identified the areas marked as essential services and allowed them to continue their operation while following defined rules.

These establishments include hospitals and medical clinic, stand-alone pharmacies, medical centres, vaccination centres, utility services offices, staff, essential municipal services, petrol pumps, e-commerce, home delivery, postal and courier services with proper trained, uniformed and identity carrying delivery persons duly trained and following SOPs.

Similarly, welfare organisations like Edhi, Chippa, Al-Khidmat duly registered and working in coordination with district administration and law enforcement agencies for food and relief distribution are also allowed to run their operation during the restrictions.

Staff of call centres, customer support centres for essential services, technical staff of cellular companies, internet service providers, media workers, government essential services, offices and staff and their field operations including port operations, customs, postal and railways have also been allowed movement during the restriction period.

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 08/05/2021)

### **PA brings electric buses under tax ambit**

The Sindh Assembly passed a law on Friday legalising the use of electric buses in the province.

One such bus has already been operational on Karachi’s roads.

Moving the motor vehicle taxation amendment bill, Sindh Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mukesh Kumar Chawla, who also happens to be the excise and taxation minister, said that after the passage of the law, electric buses could be registered for taxation in the province.

“Sindh is the first province which has launched this [electric buses] project and is going to register the buses,” said Chawla. The provincial transport department had earlier, on March 30, 2020, inaugurated a project for electric buses under the public-private partnership model.

The first electric bus hit the roads the next day and a fleet of 100 such buses was announced in collaboration with the Sapphire Group.

The minimum fare for the buses has been fixed at Rs10 and the buses are to have 10 designated stops running between Sohrab Goth and Merewether Clock Tower and back. The buses, each with 37 seats, are to run this route six times a day.

#### **On funds and delays**

Meanwhile, as the sessions devoted to budget expenditures for the fiscal year 2021 drew to a close Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah held the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-led federal government responsible for the slow pace of development projects in the province.

“Sindh is not given a due share from the divisible pool that is why many schemes are in doldrums and development work is delayed in the province,” he said, winding up the debate on the pre-budget session. “In the last ten months, Sindh government was supposed to get Rs624 billion, but only Rs544 billion has so far been released, which is a shortfall of Rs90 billion in the respective time,” he remarked.

Regretting the meager amount allocated for the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for Sindh, he said, “Only Rs8.3 billion has been allocated for Sindh, which generates a major chunk of tax revenue for the entire country “Does Sindh not fall in Pakistan? If so, then why such a minimal amount is kept for its development schemes,” he asked.

He was of the view that despite tall claims, the Centre has not earmarked funds for Karachi except for the construction of its drains. The Sindh government is working with the federal government for the construction of stormwater drains but other schemes are funded by the provincial government alone, he said. Shah maintained that he had written four to five letters to the prime minister for the completion of schemes but it had all been to no avail. Responding to the opposition members speeches about the incompetency of Sindh Public Services Commission, CM remarked “for the first time in history of Sindh, a Hindu girl has qualified the competitive exams for DSP in police along with many from the vibrant youth of Sindh who appeared and qualified the exam in various disciplines.”

With regards to schemes in the provincial development programme, Shah said that his government hopes to finish 572 schemes in by the end of the current fiscal year.

Earlier, Opposition Leader Haleem Adil Shaikh had censured the Pakistan Peoples Party-led Sindh government over its failures to deliver in the province despite being in governance for over a decade.

According to the opposition leader, there are irregularities worth Rs267 billion in the accounts of the Sindh government and the most suspicious account is that of the irrigation department, which has bungled huge amounts in the name of development.

He further contended that the treasury benches do not listen to the members on the other side of the aisle. The session was later adjourned indefinitely.

(By Hafeez Tunio The Express Tribune, 04, 08/05/2021)

### **Delay in making Zulfikarabad oil terminal operational invites SC's wrath**

The Supreme Court on Monday expressed resentment with the provincial and local authorities for delay in making the Zulfikarabad oil terminal operational and directed the Sindh chief secretary to make it fully functional.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Gulzar Ahmed also asked all stakeholders including Karachi commissioner and administrator and project director of the oil terminal to attend a meeting with the chief secretary on May 18 (today).

