

NEWSCLIPPINGS

JANUARY TO JUNE 2019

TRANSPORT



Urban Resource Centre

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Edhi Foundation report records highest number of road accidents in 2018

A report released by the Edhi Foundation reveals that 2018 was the worst year in terms of road accidents. Up to 797 people were killed while 16,980 people were injured – of these 60% in motorcycle accidents.

According to the statistics, around 460 people died from wounds caused by bullets or sharp objects while 915 injured were under treatment. The report suggests that firing incidents had increased in 2018 as compared to the last three years.

Edhi Foundation volunteers shifted 71 bodies of victims of violent attacks, from different parts of the city to hospitals.

Rescue 1122 saves 1.09 million lives in 2018

Meanwhile, 45 people reportedly died while 134 were injured in explosions caused by bomb blasts, cylinders and hand grenades.

The report also states that 1,260 unclaimed bodies were buried in Edhi Graveyard Mowach Goth in 2018 while biometrically-verified 305 bodies and 170 other bodies were handed over to the families after identifications.

According to the report, Edhi volunteers also shifted 37 dead bodies of people who died in train accidents, 93 who drowned, 51 people who died of burns and 28 who died by electrocution.

Around 578 people, including women and children, sustained injuries in violent attacks by gunfire or sharp objects.

The Edhi Foundation also shifted 481,980 patients and bodies from home to hospital and vice versa on discounted fares through 410 Edhi Ambulances. Edhi Volunteers shifted bodies and injured people in 2,190 emergency cases without charging them.

These cases included firing, road mishaps and knife attacks.

Up to 18 injured people have been shifted from Quetta, Sukkur, Raheem Yar Khan and Bahawalpur by the Edhi Air Ambulance Service which started in October last year. Around 819 mentally and physically disabled people found on streets were admitted to the Edhi Home. Out of them, 710 people were later handed over to their families later.

Fog, speeding claim 11 lives in DG Khan

It was in addition to 610 women who were also admitted to the Edhi Home and out of them, 310 were handed over to their families after fulfilling the legal formalities.

Besides, 920 missing children were found by the Edhi Foundation, who were lodged in the Edhi Child Home in Korangi, Edhi Child Home and Edhi Village.

Meanwhile, 6,570 patients were provided different items on discounted rates by centres of Edhi Foundation that included wheelchairs, crutches, walkers and oxygen cylinders. In addition to this, more than 300,000 people have been fed in langar (free food) throughout the year.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 03/01/2019)

Procurement of Green Line buses was PM's pledge, claims CM

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that although the Constitution gives a CM right to allot lands, but he had not allotted "even one inch to anybody".



minister'

The chief minister said this while talking to the media at the inauguration of a three-day Sixth Sartyoon Sang Crafts exhibition organised by the Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO) in collaboration with the Sindh government on Friday.

Responding to a question, he said ever since he had taken over as the chief executive of the province in 2016 he did not allot land to any person or organisation.

'I have not allotted even an inch of land to anyone since taking over charge of chief

He said he did not receive any notice from the National Accountability Bureau for his appearance on Friday. "I don't know how media aired this news," he said.

When asked about the report of a joint investigation team (JIT), he said that he would not discuss the JIT report because the Supreme Court had forbidden discussion on it in the media. Otherwise, he said, he had credible material to respond to each and every allegation against him.

To another question, the chief minister said that Prime Minister Imran Khan had promised to provide buses for the Green Line project during his visit to Karachi where he had also presided over a meeting on development projects.

"The minutes of the meeting are available and anybody can read them," he said, adding that otherwise the provincial government was ready to procure buses for the project.

He added that the Sindh governor might not have read the minutes of the prime minister's meeting. "I am surprised that after three months of the prime minister's meeting the Sindh governor says that the provincial government has to procure buses," he said.

Talking about relationship between the federal and the provincial governments, the chief minister said: "The Constitution has determined the working perimeters between the Centre and provinces and if both, will work within their constitutional limits there will be no problem."

The functions of the governor were also very clear in the Constitution, he said, adding: "He [governor] knows it very well."

He recalled that whenever prime minister visited Karachi he had received him and attended the meetings in which he was invited. "We are political people and would never disgrace the highest constitutional offices," he said.

Mr Shah deplored that the media was not focusing the core issue of poor revenue collection by the federal government. "This is an important and glaring issue that the federal government has failed to achieve its revenue recovery targets," he said.

He said that the collection by the Federal Board of Revenue had shown only two per cent growth while the Sindh Revenue Board's collection had shown 18pc growth.

"We are in a better position because we are focusing on our governance, performance and service to the people while they [federal government] are engaged in unproductive work and futile exercise of giving exaggerated political statements," he said.

To another question, he said that he had respect for the position of the governor and the governor was under oath to work in consultation with the chief minister and his cabinet.

Earlier inaugurating the exhibition, he said the objective of the exhibition in the city was to provide market linkages to rural women and artisans so that they could display and sell their products directly.

He appreciated the SRSO for its efforts for poverty reduction particularly of poor womenfolk and said that handicrafts and artefact help create harmony among different cultures and added such platforms help indigenous artisans to market their products.
(By Habib Khan Ghorri Dawn, 16, 05/01/2019)

Governor censures Sindh govt over delay in starting Green Line

Sindh Governor Imran Ismail said on Friday that the Pakistan Peoples Party-led Sindh government was supposed to bring buses for the Green Line bus rapid transit project, but so far it had failed to do so.



Talking to reporters at the Pakistan Lifestyle and Furniture Expo exhibition, he said that the share of the federal government in the Green Line project was 80 per cent and the remaining 20pc was the responsibility of Sindh government.

"Till date, they [Sindh govt] have not brought buses for the project and I am going to write them that they should hand it over to us if they are not interested; the federal government will bring buses and make the project operational for the people of Karachi," said the governor.

Transport minister says the federal government is just playing politics on the issue

He said that there was no master plan for Karachi and a city without such an important document certainly faced serious issues.

He said that the Sindh government was suggested to have a time-frame regarding implementation of Karachi development projects, a third-party audit, but it did not respond to the proposal.

In reply to another question, Governor Ismail said that he would have no objection if the Pakistan Peoples Party-led Sindh government wanted to display its flag on the city's development projects.

The governor said that Prime Minister Imran Khan was taking special interest in development of Karachi and Sindh and recently he held a meeting to review the projects being undertaken by the Karachi Infrastructure Development Company Limited (KIDCL).

"The jurisdiction of the KIDCL has been extended to all over Sindh and [it would] take up new projects worth around Rs50 billion," he added.

An APP report quoted the governor as telling a private TV channel on Friday that the projects included desalination plants, reinforcement of Northern Bypass, removal of debris, water and sewerage system, gray water for industrial sectors, etc.

"We have been facing hurdles with the Sindh government being run by the PPP, but we are trying to go with them for the completion of the public welfare projects," he said, adding that the Green Line would be operational within the next four to six month.

In reply to a question, the governor said that the Karachi mayor had demanded Rs200 million from the provincial government to lift debris generated in the aftermath of the anti-encroachment drive. However, he said the mayor did not get the funds.

About Orange Line train project for Karachi, he said talks would be held with the World Bank for funds.

Transport minister

Sindh Transport Minister Awais Qadir Shah on Friday said the Green Line project belonged to the federal government and had it been spearheaded by the provincial government, buses would have already been running on roads.

"This [Green Line] is the federal government's project; else everyone would have seen its completion in time," he told reporters at his office.

Mr Shah urged Islamabad to get the Green Line project completed as soon as possible and hand it over to the Sindh government for its operation as it was part of a deal that provided that the provincial authorities would control its bus service and computer system. The minister said the Sindh government had written several letters to the Centre asking that when would the project be handed over to it.

"The federal government is just playing politics; as a matter of fact, it does not want to do anything. Here, the Sindh government is ready [to run the project] while on the other hand, the federation is making excuses."

He said it took time to procure new buses. The federal government had issued tenders and released funds, he added.

He hoped that the prime minister would not take "yet another U-turn" and make sure that the project was started and provide relief to the people of Karachi.

(By Dawn Report Dawn, 15, 05/01/2019)

Quick-thinking residents rescue 15 children from burning van in Karachi

A Suzuki Hi-roof transporting 15 children to school caught fire at around 8am on Saturday, apparently due to a short circuit, near the Qatar Hospital in Orangi Town. All 15 students survived with minor burns courtesy of the quick thinking of people present in the vicinity, as they launched an ad-hoc rescue operation to take the children out of the burning vehicle.

The van itself burned to ashes despite the rescuers' best efforts. Five of the more severely injured children were taken to the Dr Ruth Pfao Civil Hospital's Burns Ward, where they were treated for superficial burns that covered 12 to 13 per cent of their bodies. The children were sent home after treatment.

The remaining ten students were taken to Qatar Hospital for minor burns and smoke related injuries. They too were discharged shortly after being admitted.

Short-circuit

The day started off as routine for the students and the van driver alike when suddenly the van stopped working. The vehicle was pushed off the road and the driver tinkered with the engine's wiring. It was when he tried to restart the car that the wires short-circuited and the van caught fire. The driver managed to jump of the vehicle unhurt, while the residents helped the children.

The latter were immediately taken to the nearby Qatar Hospital on motorcycles. Back at the scene, more residents gathered to try to put out the fire with water and sand. However, flames quickly engulfed the van and it burned to ashes.

Eyewitnesses and the victim's parents told The Express Tribune that the children were residents of different parts of Orangi Town and were students of Afnan School near Kati Pahari.

One of the parents, Azeemuddin, told The Express Tribune that he had also suffered burns on his right arm while attempting to rescue the children, as he had just dropped off his daughter to the van when it caught fire. "It was a miracle that the children were rescued just after the van caught fire," he said.

Driver surrenders

Later in the day, the van driver, Muhammad Rasheed, surrendered himself to the police.

Rasheed told The Express Tribune that he had been transporting students to and from school for the last six years. As was the norm, he was on his morning round on Saturday when his vehicle stopped working near the Qatar Hospital. That is where the van caught fire.

In response to a question, the van driver told The Express Tribune that both LPG and CNG cylinders were installed in the vehicle. The LPG cylinder was installed in the front, under the passenger seat while the CNG cylinder was installed in the trunk. On Saturday, the van was running on CNG, while the LPG cylinder was empty.

Police rhetoric

Hours later, Traffic DIG Javed Mehar ordered a departmental inquiry into the incident and terminated the Orangi Town Section Officer Manzoor Hussain.

DIG Mehar told The Express Tribune that action will also be taken against other senior officials if they were found to be involved in the incident. He said that an LPG cylinder was placed unprotected near the driving seat which could have caused a serious accident had it exploded in the fire.

The DIG added that there is already a city-wide ban on the use of CNG cylinders in school vans. Section officers have been instructed to check school and college vans on a daily basis and take appropriate action against those using CNG cylinders. (By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 06/01/2019)

Crackdown against vehicle tax defaulters begins tomorrow

Excise and Taxation Minister Mukesh Kumar Chawla has said that a road checking campaign will be launched against defaulters of vehicle tax and drivers running unregistered vehicles or vehicles on open letter during a meeting at his office on Monday. The campaign will begin tomorrow (Wednesday) and continue till January 15.

Excise and Taxation Director-General Shabir Ahmed Shaikh said that 11 teams had been constituted for the campaign, which would be deputed at Mazar-e-Quaid, Sharae Quaid, Muslimabad, Gulistan School, Kharadar, Kemari, Queens Road, Clifton, Bath Island, DHA graveyard, Sun Set Boulevard Road, Tooba Masjid Road, Shaheen Complex, PIDC, Mai Kolachi Bypass, Gulbai, Crown Cinema, Pakola Chowrangi, Pehalwan Goth, PIB Colony, Teen Hatti, Solider Market, Lasbela, Sindh Industrial Trading Estate (SITE), Manghopir Road, Banaras Chowrangi, Hub River Road, Malir Cantonment, Landhi Industrial Area, Saudabad Road, Khokhrapar, Sohrab Goth, Federal B Area, Shafiq Mor, Korangi Industrial Area, Brooks Chowrangi and Singer Chowrangi.

Chawla directed the staff to wear uniforms and ensure their presence on the roads during the campaign. He also directed that the roads remain open and that all cars be checked one by one. He requested tax defaulters to pay their dues before the campaign and also directed excise department officials to adopt a polite approach while checking. He warned that strict action would be taken against those who violate the directives.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 05, 08/01/2019)

Double parking of vehicles in district South to be banned

City administration has decided to stop double parking at charged parking spots in the business district to avert frequent traffic jams and ensure smooth flow of traffic, it emerged on Monday.

Official sources told Dawn that a meeting, held with Commissioner Iftikhar Shallwani in the chair, reviewed the charged parking projects along the busy roads and streets in South district as double parked vehicles affected the traffic flow and created gridlock. They said that DIG Traffic Jawed Mahar, who was among the participants of the meeting, pointed out different parking spots where traffic remained clogged due to double-parked vehicles, creating a great deal of inconvenience to commuters.

The meeting was also attended by deputy commissioner of South and East districts, representative of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, district municipal corporations and other civic bodies.

They said that the commissioner told the meeting that Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah had taken notice of the traffic jams due to double parking at certain charged parking spots and ordered to take immediate action in this regard to ease the traffic situation in the city.

They said that the participants of the meeting discussed in detail the objectives of the initiative of charged parking system and concluded that the double parking of vehicles on charged parking sites had actually become a nuisance.

The commissioner said that the charged parking system was introduced for the facilitation of parking of vehicles systematically to avoid traffic congestion at all busy roads in the city.

The DIG Traffic told the meeting that there was a great need to review the locations allowed for charged parking on busy and key roads as at most locations it was badly affecting the traffic flow.

It was decided that the DC South would prepare a report to find out the locations where charged parking was causing traffic congestion on the roads and how that could be removed.

The DC was also asked to submit a report about the places where motorbikes were being parked on footpaths.

Meanwhile, the commissioner told Dawn that he had sought entire record of charged parking contracts given by the KMC, DMCs and other civic bodies as the city administration had received several complaints against the parking contractors.

He said that double parking of vehicles on the charged parking spots was illegal as the contracts were awarded only for single parking.

KMC's Metropolitan Commissioner Dr Syed Saif-ur-Rehman told Dawn that traffic congestion mainly caused by the double-parked vehicles in Saddar and its neighbourhoods also had a terrible impact on the traffic flow in other parts of the city.

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 15, 08/01/2019)

Driving licences to be issued to persons with hearing impairment in Sindh

The Sindh Chief Minister (CM) Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that various countries issue driving licences to persons with hearing impairment so Pakistan should also start issuing the same.

He directed Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah to seek opinions of the driving licence branch and traffic police and then make necessary amendments in the law so that persons with hearing impairment could be issued driving licences.

The CM, in a letter to the chief secretary, said that persons with hearing impairment form a sizeable number of the Pakistani disabled population. However, they are also involved in an active life and play an important role in the progress of Pakistan.

The CM said that Article 25 of the Constitution guarantees 'Equality of Citizens before law and all citizens are entitled to equal protection of law with no discrimination on any basis', while Article 18 guarantees 'Freedom of Trade, Business or Profession'. He added that following the spirit of the law, the newly promulgated 'Sindh Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2018' also calls for 'Equality and non-discrimination of Persons with Disabilities' (Section 3), 'Ease of access and mobility' (Section 6) and 'Public facilities and services' (Section 2 (v)).

Furthermore, the CM added that the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) provides for the right to 'Equality and non-discrimination for all people with disabilities' – including deaf persons and requires they have equal protection and benefit under law.

The letter says that at present, persons with hearing impairment are disqualified for issuance of driving licence by the Second Schedule of the Motor Vehicles Ordinance, 1965 (amended from time to time). Section 7(5) of the ordinance says, 'Disease and disabilities absolutely disqualifying a person for obtaining a licence to drive a motor vehicle.

They are Epilepsy, Lunacy, heart disease likely to produce sudden attack of giddiness or fainting; inability to distinguish with each eye at a distance of 25 yards in good daylight (with the aid of glasses, if worn) a series of seven letters and figures in white on a black ground of the same size and arrangement as those of the registration mark of a motor car.

A degree of deafness, which prevents the applicant from hearing, without hearing aids, the ordinary sound signals. Colour blindness or inability readily to distinguish the pigmentary colours red and green; Night blindness.'

The CM said that throughout the world, countries in all major continents issue driving licences to the deaf. They include North America (United States of America, Canada, Mexico), South America (Brazil, Chile, Argentina etc.), European Union (all countries), Australia, Asia & Middle East (India, Japan, New Zealand, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Malaysia, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Russia, Uzbekistan etc.), Africa (Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria etc.) Shah said that that the issuance of driving licence to deaf persons would lead to a myriad of socio-economic benefits. He added that firstly, it would be an implementation of guarantees provided in the Constitution, ordains of the relevant statute and the declaration in the UN CRPD regarding the equality of the hearing-impaired persons, which would in turn make them feel empowered and motivated.

Secondly, the hearing-impaired persons would get ease of access and mobility, as they would be able to move freely in their own vehicles without being a burden on anyone. Thirdly, the hearing-impaired persons would be able to make a livelihood by getting employed in jobs, which require driving skills such as drivers, transportation of goods, delivery persons, courier services etc.

The CM directed the chief secretary that necessary amendments in the Second Schedule of the Motor Vehicles Ordinance, 1965 may be made to allow issuance of commercial/private driving licences to hearing-impaired persons.

On the directives of the CM, Syed Qasim Naveed, CM's Special Assistant for 'Programs Related to Differently-Abled Persons', has prepared a summary for the CM.

In the summary, the CM has directed the chief secretary to discuss the matter with the driving licence branch experts and traffic police and then put up a recommendation for the amendment in the law so that licences may be issued.
(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 05, 09/01/2019)

Traffic management boards to be set up in all districts

A meeting headed by Karachi Commissioner Iftikhar Shallwani on Sunday decided to set up district traffic management boards in all six districts of the city, in an effort to resolve traffic issues.

The boards would be authorised to remove encroachments and hindrances affecting traffic flow, said the commissioner, and could utilise the services of relevant departments to undertake steps for effective management of charged parking. The resulting elimination of traffic congestion and bottlenecks would ensure smoother flow of traffic, he said.

He said that the parking spaces provided to commercial buildings in the city would also be enforced with the support of Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA). It was also decided that the district traffic management boards would coordinate with SBCA in this regard.