The bench, also comprising Justice Maqbool Baqar and Justice Sajjad Ali Shah, directed the chief secretary to provide 50 acres to the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation for parking of Balochistan oil tankers since the land earlier given for this purpose seemed to be disputed.

When the bench took up the matter for hearing, it was informed that the Zulfikarabad oil terminal (ZOT) had been established on 200 acres of land and there was a parking facility of around 1,300 oil tankers, but the oil marketing companies (OMCs) had yet to complete their facility of petroleum products delivery from the terminal.

#### *CJP Gulzar Ahmed performs groundbreaking of new SC registry building in Karachi*

The lawyer for OMCs submitted that June 2021 was the timeline for all the OMCs to start delivery of oil from the ZOT so that there was no need for oil tankers to enter the roads of provincial metropolis.

The bench directed him to ensure that the OMCs must meet the timeline for delivery of oil at the terminal.

The bench was further informed that there were also issue of shops established on the premises of ZOT as 146 persons had deposited development charges of Rs34,000 for each shop and around 120 structures of shops had been erected while there was a provision of 1,494 shops and the same would be rented out by the KMC.

However, it was told that the construction work on shops had been stopped because of some irritants between the shop owners association and the project director ZOT; besides there were some other issues about parking of tankers of edible oil, water and trucks.

At this, the chief justice came down hard on the provincial and local administration and said that despite several orders and lapse of many years, the ZOT could not be made functional and warned that they were going to summon the chief minister.

However, the advocate general Sindh requested the bench to summon the chief secretary instead of the CM.

Subsequently, Chief Secretary Mumtaz Ali Shah appeared in court and submitted that the provincial government had provided funds to the KMC, but there were some issues of oil tanker owners.

He requested for two weeks to ensure that all matters about ZOT were discussed with all the stakeholders and addressed in order to make the terminal fully functional.

The bench was informed that the first meeting in this regard was to be held on Tuesday (today) and it directed all the stakeholders to attend it.

The court also asked the chief secretary to ensure that the ZOT become fully functional and the oil tankers were not allowed to park outside the terminal and they were not permitted to enter the city's roads once the terminal was made functional.

The bench said that since 50 acres handed over to the KMC by the provincial government for parking of oil tankers of Balochistan seemed to be disputed land, the chief secretary must ensure that the apex court's order issued in June 2018 be fully implemented regarding 50 acres of land for parking of oil tankers.

This matter was pending before the apex court since 2007 as initially a resident of Shireen Jinnah Colony, a neighbourhood in Clifton, had sent a letter to the then CJP to order the shifting of the oil tankers from the residential area and later several identical applications were filed.

The apex court, during the past several years, had time and again directed the authorities and the oil tanker owners and operators to remove their vehicles immediately from Shireen Jinnah Colony and other areas of the city and shift to the terminal.

#### **New registry building of SC**

Later in the day, CJP Gulzar Ahmed laid the foundation stone of the proposed new Supreme Court Registry building at Pakistan Secretariat.

The project of the proposed two-storey building in the provincial capital is likely to be completed in three years.

It may be recalled that then CJP Main Saqib Nisar had also laid the foundation stone of the proposed building in December 2018, but the construction work could not be started till date.

A chief engineer of the federal public works department had said that 6.89 acres had been acquired for the proposed building at the Pakistan Secretariat after demolishing a number of barracks, which had housed customs courts, banking courts and federal services tribunals.

The two-storey building with a basement will have six courtrooms, judges' chambers, conference rooms and spaces for the Supreme Court Bar Association, public and a mosque, he said and added that the basement will have the parking capacity of over 500 vehicles. (By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 18/05/2021)

#### **Four oil tankers, trailer destroyed in fire**

A huge fire destroyed four oil tankers and a trailer off Superhighway (M-9) in Gadap City on Wednesday, said officials.

The police said no one was hurt in the fire.

They added that an oil tanker was parked behind a restaurant near Kathor when it caught fire.

The fire spread rapidly which also engulfed a trailer truck carrying goods and two other parked oil tank trucks standing there.

Fire engines of FWO Bahria Town Karachi and KMC fire brigade controlled the fire after five hours of hectic efforts.