Shallwani asked the SBCA to play its due role and ensure strict enforcement of rules that allow building owners to utilise spaces for parking purposes and not to allow them to use the spaces to construct warehouses and shops instead. The board would bring an end to all unauthorised parking lots (charged or otherwise) in Karachi, he added.

The commissioner said that all the boards would follow the terms of reference of the district management board already established in South district.

South Deputy Commissioner (DC) Syed Salahuddin said that the action was taken against the contractor who had allowed double parking at the charged parking space at Abdullah Haroon Road, Sagheer Shaheed Road and Mansfield Road. As per the contract made with South District Municipal Corporation (DMC), the DC said, the contractor was not following the requirement of single lane parking.

He added that there were complains of double parking at these spots.

The meeting was also informed that South district administration had removed the illegal charged parking at Teen Talwar traffic section, Gulf Centre, CTC shopping Mall and Shell Petrol pumps which fall in the Civil line subdivision. These locations were being used to run unauthorised charged parking. The DC added that 72 vehicles were impounded in the action.

An operation was also carried out against illegal charged parking and double parking in the Lyari subdivision, the areas include Mira Naka to Bakra Piri, Mirza Adam Khan Road, Nawab Mohabbat Khan Khanji Road, Sheedi Village Road and Chakiwara.

The district South administration also submitted a report to the commissioner mentioning the persistent problem of illegal parking at Mirza Adam Khan Road in Lyari, where transporters park heavy vehicles on one track of the road which has made it dysfunctional for the last many years.

(By PPI The Express Tribune, 05, 14/01/2019)

Charged parking fee collection not KDA's job: KMC

A row between the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and Karachi Development Authority over charged parking sites further deepened on Sunday day when the city's municipal administration claimed that the KDA had nothing to do with the collection of charged parking fee.

Taking exception to an advertisement published by the KDA inviting bids for charged parking sites in different parts of the city, a spokesperson for the municipal administration stated that only KMC had authority to charge and collect parking fee in the city under the law.

However, KDA director general Sami Siddiqui told Dawn that the KDA had every right to auction charged parking sites in those schemes which had not so far been transferred to the KMC for municipal administration. "KDA is responsible for everything in these schemes, including construction of roads, parks and other civic infrastructure," he added.

He further said that he had written a letter to the provincial government for deciding the administrative jurisdiction of all civic agencies to avoid overlapping of authority.

The KMC spokesperson said that the KDA had nothing to do with charged parking fee collection and only the KMC had authority to collect the fee in the city.

He clarified that that the KMC had been collecting charged parking fee on these sites for the past many years after inviting bids many a time before too. "Therefore, auction of these charged parking sites by the KMC was legal and final," he added.

He cautioned the bidders against taking part in the auction of the charged parking sites by the KDA.

(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 21/01/2019)

Used car restrictions

THE government has done the right thing by reviving the restrictions it had placed on the used car import business. And unlike previously, it needs to continue with the initiative rather than fold it up under pressure. In fact, what the used car importers are calling 'curbs' are actually measures designed to ensure that the import of a used car under the gift or baggage scheme is not being misused for commercial purposes. The law allows all Pakistanis to import a used car if they are returning from employment abroad or receiving it as a gift from a relative who lives outside the country. But importers have greatly misused this facility to commercially import used cars for onward sale instead. Almost all used cars being imported into the country are brought under these schemes.

All that the government has done through a recent order issued by the commerce ministry is to require that the funds remitted to pay for the reduced import duties applicable under the gift and baggage scheme be made via an account that is opened in the name of the person bringing the vehicle, or a family member. If used car importers are complaining about this, it only shows that they have been using the schemes in question for commercial purposes. If they want the right to import used cars on reduced duty for commercial purposes, they should lobby the government specifically for this rather than demand that they be allowed to continue to take advantage of a facility meant for overseas Pakistanis. The used car racket needs to be stopped. In the name of their commercial interests, these racketeers are not only misusing a customs scheme, but also remitting their payments abroad through

illegal hundi and hawala channels, and thereby draining the country's foreign exchange reserves. There are also no real quality checks on the vehicles being imported by them, which in many cases are automobiles picked up from junkyards in the country where they are procured from. All along the chain, this racket does damage to Pakistan's economy. It deceives the consumers into thinking that they are buying a 'reconditioned' vehicle; it strengthens illegal hundi and hawala networks; it warps and misuses the regime of customs duties meant for others; and it deprives the exchequer of its revenue and drains foreign exchange from the economy. It is high time the racketeers were made to adhere to the law.
(By Editorial Dawn, 08, 22/01/2019)

Burst sewerage line at Jail Chowrangi causes hours-long traffic jam

Commuters were left stranded for hours due to the traffic gridlock near Jail Chowrangi on main University Road on Thursday after a sewerage water line burst in the vicinity.



The sewerage line, which burst on Wednesday night, flooded major thoroughfares including main University Road, New MA Jinnah Road and their adjoining streets. The water caused hours-long traffic blockades at University Road, New MA Jinnah Road, New Town, Pir Sibghatullah Rashidi Road, Shaheed-e-Millat Road, Jail Chowrangi, Kashmir Road, Sharae Quaideen and Sir Shah Suleman Road, among others.

The worst hit were commuters on the way to work in the morning rush hour and those returning home after office hours. Several ambulances also remained stuck in the traffic jam, with patients in need of emergency care stranded amid the sea of cars and motorcycles. In some cases, vehicles ran out of fuel due to the long wait times and had to be pushed to the side of the ride.

The damage

A huge pit, several feet wide and deep, was formed where the sewerage line burst. Multiple motorcyclists were injured when they accidentally fell into it. Other commuters helped the injured motorcyclists out of the pit.

Stuck in the jam for several hours, several enraged citizens started shouting slogans against the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) and the traffic police. "It's been several hours since the sewerage line has burst, but they haven't been able to fix it yet," said one motorcyclist.

Another commuter lambasted the traffic police, saying no diversion or alternative traffic routes had been devised despite being aware of the situation. "They could have informed citizens of the situation," he said, adding that traffic was being diverted to different roads after people were already stuck in the jam.

Later, Sindh Police chief IG Dr Kaleem Imam took notice of the situation and ordered the Traffic DIG to make concerted efforts to clear the gridlock. He also directed the zonal DIG of the operations police to cooperate with traffic police personnel and divert traffic to alternative routes.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 25/01/2019)

Another school van catches fire, little girl receives burns

A minor girl received burn injuries when a fire broke out in a school van in a Korangi locality on Friday, officials said.



"The school van [Suzuki hi-roof] was dropping children when suddenly a fire erupted," according to Korangi SSP Syed Mohammed Ali Raza. As a result, the van driver and one little girl received minor injuries. Both were taken to a hospital for treatment while other children were sent to their homes with help of police.

The senior officer claimed that the blaze broke out due to a short circuit.

The area people and police put out the fire, in which the van was partially damaged.

A fire brigade official said they did not receive any information about the incident.

Awami Colony SHO Shahid Khan said that no one had approached the police for lodging an FIR so far.

He pointed out that the girl received minor burn wounds on her hand and was discharged from the hospital after first aid.

Meanwhile, IGP Sindh Dr Syed Kaleem Imam took notice of the fire in the school van and sought a detailed inquiry report from the DIG traffic.

This is the second such incident this month where a school van caught fire, underlining the need for adopting safety measures and ensuring fitness of school vans.

On Jan 6, four children, including a girl, sustained burn wounds when a school van caught fire in Orangi Town.

The van was carrying several children for a school-cum-seminary when a fire erupted in it at Orangi-7.

'Two MQM-L workers held over street crimes'

The Pakistan Rangers Sindh on Friday claimed to have arrested 19 suspects, including "two workers of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement" for their alleged involvement in street crimes, said a spokesperson for the paramilitary force.

The force conducted an action in Defence and apprehended two suspects — namely M. Nadeem, alias Irfan and M. Irshad, alias Kala.

"The held suspects belonged to the MQM-London," claimed the Rangers spokesperson.

"They were involved in armed robberies and other dacoities," added the official.

Separately, the Rangers carried out actions in SITE Superhighway, Gadap, Baldia and Defence localities and detained 15 suspects. They were involved in street crimes and other criminal activities.

Separately, the paramilitary force apprehended two suspects in Gadap and Superhighway who were also involved in several crimes. The Rangers also arrested two suspected drug peddlers at SITE Superhighway.

Arms, ammunition, looted goods and drugs were said to have been seized from them.

Later on, all the held suspects were handed over to the police concerned for further legal action.

(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 15, 26/01/2019)

SHC summons transport secretary for explanation on use of CNG

The Sindh High Court on Thursday summoned the transport secretary for Feb 14 to explain whether any mechanism was in place for issuing fitness certificates regarding the CNG kits being used in vehicles.



A two-judge bench of the SHC headed by Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar also directed the SSP traffic to come up with a progress report on the action taken against intercity vehicles using CNG despite a ban.

When the bench took up a petition against traffic police and substandard CNG cylinders being used by public transport, the petitioner submitted that the transport and mass transit secretary had issued a notification in May 2015 imposing a ban on the use of CNG in intercity vehicles under the Provincial Motor Vehicle Ordinance 1995 in the larger interest of public safety. However, he submitted that despite the ban, CNG kits and cylinders were being used in such

vehicles as well as in school vans.

A focal person for the transport department admitted that the notification was in field, but there were many issues in its implementation.

The traffic SSP also appeared before the bench and submitted that around 1,800 CNG cylinders had been removed from such vehicles, but conceded that the number of such vehicles was very high.

The bench directed the secretary for transport and mass transit to appear at the next hearing and explain if any mechanism or procedure had been laid down for issuing fitness certificates about CNG kits and cylinders in vehicles.

Muzammil Mumtaz had moved the SHC after a rickshaw driver had set himself on fire at the traffic police office in Saddar in protest after being fined by traffic police for not paying them a bribe and later died in a hospital.

The petitioner contended that the rickshaw driver was compelled to commit suicide as money was extorted from him at least thrice and alleged that it was a routine in Karachi that traffic police demanded bribes from rickshaw drivers and motorbike riders on main roads, and on refusal they imposed undue fines on them.

The petitioner maintained that substandard CNG cylinders were being used in public transport despite clear directions of the court and no action was being taken against such vehicles. Impleading the home secretary, transport secretary, traffic DIG and others as respondents, he asked the court to direct the respondents to take action against traffic policemen demanding bribes from public transport operators for using substandard CNG cylinders and overloading.

AKUH told to give details of treatment for poor

The same bench on Thursday told the lawyer representing the Aga Khan University Hospital to inform it at the next hearing about the criteria for providing free medical aid to poor patients.

The court was hearing a petition seeking directives for the AKUH to provide free-of-charge medical facilities to poor and needy citizens.

On Thursday, the lawyer for the AKUH submitted the comments and contended that the AKUH was owned and managed by the Aga Khan Hospital and Medical College Foundation (AKHMCF) which, he said, was a charitable organisation, registered under the Companies Act, 2017.

AKUH questioned about criteria for providing free treatment

The lawyer admitted that the government had granted land twice in 1980 for the construction of a charitable hospital and medical college while it was also exempted from property tax and income tax on donations.

He further contended that the mere recovery charges from patients did not change the basic character of the hospital as a charitable organisation because the profit was not made for distribution among the members of the AKHMCF and maintained that it provided patient welfare of Rs2.7 billion to more than 708,000 patients in 2017.

When the court asked the lawyer about the criteria for providing free medical aid to poor patients by the hospital, he sought time to provide relevant details, and the matter was adjourned till Feb 14.

Dur Mohammad Shah petitioned the SHC and contended that although land was allotted to the AKUH for charitable purposes, in practice the hospital administration was charging patients higher fees than those charged by other charitable hospitals.

He said that under Section 10(4) of the Colonisation of Government Lands Act, the payment of land revenue annual assessment charges had to be made and recovered from the AKUH and it required a revised assessment on the expiry of the term after 10 years when the settlement of land was executed, but no annual assessment of payment of land revenue on the expiry of 10 years had ever been made or recovered from the university hospital by the government.

He said that the AKUH was built and operated for charitable purposes to serve the poor, but unfortunately it was providing medical facility at a heavy cost, adding that poor patients could not afford the specialised healthcare they desperately needed.

(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 15, 01/02/2019)

Women on bikes

AS a teenager I loved to ride my cousin's Vespa Scooter on the driveway of our house in PECHS, Karachi. That was no problem as I was doing it in the privacy of our home. It didn't become a cultural aberration either because my parents had by then resigned themselves to my interest in 'unladylike' activities such as cricket and cycling.



However, the past is another country, as they say. I can well rejoice in my lifetime at seeing the so-called male activities of yesteryear being adopted by women today. We have women's cricket and hockey teams, though they came belatedly, after a struggle. My other pastime, driving a Vespa, didn't seem to be so impossible either when I attended a talk by Mansoor Raza, a lecturer at NED University.

Speaking about Karachi's planning, Mansoor pointed out that in a survey conducted by the Urban Resource Centre under Arif Hasan's guidance, it was found that 60 per cent of the women (most of them young girl students), said they would like to ride a motorbike to commute to university. That would facilitate female mobility and thus empower women further.

What stops women from riding a motorbike? According to Mansoor, the women he talked to (even female health workers in Hyderabad and activists in the rural areas of Sindh) said their main problem was that the motorbikes we have today in Pakistan are not easy to manage for them, mainly for sartorial reasons. In the West, women who ride motorbikes wear trousers that are comfortable and safe in every way. The shalwar kameez as is commonly worn can be hazardous for a motorbike rider. The Vespa I rode was no problem because I could plant my feet on the footboard in front. In other words, either the motorbike manufacturers will have to work on the design of their product or dress designers should address this problem.

Motorbikes are not easy to manage for sartorial reasons.

The main issue at the heart of the matter is traffic management in Karachi. It is tyrannical and unfriendly to women and the low-income classes who constitute nearly 70pc of the population. Defying all rules of logic, 88pc of the registered vehicles are privately owned cars and motorbikes. Public transport comprises only 7pc of the traffic in Karachi.

As a result, those who depend on public transport for their mobility are put to serious inconvenience which adversely affects the quality of their life and restricts their choices in terms of jobs and residence. They have to spend a big chunk of their day (sometimes as many as four hours) commuting to work and back. We can add to that factors like overcrowding in buses, financial losses to people due to dishonest conductors and pickpockets, physical injuries caused by damaged, ill-maintained buses and uncaring drivers in a hurry and women's mental agony of facing sexual harassment. A journey by public transport in Karachi is indeed a nightmare for commuters.

This is not a new phenomenon. It has existed for decades and the situation has been deteriorating with the passage of time given the lack of political will to reform the system.

We now see people on the borderline with some resources turning to the motorbike solution. This is not an ideal solution given the pollution this vehicle causes in the air and congestion on the road, and its high accident rate — more than a third of fatal accidents are caused by motorbikes. Yet for desperate commuters the advantages of flexibility and saving of travelling time and the lowering of cost of commuting to work are worth the initial investment of buying a motorbike.

Small wonder the number of motorbikes on Karachi's roads is growing much faster than was calculated. In 1990, Karachi had 450,000 registered motorcycles. In 2004, this figure had increased to 500,000 and in 2010, the figure was just over a million. If this trend continues, by 2030 it is estimated that Karachi will have 3.6m motorbikes.

If the authorities are not in a position to address Karachi's traffic management problems they might as well look at the motorbike solution, which should also focus on the special needs of women.

As the first step, the Karachi police need to look into the traffic problems caused by the ubiquitous presence on city roads of motorbikes. In December, a special motorbike lane was launched in Karachi on Sharea Faisal. A law requiring all motorcyclists to wear helmets is also in force now. So far these moves have proved futile in bringing some sanity to our roads. If women have to be offered a fair chance to use motorbikes, it is important that scooters are introduced.

It is time the authorities realised that transport is a formidable challenge that is destroying Karachi.

NB: The URC survey was held in 2011 but Mansoor Raza estimates the situation to be worse today.
(By Zubeida Mustafa Dawn, 09, 01/02/2019)

Sindh-wide drive against CNG cylinders in school vans to begin next week

Sindh Transport Minister Awais Shah on Wednesday said the provincial government was committed to ensuring safety of schoolchildren on roads for which a province-wide campaign for removal of CNG cylinders from school vans would be launched next week.



"Our government is committed to ensure that children are safe and secure in school vans as we have planned to launch a campaign against the vans fitted with gas cylinders next week," said the minister while speaking to reporters after presiding over a meeting on the issue at his office.

He said the campaign would cover the entire province during which "no pressure" from any quarters would be entertained.

"This campaign has a single objective: to make the journey of our school-going children safe. No pressures from anyone will be tolerated," he said.

Originally, the provincial government had banned the fitting of LPG and CNG cylinders in school vans in August 2015. However, it failed to get the ban implemented since then. Van drivers have been plying their vehicles with impunity.

The traffic police along with transport, education and excise officials will lead the campaign

The minister has already appealed to parents that they should not send their children in school vans having CNG or LPG cylinders. Accepting the government's failure, he had said the transport department did not have a force of its own so parents should look into the matter themselves.

On Wednesday, he said the transport department would spearhead the campaign against errant school vans with the help of traffic police.

He said district committees comprising representatives from transport, education and excise departments and traffic police would survey the private schools vans.

"We are dispatching letters to those departments asking them to furnish nominations for such committees. All these committees will be monitored by the transport secretary," Mr Shah said.

He said the official in charge of a committee concerned would be responsible for any incident in one's district.

Mr Shah said the ban on use of gas cylinders in school vans was imposed on a court order and the drive could be launched even before next week's deadline. "Parents, school owners and all other stakeholders should help us in the government's endeavour to save our children from tragedies."

The minister said the traffic police would remove gas cylinders from school vans along with officials of other relevant departments. "We will never compromise on this grave issue."

He said he had also got a proposal from the officials suggesting action against gas stations that refilled school vans with gas.

Last month, six children were hurt after their school van caught fire near Qatar Hospital in Orangi Town. They were shifted to a hospital with burn wounds. Two of them were admitted to the burns ward at the Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi. There were 14 children in the van at the time of the fire. The driver was not injured.

Officials said presence of a gas cylinder was a violation of the charter issued by the transport department which prohibited installation of LPG cylinders in school vans.

The ban was originally slapped on gas cylinders in school vans in 2015, but owners and drivers remained indifferent to it. The order also restricts owners to paint their vans yellow.

With the government's renewed order to enforce the ban, drivers of school vans went on a strike last month that affected attendance in schools as a number of students could not reach their institutions.