The fire brigade officer said that four heavy vehicles were completely destroyed in the fire. One shop was also damaged.

The cause of the fire and estimation of loss could not be made immediately. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 14, 20/05/2021)

#### **'Zulfikarabad oil terminal made functional'**

The city administrator on Wednesday said the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation had made Zulfikarabad Oil Tankers Terminal functional.

"The situation will improve as soon as the transfer of tankers starts in the light of the orders of the Supreme Court. Steps are also being taken for tree plantation, setting up a fire station at the terminal and surrounding areas," said Laeeq Ahmed while addressing a meeting of KMC officials.

The administrator directed the engineering department to make spaces available in KMC markets.

During the meeting, the status of the ongoing case in the Supreme Court regarding Zulfikarabad oil terminal was discussed. Mr Ahmed said that the directives of the SC would be implemented to keep the Zulfikarabad terminal continuously operational.

He said the relocation of oil tankers from different parts of the city to the terminal would improve traffic flow on roads. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 14, 27/05/2021)

### Green Line deadlines

From July-August to August-September, the inauguration deadline for Karachi's Green Line bus rapid transit system has been delayed further, as confirmed by federal minister for planning Asad Umar. A slight delay though it is, it does show that the PTI-led federal government — which is now responsible for completing the much-delayed transport project — is only giving a tentative deadline and is still not certain about a definite launch date. The work on the project — conceived by the previous, PML-N government — had started in February 2016 and was scheduled to finish before the general election in July 2018.

However, it was not to be. The project remained stalled for one reason or the other, including political ones. The incumbent PTI government too has given so many deadlines, but has yet to perform the ribbon-cutting on the Rs24 billion federal-funded project. And, five years on, Karachiites are still waiting to see the city's first metro bus hit the road. All this while, the citizens suffered a great deal due to the dug-up roads along the 26km stretch of the bus route making the commute difficult and lengthy; loss of business in consequence of the construction work; and a smoke- and dust-filled atmosphere, giving rise to respiratory ailments.

It is pertinent to mention here that on completion, Green Line will only cover one stretch of the city between North Karachi and Merewether Tower. The Green Line is just one component of 'Karachi Breeze' — a project that comprises four more bus lines and promises a comprehensive transport solution in the city. While the incumbents must ensure that the promised August-September deadline on Green Line turns out to be a final one, it must also divert attention and financial resources towards completing 'Karachi Breeze'.

That a metropolitan city like Karachi, which is the revenue engine of the country, is devoid of a mass transit system speaks of the sheer apathy of the authorities which can, in no way, be justified. (By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 04/06/2021)

### Two NGOs join forces to fix Karachi's potholed roads

With the exception of only a few roads that can be counted on the fingertips, no track in the city is a smooth and safe drive or ride. What to say of vehicles, they are not even safe for pedestrians.

So it was a sight for sore eyes when a couple of non-governmental organisations stepped in to do what the government has been hopeless at. First they replaced the missing manhole covers while pointing out that it was something which needed fixing, now they are also fixing dangerous potholes.

For the past three years, activist and politician Alamgir Khan of the #FixIt Pakistan campaign has been pointing out the government's failure in covering manholes while doing the work himself. And for some six months now, he and his team of volunteers have turned their attention to the city's bad roads, especially the potholes in them.

"These potholes don't just produce bumpy rides. They are dangerous, deadly and in need of urgent attention," said Khan while speaking to *Dawn*.

"So we are not beautifying the city by repairing roads. We are saving lives," he said.

"We use a kind of cold mixing formula for the patchwork that we are doing. Mind you, we are not doing complete road carpeting. We are repairing the roads through 4x4 or 5x5 patches where needed," he said.

*'We are not beautifying the city by repairing roads; we are saving lives'*

"#FixIt is doing welfare work while also protesting. Our volunteers are well-educated youth doing basic work where the government bailed out while pointing out the government's shortcoming," he said.

#### Joining forces

Khan also said that this time for fixing the roads they are collaborating with Saylani Welfare Trust. "We have joined forces with Saylani Welfare this time. Both of us are complementing each other with our work. Both of us have our workers. Saylani has brought in the vehicles for carrying the raw material. And we have our machinery and technical assistance, not to mention the experience of three years. There are still many manholes, too, that we are covering while patching up roads," he said.