The protest ended when the drivers were assured that CNG cylinders, seized during a crackdown, would be returned.

In the 2015 notification, the provincial government had said: "A college or school vehicle or contract carriage shall adopt the yellow colour coding scheme to distinguish from other vehicles plying the road; ensure the availability of an attendant for the facilitation and safety of students; have an emergency exit, in case of a bus or van; install therein a fire extinguisher; not be overloaded by students; not use LPG as fuel or an oxygen cylinder."

The education minister had recently said the provincial government would not allow school vans to run on "CNG bombs".

The government's notification was in response to a tragic incident in Benazirabad in January 2014 in which 21 children were killed when a school van collided with a truck.

(By Hasan Mansoor Dawn, 15, 07/02/2019)

Drive against school vans with gas cylinders begins in Sindh

The Sindh transport department and the traffic police on Wednesday formally launched a campaign to ensure that no school van was fitted with a gas cylinder as they imposed fines on 273 vehicles, officials in the provincial government said.

They said the campaign had primarily been launched in the cities of Sindh, with more intensity in Karachi, where traffic police intercepted school vans and fined the drivers of those being run on LPG or CNG.

"It is illegal for these vehicles to be fitted with gas cylinders; thus, our campaign is to safeguard schoolchildren from any tragic incident as such incidents have been reported in the past months," said Awais Qadir Shah, Sindh minister for transport and mass transit, in a statement issued to the media.

Officials said so far drivers of some 273 vans had been fined while 241 CNG cylinders had been removed from the vehicles and confiscated.

"At any cost," said the transport minister, "we'll not allow the owners of the school vans using CNG cylinders in their vans."

The minister said the provincial government was committed to ensuring safety of schoolchildren on roads for which the province-wide campaign for the removal of CNG cylinders from school vans had been launched.

"Our government is committed to ensuring that children are safe and secure in school vans," said Mr Shah, adding that the campaign was covering the entire province for which "no pressure" from any quarters was being entertained.

"This campaign has the single objective to make the journey of our schoolgoing children safe. No pressure from anyone is being entertained," said the minister.

(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 15, 14/02/2019)

Notices issued to Ogra, HDIP in case of gas cylinders used in vehicles

The Sindh High Court on Thursday issued notices to officials of the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) and Hydrocarbon Development Institute of Pakistan (HDIP) after it was told that no proper mechanism was in place to check and verify the CNG and LPG kits being used in vehicles.

When a set of petitions about the use of substandard CNG and LPG kits and cylinders in vehicles as well as in school vans came up for hearing before a two-judge SHC bench headed by Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar, secretary for transport and mass transit Akhtar Ghouri appeared before the bench as he was told to explain if any mechanism was in place for issuing fitness certificates regarding CNG kits being used in the vehicles.

However, the secretary submitted that the basic responsibility vested in Ogra, which is a controlling authority for the issues raised in the petitions, adding that the HDIP was working under the control and supervision of Ogra and they were responsible for checking the quality of CNG kits and cylinders. Their office was also in the city.

No proper mechanism in place to check fitness of CNG and LPG kits, SHC told

But, they have no sufficient means and resources to verify and check the vehicles for testing their fitness, the transport secretary contended and asked the bench to put the HDIP on notice asking it to explain the procedure adopted for securing safety measures in the vehicles operating on CNG or LPG.

Traffic SSP Najeeb Khan contended that they had frequently been removing CNG/LPG cylinders from school vans and also submitted a report regarding the amount of fines imposed and the cylinders seized by the traffic police.

The bench issued notices to Ogra and the HDIP and also directed an assistant attorney general to ensure the presence of a relevant officer from Ogra and the HDIP director on Feb 21.

The transport secretary also submitted copies of relevant laws which will be examined in the presence of the Ogra and HDIP representatives on the next date of hearing.

Muzammil Mumtaz, Tariq Mansoor and others had moved the SHC and contended that a rickshaw driver was forced to commit suicide as money was extorted from him at least thrice and alleged that it was a routine in Karachi that traffic police demanded bribes from rickshaw drivers and motorbike riders on main roads, and on refusal they imposed undue fines on them.

The petitioners maintained that substandard CNG cylinders were being used in public transport vehicles as well as in school vans despite the court directions and no action was being taken against such vehicles.

Impleading the home secretary, transport secretary, traffic DIG, Ogra and others as respondents, they asked the court to direct the respondents to take action against traffic police personnel demanding bribes and restrain public transport vehicles and school vans from using substandard CNG cylinders and overloading.

Baldia factory fire victims' plea

The labour secretary on Thursday informed the same bench that the then minister for labour's speech on May 1 last year was about the disbursement of \$5.15 million, agreed by a German firm, among the victims of the garment factory in Baldia Town.

Petitioners Mohammad Tariq, Farida Bano and Syed Hashmat Ali — the victims and their relatives — moved the SHC and submitted that the then provincial labour minister Nasir Hussain Shah had announced on May 1, 2018 an amount of Rs560m as compensation for the victims of the garment factory in Baldia Town. However, that amount had not been released yet, they added.

On a directive of the court, labour secretary Abdul Rasheed Solangi appeared on Thursday and submitted his comments. The secretary contended in the written statement that the then labour minister during his speech had stated that \$5.15m, agreed by the German brand Kik Textilien, will be disbursed among the affected families.

"This statement is totally different than what was published in newspapers on May 1, 2018," it maintained.

The bench adjourned the hearing till Feb 28 as the lawyer for petitioners sought time to go through the comments filed by the secretary.

(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 15, 15/02/2019)

Zulfiqarabad Oil Tanker Terminal fails to achieve its purpose

Zulfiqarabad Oil Tanker Terminal, built at a cost of billions of rupees, has not yet been made fully operational due to the lack of interest of the district administration and provincial government.

The project was built by Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) to shift oil terminals from inside the city and to ensure the smooth flow of traffic in Karachi. It was designed to accommodate up to 1,200 tankers outside the city, but as it stands only 200 to 300 tankers are found parked in its premises. The rest of the tankers are being parked on different private lands or the National Highway.

KMC officials have sought the help of Malir deputy commissioner to take action against terminals established on private lands and shift the tankers to the terminal.

The Supreme Court (SC) had ordered the establishment of the oil terminal and also banned their parking on private land and roads.

In a meeting, headed by Karachi commissioner, all deputy commissioners were informed about the SC orders, however, the Malir district administration has failed to implement the orders. Oil tankers are still being parked on private lands, National Highway and different lands of Malir Developmental Authority.

Only 200 to 300 oil tankers can be found parked at Zulfiqarabad Terminal, where just a few months ago around 500 to 600 tankers were parked.

KMC Oil Terminal Director Raza Abbas Rizvi has sent a letter to Malir deputy commissioner to enforce the judicial orders immediately. However, no action has been taken by him as yet to address the issue.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 05, 18/02/2019)

A case for trams in jostling Karachi

Retired Lt Col Ian Vaughan Arbuckle served as personal assistant to British Military Attaché in Karachi back in late 1950s. Speaking at the concluding session of the Adab Festival Pakistan held earlier this month, he suggested that Karachi can use trams to address its urban transportation issues.



Recalling his memories, according to media reports, he winnowed several urban planning issues while discussing life in Karachi during his stay here. Looking into the rationality of using trams in the cosmopolitan city, Mr Arbuckle's argument merits attention because of his practical experience of living in the port city. Introducing trams in Karachi must, however, address practical urban challenges as was done by many smart cities of the world.

New York, for example, started operating low floor trams as early as 1912. Their floors were intentionally kept low because women in New York, at that time, would wear hobble skirts which were quite narrow below the knees. The purpose was to intelligently facilitate the women to easily board and disembark from the tram. As a result, these trams in New York were called 'hobble skirt cars', reflecting their popularity in a major urban city. The use of similar trams was later extended to several parts of the US and Europe as the two regions had identical hobble skirt culture.

Keeping it local

The example underlines the critical importance of local challenges and cultural values in designing a tram system in a big city. If similar hobble skirt cars, for example, are introduced in a city like Karachi, where people predominantly use loose dresses, they may not attract as many people as it did in case of the US and Europe. It is because the cultural issues of New York and Karachi are poles apart.

This dimension is corroborated by a Japanese researcher Shigenori Hattori who, in a 2004 article, outlines the ups and downs of the use of trams in several big cities of the world. He argues that the use of trams must open the gateways to urban renewal.

The first urban transport system of the world, based on light rail transit, was sanguinely introduced in Canada's city, Edmonton, in 1978. Following gradual vicissitude, such systems were introduced in 70 cities across the globe in next 25 years. Till 2004, according to Shigenori, 350 tram systems were introduced in different cities of the world after carrying out necessary modifications and refurbishments. This suggests that developing a tram system through wily modifications, as per local requirements, is the real challenge requiring necessary innovation before trams are introduced in Karachi.

Planning for Karachi

Against this backdrop, an analysis of the Karachi Strategic Development Plan 2020's vacillating vision reveals three rudimentary factors on which it is based: transforming Karachi into a world class city, making it an attractive economic centre, and providing a decent life to the people of Karachi.

All three factors are fundamentally conjoined with the notion of urban renewal countering multiple externalities. Many of the urban challenges posed by these externalities have been investigated in detail by the Dutch scholar, Dr Jan van der Linden. Dr Linden's work on low-income settlements in Karachi may help design a tram system for the city, capable of opening the doors of urban renewal.

Sharing space

'Sharing space' and 'demonstrating tolerance', in my opinion, are the two fundamental soft factors that, among other determinants, can transform Karachi into a world class city and an attractive economic center. The vertical development of the city, in terms of high-rise buildings and prevalent flat dwelling, indicates a predominant 'space sharing culture' in the city.

The introduction of trams is a continuation of space sharing culture that would inherently promote urban tolerance. It is because the entrance of tram in Karachi's transport system would extract the boundaries of its right-of-way. That means it will create discipline, tolerance and respect for the rights of other transport modes.

These values can inculcate a deeper sense of transport stasis among the people of Karachi while travelling on roads. The same traffic culture can then dissipate in other cities of Pakistan.

A surfeit of single occupancy cars has literally jostled Karachi requiring intelligent transport interventions. The introduction of trams could be an effective option for the people of Karachi, provided their practical issues, causing urban torpor, are sufficiently addressed while designing the system.

Merely adopting other cities tram models for Karachi could be disastrous for its wanton urban transport. A Spartan disciplined and courteous traffic pattern on roads is indeed reflective of the progressive mindset necessary for transforming Karachi into a world class city. Once such traffic pattern is achieved, it would itself be a symbol that the city is an attractive economic center capable of countering trite urban externalities and providing people with a decent life style.

(By Dr Muhammad Babar Chohan The Express Tribune, 04, 20/02/2019)

Court directs commissioner for convening all-party meeting on bus terminal matter

The Sindh High Court (SHC) issued notices on Tuesday to the Karachi Port Trust (KPT), Pakistan Railways, Defence Housing Authority (DHA), cantonment boards and agencies in a petition seeking to ban the entry of heavy vehicles in the city and also directed the senior member of Sindh Board of Revenue to appear at the next hearing.

A two-member bench, comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Agha Faisal, was hearing the case in which Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar and several others appeared before the court.

Chairman of the transport association informed that the court had ordered a joint meeting of the parties, which could not happen. The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) has acquired 500 acres of land for the bus terminal. The transporters' representative said that neither bus stops were shifted outside the city despite the court orders nor were the transporters called for a meeting.

Officials from the transport department said that they were called to all the meetings, which were also advertised in the newspaper.

The court inquired about the land secretary, asking for the reason of his absence. The additional advocate-general maintained that the Land Secretary Aftab Memon had been arrested two days ago.

The court said that the parties should be called to resolve the issue. Justice Mazhar remarked, "Listen carefully, you have to do the task. It is being done for the betterment of the city."

Karachi mayor said that formulating a committee was important to ensure an uninterrupted monitoring system.

The court, responding to his suggestion, ordered the formulation of a monitoring committee to implement the action plan. The Karachi mayor and chiefs of relevant authorities be included in the committee, which would be headed by the chief secretary.

The court directed the Karachi commissioner to call a joint meeting of the parties on March 19 and ordered the senior members of transport department to present a report pertaining to the land for bus terminal. The hearing was adjourned till April 9.

May 12 incident

Another bench of the high court rejected the plea to cancel the bail granted to Wasim Akhtar in the May 12 cases.

A two-member bench, comprising Justice Aftab Gorar and Justice Amjad Ali Sahoto, was hearing the petition filed by Iqbal Kazmi against Akhtar's bail in the May 12 cases. The petitioner maintained that Akhtar, despite being an accused, still holds public office. He said that there are 44 lawyers as witnesses in the case filed in the city court. Despite the witnesses, Akhtar's case had been termed A class.

The court inquired from the petitioner how he was the affected respondent in the case. Kazmi said that the Supreme Court had declared that if the accused of the May 12 case were punished then such incidents would not happen again. It was a matter of public importance.

Kazmi's arguments failed to convince the court and his plea was rejected.

KKF money laundering

The same bench ordered the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and Khidmat-e-Khalq Foundation (KKF) on Tuesday to submit replies at the next hearing in response to the allegations of money laundering case done in the name of Muttahida Qaumi Movement's (MQM) welfare institution.

Baqar Mehdi, the counsel of former senator Ahmed Ali, maintained that FIA had frozen his bank account and was not cooperating or even submitting a response. The FIA froze the bank account without any court orders. "Though KKF's amount is present in the account, it has not been used illegally," he said.

According to the petition, Ahmed Ali was regularly facing the trial while Arshad Vohra, and several other accused named in the case remained at large. The FIA has not been taking action against several MQM leaders involved in money laundering. The petitioner requested that orders be issued to FIA to unfreeze the bank account.

The court expressed displeasure with FIA and KKF and directed them to submit replies by next hearing.

Illegal land allotment

The SHC dismissed former secretary Aftab Memon's bail plea on Tuesday pertaining to the illegal allotment and occupation of 1,600 acres land in Korangi and Malir. A two-member bench, headed by Chief Justice (CJ) Ahmed Ali Sheikh and Justice Omar Sial, was hearing the case.

The accused's counsel said that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had arrested Memon in the fake bank account case. A production order to present him before the court should be issued.

The CJ asked that why the court should issue the production order? If a serious offence has been committed, NAB and the accused should deal with it themselves.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 13/03/2019)

Careem, Uber barred from entry to Karachi's Jinnah International Airport

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has completely barred ridesharing companies, Careem and Uber, from operating within Jinnah International Airport in Karachi. The authority has also told both companies that the ruling will be in effect as long as they fail to meet the legal requirements of the Sindh Transport Authority.

CAA Additional Joint Director (Vigilance) Tariq Ahmed Siddiqi wrote a letter on February 26 to the two ridesharing companies stating that their operations at the airport would be considered illegal and that they “exploit the business of registered cab companies.”

The companies have also been asked to update their websites and apps to reflect that they are barred from offering pick and drop services at the airport.

Earlier, the Jinnah International Airport management had placed warning signs at the airport regarding the ban on Careem and Uber services which state that the entry of Uber and Careem cars within the airport is banned and the violators' cars will be confiscated.

Documents available with *The Express Tribune* show that the Transport Secretary had also written to the Jinnah International Airport management to explain that the two ridesharing companies are not in compliance with various laws, which is why they must be barred from entry to the airport till the services gain legal cover from the transport authorities.

On September 10, 2018, the Traffic DIG had informed the airport management that the implementation of the Sindh transport department's letter should be ensured and the DIG's office must be informed of the measures adopted by the airport administration.

It was not until February 26, however, that the CAA wrote a letter to Uber and Careem in which they have been asked to fulfil all legal formalities before they are allowed to continue operations at the airport.

(By Tufail Ahmed The Express Tribune, 04, 21/03/2019)

Sindh authorities neglect Karachi's Stadium Road

The National Stadium Road, one of the busiest roads in the city, has been deteriorating over the years. The development and repair work on the road is being delayed due to the negligence of authorities causing difficulties for commuters and patients visiting two of the largest private hospitals located there.



The deplorable condition of the National Stadium Road has left many in despair as private, government, residential and commercial buildings are located on it including two major hospitals on the track leading to New Town from National Stadium. Developmental work on water, electricity and internet lines on the road is facing delay since the last six months because of this.

The traffic flow has also been affected severely due to the ruptured road while ambulances avoid taking these tracks causing inconvenience to patients.

According to the ambulance drivers, they have to either take longer routes or the patients suffer discomfort while being shifted to the hospitals.

Locals, talking to *The Express Tribune*, said that the authorities have closed their eyes on this issue. The government needs to draw its attention towards the difficulties faced by citizens. The road has been dug up many times but left midway.

Besides, all link roads to National Stadium were repaired for the recent Pakistan Super League matches but despite that, the authorities didn't pay heed to the National Stadium Road itself.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 21/03/2019)

Sindh govt cancels procurement of Green Line buses

Sindh government has decided to cancel “Green Buses” procurement process following the federal government's decision to run the buses on this route on its own. The meeting on public-private partnership (PPP) on Thursday was informed that the provincial government had started the process of procurement of buses for Green Line Project, but has now stopped it. “Today's meeting has now approved to start Orange Line buses' procurement process afresh,” an official privy to the development said.

Earlier, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah said that the PPP Unit of Sindh has been recognised by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) and ranked sixth in Asia in its report of 2018. “This is the manifestation of our hard work, sincerity and commitment with the people of Sindh”.

The 28th PPP Policy Board meeting was held at Chief Minister's House on Thursday. Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah presented a report of EIU in which Sindh PPP Unit has been ranked sixth in Asia. It states, "Sindh's most positive performance are in its regulatory environment (especially its PPP selection criteria and fairness and openness of bids and contracts) and its institutional environment, including the stability of its PPP agency, the resourcing of project selection and implementation, institutional transparency and accountability".

Malir Expressway

The PPP unit presented the Malir Expressway project, proposing to construct an interchange at Link Road to give passage to Education City.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 05, 22/03/2019)

Two men killed, four injured in explosion at fuel station

Two men died and four others sustained burn injuries when an explosion occurred at a fuel station in North Karachi on Sunday, officials said.



The incident occurred at Al-Madina petrol station in Sector 5-C in North Karachi.

The police claimed that a gas leakage triggered the explosion, which badly damaged the room where the victims were sitting.

Both the gas cylinder and compressor were found intact by bomb experts.

The police said that several persons were sitting in the manager's room adjacent to the safe room of the fuel station whose central door was the same when the huge explosion occurred.