Speaking to *Dawn* from Saylani, one of its executive board committee members, Amjad Chamdia, said that having lived all his life in Karachi he has grown up with potholes in roads and open manholes.

"It was after we heard of a man losing his life by falling into a gaping gutter that we decided to take matters into our own hands. The man had left behind a family, a widow and three young children. It is devastating for a family to lose its breadwinner.

“Maulana Bashir Ahmed Farooqui turned the board’s attention to the matter following which we selected a team that could help in replacing manhole covers as well as do road repairs and carpeting patchwork,” he said.

“The manhole covers are so heavy that no thief or addict would have the strength to run away with them. He won’t even be able to lift it. They are not like your regular city government manhole covers that crack or break or dent even if a heavy vehicle such as a truck passes over it,” he said.

Asked which part of the city they are working in currently, Chamdia explained that there is no particular city area. “We act on complaints. Once we receive a complaint, we dispatch our survey team there. Then if the place really seems life-threatening, capable of causing accidents, we get the material and machinery for the repair work there to do the needful,” he said.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 06/06/2021)

### Likely rise in CNG price

CNG causes far less air and other kinds of environmental pollution than petrol and LPG and the former is cheaper than the latter two fuels. It is in view of these advantages that CNG was adopted as a fuel for vehicles in Pakistan in the early twenty-first century. Many vehicles in Pakistan and other countries were converted to CNG and it gave results in terms of cutting pollution because of its being an eco-friendly fuel.

However, Pakistan has been facing a gas shortage for the past several years due to declining local production of the commodity, so the authorities resorted to gas rationing in order to tide over the problem. Then the government began to import the relatively expensive liquefied natural gas (LNG), which the filling stations are using as CNG. This has come both as a boon and a bane. While it helped get over the increasing scarcity of gas, it also made the commodity expensive. Now the All Pakistan CNG Association claims that as a result of the levy of new taxes on LNG in the Punjab budget, the price of CNG would rise by Rs6-9 per kg in the province, and this might lead to the closure of many CNG filling stations, rendering thousands of workers jobless.

The association complains that nearly all sectors have been given relief in the provincial budget, but ironically only the CNG sector has been given a raw deal. It says that a lower petroleum levy is encouraging the use of petrol and diesel — the pollution-causing fuels — and another increase in CNG price would be disastrous. The association claims that CNG is the only sector which is purchasing LNG without any subsidy and discount so the CNG sector’s shutdown could jeopardise the supplies of LNG worth a huge amount of money. It is feared that the lower usage of CNG in transportation would push up the fares. Moreover, it would add to environmental pollution and increase the petroleum import bill.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 20/06/2021)

### Spanish firm seeks permission to visit Green Line project site, look into ‘wrongdoings’

The multi-billion rupee Green Line bus project, which was meant to address the decades-long transport problems of Karachiites, is facing another controversy as this time a European company that had offered technological support and services for the project has sought a nod from the authorities to allow its team to visit the site “before inauguration” since it has come to know about installation of substandard equipment and materials by a local contractor under its name.

The Green Line project is being undertaken by the federal government through the Sindh Infrastructure Development Company Limited (SIDCL).

The Spain-based GRUPSA company, which is considered to be one of the pioneers in automatic equipment supplies around the world and already waiting for a response from anti-graft bodies in Pakistan over its complaint against a “fraud” in its name by one of the local contractors, now wants its team of experts in Karachi to visit the project site where its “global credibility is at stake”.

The firm is keenly waiting for a reply from the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) as well as from the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) regarding its complaint that it had provided platform screen doors (PSDs) for the Green Line project for a price of over a half million euros through a Pakistani contractor more than two years ago, but it learnt that its reputation was at stake as the government of Pakistan was being charged more than 2.5 million euros for the services in its name through forged documents.

The disclosure led the company to dig more and it came to know through different sources about another practice which could badly affect its reputation across the world.

In a statement, the Spanish company refers to different images it has found that shows low-standard equipment installed along the route of the Green Line project, which were never supplied by GRUPSA but the local contractor was using its name for selling the poor quality materials.