Six persons sustained burn wounds. They were taken to the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital, where doctors pronounced Saqib Moin as dead on arrival, said additional police surgeon Dr Saleem Shaikh.

Another injured person, Rashid, died later on. He was stated to be the owner of the fuel station while Saqib was its employee.

Gas leakage blamed for the tragedy

Dr Shaikh said that of the four injured persons, three were taken to the Aga Khan University Hospital after first medical aid as they were in a serious condition.

Two of the injured were identified as Kaitan Dakshan, 20, and Faqeer Muhammad, 31.

Khawaja Ajmer Nagri DSP Altaf Husainsaid that it was a huge explosion, which destroyed a wall of the room while fire bubbles pierced its door and window. A wall of the service room also cracked because of the impact of the explosion.

The police called a team of the Bomb Disposal Squad who examined the place and found both the cylinder and compressor intact. The bomb expert observed gas smell emanating from the room where the explosion took place.

Quoting initial findings of the BDS team, DSP Husain said that apparently a gas leakage ignited the fire. The gas had accumulated in the room where probably someone lit a match, which caused the explosion.

The officer said that the police were further investigating the incident.

Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah took notice of the explosion at fuel station and sought a report from the Karachi commissioner. Mr Murad asked if the relevant federal institution conducted inspection of CNG stations.

"If inspection was done, when it was done last time," asked the chief minister. He also that asked if the compressor had expired or was defective. While expressing his regrets over the loss of life, he directed the authorities for proper treatment of the injured persons.

Media persons beaten up

Meanwhile, media persons covering the incident at the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital were beaten up by an angry mob, which had gathered there, according to witnesses. Relatives of the victims were apparently angry over covering the incident there and beat up some media persons.

The chief minister also took notice of the alleged beating up of certain TV channels at the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital. "Beating of the media persons is unacceptable," said Mr Murad.

He ordered the Central SSP to conduct an inquiry into the incident. He also directed the police officers to take action against the persons who subjected the media persons to beating.

(By Imtiaz Ali Dawn, 12, 25/03/2019)

Varsity students exhibit built-from-scratch energy efficient car in Karachi

To commemorate Pakistan Day, Shell Pakistan celebrated with the youngsters who will be participating in the Shell Eco-marathon Asia 2019. An exhibition was organised in this regard at a local mall. A car designed by 25 students at a cost of Rs1.2 million in one year was showcased at the exhibition. This car can travel 120 to 150 kilometres using only one litre of petrol at the speed of 45 to 50 km per hour.



The Eco-marathon is an annual competition hosted by Shell which challenges student engineers from around the world to design, build and drive energy-efficient vehicles. Around 100 students from 21 countries from Asia and the Middle East will be participating in the Eco-marathon Asia 2019. The student teams will test energy-efficient cars they have built themselves to see which car can go the farthest using the least amount of energy.

This year, nine teams from seven universities will be representing Pakistan. These include Team Envision PNEC NUST Urban and Team Envision PNEC NUST Prototype from the National University of Sciences and Technology – Pakistan Navy Engineering College (NUST PNEC), and Team DSU Shell Eco-marathon from DHA Suffa University.

The teams from NUST PNEC showcased their innovation to interested visitors. “Our university has been participating in this competition since it started. This year, we have worked on two types of vehicles – urban and prototype,” said their team leader, Saad Chinoy. “We have harnessed useful energy from the motion of the vehicle’s tires improving mileage figures. We have also used free-wheel mechanism to economise fuel and reduce frictional losses,” he explained. Chinoy was confident his teams were geared up to compete on an international level.

Earlier, Shell Pakistan External Relations Manager Habib Haider had opened the exhibition. “Student teams from Pakistan have been actively participating in the Shell Eco-marathon Asia since 2010,” he said. Haider added that Shell was proud to be a part of the journey of these talented students and wished them the best of luck for the competition. “Pakistan is the sixth most populated country in the world with an increasing demand for energy, and therefore working on energy efficiency is very important for us,” he said.

The Shell Eco-marathon will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia at the end of April 2019. This year marks their 10th year in Asia. (By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 05, 25/03/2019)

Karachi Green Line Project

The Sindh government has handed over control of the Karachi Green Line Bus Rapid Transit Project to the federal government. This is a plausible step for a multitude of reasons. Prime Minister Imran Khan expressed dismay earlier at the delay of the project which was to be completed in December 2017. Since he also expressed desire to take over the project, this move suggests he is a man of his words. For Pakistan’s largest metropolis, replete with congested roads and ever-expanding population, the Green Line is a significant and necessary project. For a project of this magnitude in terms of its necessity, it perhaps makes sense to have devolved control to the federal government.

The project itself seeks to facilitate commuters in some of Karachi’s most busy areas. Any successful city infrastructure requires a mass transit system to reduce vehicle congestion, not to mention the positive effects on the environment with reduced pollution. Having a well-developed system will encourage more people to use public transportation. However, with such a lengthy delay of over a year and a significant chunk of the work still underway, the undertaking of the project is causing fouler than facility.

Having the federal government overtake the project could also mean better financial resources and less squandering of funds. It has already set aside Rs7.7 billion. When the PTI took over Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, we saw positive transformation of its systems and infrastructure. Thus, the change of power seems promising because the PTI has shown us that we can trust it to utilise funds effectively in most cases. The Sindh government’s record in application of funds to development projects is much less reliable. Of course, the landscape and pace of Karachi are drastically different from those in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. The PTI must develop a strong strategy now keeping the monstrosity and end goal of the project in mind so that Karachiites can soon seek ease in their daily commutes.

(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 16, 26/03/2019)

Sepa seeks details from landowning bodies on commercialisation of roads

While seeking details from landowning organisations on the roads which have been commercialised in their respective jurisdictions, the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) has warned the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) and the landowning organisations that they must not allow any ‘development’ unless approval is granted by Sepa.

The Sepa letter dated March 26 has been sent to all cantonment boards, Defence Housing Authority (DHA), Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), Karachi Development Authority (KDA) as well as the SBCA.

The step, the letter says, has been taken in the light of the Supreme Court orders passed in January this year and the report submitted by the commission on water and sanitation in which Karachi-specific recommendations have been given as improvement initiatives requiring longer period.

"In pursuance of (these) orders, Sindh Environmental Protection Agency has been mandated to ensure that the city of Karachi is restored to that of its original master plan.

Warns against allowing development without its approval

"The department hereby requires a 'progress report' from all concerned landowning organisations regarding the status of compliance to the orders of the Supreme Court," the letter says.

It calls upon landowning organisations as well as the SBCA to ensure filing of environmental assessment reports by developers under Sepa rules as recommended by the water commission in its final report.

The Sepa letter written to the DHA also "demands an urgent submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and a traffic management plan for all commercialised roads in its jurisdiction, including the EIA report of DHA Phase 8 as well as the projects under the DHA Water Front Development Scheme.

"This exercise is essentially to be achieved to explore way forward towards addressing further construction on the commercialised roads and the overall sustainability of the province in general and the city resources in particular," it says.

The letter, however, also brings into question Sepa's own writ, authority and performance when it says that "the current chaotic condition on the commercial roads of Karachi demands a review of the road commercialisation/land use change policy whereby a number of roads were commercialised without taking Sepa on board.

"It may be reminded that the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act 1997 as well the Sindh Environmental Protection Act 2014 both have delineated that every change in land use must be preceded by an Environmental Impact Assessment in which the cumulative impact of all alterations in land use will have to be clearly evaluated.

"The policy adopted for strip commercialisation is against the principles of environmental sustainability since it is neither socially nor environmentally acceptable. The commercialisation policy should have been preceded by a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) which is a critical step since it concerns the future development of Karachi.

"The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency brings to your notice that the role of this agency in the indiscriminate change of land use, commercialisation and construction has been ignored, as well as densification of roads has been undertaken without a master plan. As such a stage has been reached that majority of plots on the commercial roads are being converted into commercial ones."

The letter also highlights the disaster spelled by city's haphazard densification and says that this process has been inattentive to the impact of development of one section on the other and brought about at the cost of Karachi's meagre resources.

"Majority of the projects have been completed in violation to the approved plans because there is no provision for parking and the space for parking has been unauthorisedly allotted for more commercial activities in the basements.

"Development activities with the current approach are both faced with adverse impact arising from deficiencies in infrastructure and other facilities in the rest of Karachi.

"The demand for utilities, such as water, sewage disposal, electricity and gas has increased considerably for which there is no plan for augmentation. The water supply and sewerage system both have outlived their age and have no capacity for taking extra burden.

"The sewerage system simply does not exist in most areas while the lack of storm-water drains is creating submergence issues with every heavy rainfall. The city residents are already protesting against the shortage of water, but the authorities (SBCA, KDA, KMC, CBC and DHA) seem handicapped for inadequacies in Karachi's infrastructure," the letter says.

It might be recalled here that it's the second time Sepa has sought details about commercialisation of roads. A similar letter was sent to the organisations concerned in 2017.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 15, 28/03/2019)

Haphazard parking, encroachments, cause massive traffic jams in Karachi

Haphazard parking of motorcycles on the main Stadium Road stretching from Hassan Square to the Stadium Flyover has been a source of inconvenience for motorists. Extensive parking outside the office of Gulshan SP causes the traffic on the main road to be jammed frequently. Most of the motorcycles parked along the road bear police number plates.