“We are writing for KIDCL [Karachi Infrastructure Development Company Limited] to advise a suitable time at the earliest so GRUPSA can visit Karachi before inauguration and get technical review with consultant and client officials at site to address the low standard and local material installed by MGH under GRUPSA name that is not only damaging our image but also giving huge loss to our credibility globally,” said the statement.

### Agreement with local firm not renewed

Only a few weeks ago, the Spanish company lodged a written complaint with the cyber wing of the FIA after writing the same to NAB and the embassy of Pakistan in Madrid stating: “M/S MGH [Pakistani contractor] has prepared a false/forged/fabricated

document/invoice of M/S GRUPSA and has claimed payment of Euro 2,732,232.76 [more than two million Euros] as total amount of manufacturer invoice from Karachi Infrastructure Development Company Limited [now transformed as SIDCL] on account of import of Automatic Platform Screen Doors from Spain.”

“As now [the issue of] BRT green line forge document and product installed images with low standard profiles and substandard fixing have been in the media, so it is pertinent to clarify that GRUPSA has no nexus with this fraud,” said the company statement.

“We would like to say to government of Pakistan that our working philosophy is always to assist our customers from the first steps of the project through to commissioning if necessary. We are therefore at your disposal for any technical consultation and any technical or design support, either by video call or on-site visit at your premises in Karachi. So we will be pleased to provide you with any additional information you may need from us,” it added.

The company, which has a history of doing business in Pakistan supplying technological support to different projects and providing the same services in Multan and Islamabad metro bus projects, also warns its partners and clients in the country to be cautious in the future.

“We would like to inform that MGH agreement is not renewed further,” it said. “We had also intimated MGH not to act as GRUPSA distributor anymore until the issue is resolved. We are also going to inform local clients in Pakistan to take their actions as per PPRA rules to watch MGH activities. We stand not responsible for MGH activities until MGH name does not get cleared from the investigating authorities.”

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 28/06/2021)

### **Green Line contractor says action taken against ‘wrongdoer’**

A Pakistani company — which is accused by a European firm offering its technological support and services for the Green Line bus project of forgery and fabrication of its invoices — has claimed that it has already taken action against the “person involved” while vowing to carry out its contractual obligations and fulfil its commitments in the public transport project.

The Green Line service seems to be surrounded by a financial controversy when a Spain-based company approached the NAB, FIA and the Pakistani embassy with a complaint that one of the Pakistani contractors had fraudulently charged billions of rupees from the national exchequer in its name, damaging its professional standing.

The complaint came from Spain’s GRUPSA against Pakistan’s MGH Engineering claiming that the company had provided platform screen doors (PSDs) for the Green Line project against over a half million euro.

The company learnt that its reputation was at stake as the government of Pakistan was being charged more than two and a half million euro for the services in the name of the Spanish company.

Only last week, GRUPSA also issued a statement seeking a nod from the authorities to allow its team to visit the site “before inauguration” since it came to know about installation of substandard equipment and materials by a local contractor under its name.

While waiting for the response from the NAB and FIA on its complaint, the company said it came to know through different sources about another practice which could badly affect its reputation across the world.

In the statement, the Spanish company referred to different images it had found that show low-standard equipment installed along the route of the Green Line project, which were never supplied by GRUPSA but the local contractor was using its name for selling the poor quality materials.

In a fresh development, this time the Pakistani company came up with its side of the story.

It said that it had already taken action when it learnt about the complaint from the Spanish company.

“M/S MGH further clarifies that the claim which forms the basis of the news being circulated was engineered without knowledge of MGH and its management and on coming to know of the fact, the claim was immediately withdrawn and the person involved in the said action has also been penalised,” said the Pakistani company’s statement without sharing details of its action and identity of the “person involved”.

No money was received by MGH under the claim aforementioned and which forms the basis of the ‘unfortunate’ media campaign, nor any loss has been caused to the national exchequer, the statement said.

“On the contrary, MGH, as a gesture of goodwill has foregone other substantial valid and legal claims. Appropriate legal action has also been initiated against concerned person before the court of law.”

(By Newspaper’s Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 30/06/2021)