Sir Shah Suleman Road which stretches from Hassan Square to Stadium Road has significant places located at it such as the Expo Centre, Aziz Bhatti police station and the National Institute of Blood Diseases.

The motorcycles parked outside the SP office and the police station cause traffics jams on the main road troubling commuters and citizens.

According to the citizens, the motorcycles belong to police officers and have number plates bearing police monograms.

Citizens maintain that there is no service road before the main gate of the Expo Centre but the service road that follows, leading to Aziz Bhatti police station, has been closed with concrete blocks and is used as a parking area. Sindh IG Dr Kaleem Imam has ordered strict action against fake number plates bearing police monograms but dozens of motorcycles can be seen outside the office of Gulshan SP.

Saddar situation

Meanwhile, passing Saddar during peak traffic hours has become extremely difficult. Despite an extensive operation by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), encroachments still prevail on a number of roads and pathways in Saddar. The on-going construction work for the underpass on Numaish Chowrangi intersection leaves the road blocked for hours as the incoming traffic from Preedy Street to Saddar causes traffic jams.

KMC claimed the removal of thousands of illegal structures including stalls, push-carts and vendors from footpaths and roads in Saddar but the commercial hub of the city is dotted with encroachments again leading to regular traffic jams in the area. Citizens cannot walk on the footpaths either. Besides, due to the construction work on MA Jinnah Road for the underpass, the path stretching from Numaish Chowrangi to Capri cinema remains closed causing hundreds of thousands of vehicles to take Preedy Street to reach Tibet Centre and return to MA Jinnah Road. The increased traffic coupled with encroachments results in citizens having to spend hours for a journey which would otherwise last a few minutes.

The encroachments have reportedly covered one road track each on Preedy Street, Regal, Zaibunnisa Street, Korangi Bus Stop, Passport Office, Abdullah Haroon Road and related roads.

Sources blame officials of the anti-encroachment campaign and the police for the re-emergence of encroachments. Saddar is one of the biggest commercial centres of Karachi with thousands of citizens making way to the market every day. Similarly, MA Jinnah Road is the busiest road of the city after Sharaf Faisal and negligence of KMC's anti-encroachment wing and the police is adding to the sufferings of the thousands of citizens who remain stuck in traffic for hours every day.
(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 28/03/2018)

Petrol, diesel prices touch nine-month high

The government on Sunday increased prices of all petroleum products by up to 6.45 per cent for the month of April as the international crude price inched up by less than 2pc over the last month.

Petrol and diesel prices were increased by Rs6 per litre while kerosene and light diesel oil (LDO) were jacked up by Rs3 per litre with immediate effect, according to an official announcement.

With the decision, the ex-depot price of high speed diesel (HSD) was set at Rs117.43 per litre — the highest since July 2018 — instead of existing rate of Rs111.43 per litre, up by 5.36pc.

Likewise, the ex-depot price of motor spirit (petrol) was fixed at Rs98.89 per litre — also a nine-month high — instead of current rate of Rs92.89, showing an increase of 6.45pc.

The ex-depot price of kerosene oil was increased to Rs89.31 per litre — the highest since October 2014 — from Rs86.31 per litre, indicating an increase of almost 3.5pc.

Govt increases rates of petrol, HSD to Rs98.89 and Rs117.43 for April

The ex-depot price of LDO was increased to Rs80.54 per litre — a five-month high — from the previous rate of Rs77.54 per litre, up by 3.9pc.

However, the government did not pass on the full price hike calculated by the Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) last week and reduced tax rates to minimise political backlash.

Based on import parity price of Pakistan State Oil (PSO) for purchases in March, Ogra had worked out about Rs11.17 increase in the price of HSD per litre, Rs11.91.71 hike in petrol price, Rs6.65 rise in kerosene price and Rs6.49 increase in LDO price.

Crude price (Brent) had increased by less than 2pc over the last month from \$66.57 on Feb 28 to \$67.86 per barrel on March 28.

The government had already increased general sales tax (GST) on all petroleum products to standard rate of 17pc across the board to generate additional revenues. Until January 2019, the government had been charging 0.5pc GST on LDO, 2pc on kerosene, 8pc on petrol and 13pc on HSD.

Besides the 17pc GST, the government had more than doubled the rate of petroleum levy on HSD in recent months to Rs18 per litre instead of Rs8 per litre, while levy on petrol had also been increased by 40pc to Rs14 per litre instead of Rs10 per litre.

Over the last two months, the government started increasing petroleum levy rates to partially recoup a major revenue shortfall faced by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). The petroleum levy remains in the federal kitty unlike GST that goes to the divisible pool taxes and thus about 57pc share is taken by the provinces.

Petrol and HSD are two major products that generate most of the revenue for government because of their massive and yet growing consumption in the country. Total HSD sales are touching 900,000 tonnes per month against monthly consumption of around 700,000 tonnes of petrol. The sales of kerosene oil and LDO are generally less than 10,000 tonnes per month.

The petroleum prices have been on the rise since early 2017, barring only a couple of times when they were reduced.

For the past two weeks, the international benchmark Brent prices have been inching up and the government has also been mopping up tax rates in run up to finalisation of an IMF-assisted stabilisation programme.

The government has already announced that it will gradually increase electricity and gas rates over the next few months.
(By Khaleeq Kiani Dawn, 01, 01/04/2019)

Peshawar BRT

A RECENT 27-page report by the provincial inspection team on the progress made on the multibillion-rupee Peshawar Bus Rapid Transit project has presented a picture of large-scale ineptitude, mismanagement of public funds, shoddy design and planning, and a political recklessness that has resulted in the wastage of money, inconvenience to commuters and local businesses, and immeasurable harm to the environment including the city's air quality.

The detailed inquiry was carried out on the orders of KP Chief Minister Mahmood Khan after public outrage over the project was expressed.

In particular, questions were raised regarding the project's completion, since the route runs along the GT Road — the city's main artery and economic lifeline.

The Peshawar High Court, too, demanded more transparency and asked why the project — which was supposed to be completed in July 2018 — is still far from over.

Kick-started in haste on October 2017 by the KP government, less than a year before the 2018 general elections, the initial six-month deadline has been extended several times, without even meeting its latest target, which was last month.

The reasons given for the latest delay include unfinished work, the non-availability of buses, and apprehension over the traffic bottlenecks that have been created in its wake, with 11 choking points having been identified along its 26km-long route.

Since being initiated, the project has gone through several stages of 'make, break and remake', while the initial loan taken from the Asian Development Bank of Rs49bn has risen to a whopping Rs67.8bn.

The PTI government's own good work carried out in the previous five years towards easing traffic congestion seems to have been demolished by one rash decision.

And there are still some questions being asked about whether or not the completion of the BRT project will actually improve the city's traffic and commuting issues.

It is also worth remembering this government's own criticism of the previous dispensation's emphasis on the metro projects that were undertaken in Punjab, which it then tried to replicate in Peshawar — as opposed to focusing more on health and education.

Given the mounting criticism and growing embarrassment, the government recently sacked the transport secretary and the director general of the Peshawar Development Authority, who it held responsible for the delays and poor execution of the project.

The Peshawar BRT should stand as a lesson in political hubris.

Competence surpasses confidence. But it is a different story in this case.
(By Editorial Dawn, 08, 06/04/2019)

Mayor seeks report on flyovers, underpasses

City Mayor Wasim Akhtar on Friday directed the engineering department of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) to prepare a detailed report on the condition of all bridges, flyovers and underpasses to start their repair and renovation.

Presiding over a meeting of senior KMC officials at his office, he asked the department to conduct a survey to ascertain the repair work.

He also directed the department concerned to immediately invite bids for the repair and renovation of the bridges.

The mayor also directed for inviting tenders for the replacement of joints on Jinnah Flyover at Keamari and Shah Faisal Flyover.

KMC's Metropolitan Commissioner Dr Syed Saif-ur-Rehman, senior director Masood Alam and other officials of the municipal administration's engineering department attended the meeting.

The mayor stressed the need for immediate repair and renovation, saying that a large number of vehicles, including goods transporting vehicles, used Jinnah Flyover.

(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 16, 06/04/2019)

Peshawar metro bus challenges

THE Peshawar BRT (metro bus) project is mired in controversy. In what is a 'damning' report (Dawn), the provincial government's own inspection team has heaped criticism on the project. In the days since, several senior officials have lost their positions as the KP government struggles to complete a large infrastructural project already months behind its promised schedule.



If news coverage of the report is to be believed, some of its components are indeed damning. There was talk of billions of rupees lost to kickbacks and inefficiencies, as well as stories of make, break and remake. There can be little justification for the misappropriation of public funds in any project, let alone in something as large as the Peshawar BRT. Due process of law must be followed and those who made illegal gains punished.

However, other parts of the report demand that we seriously reconsider our understanding of cities and urban transportation. Concerns about pedestrian crossings and road width, and an outright recommendation for an elevated busway, are ill informed and almost absurd, pointing to poor understanding of mass transit and, particularly, BRT. Let's start with the basic idea of a BRT and how it directly contradicts our imaginary.

Any good transit system, especially BRT, is defined by its integration with spaces and people along the areas where it is built.

BRTs emerged as low-cost alternatives to over- and underground rail systems that many developing cities could not afford. Instead of laying new corridors that trains necessarily required, a BRT allowed ordinary buses to utilise specially marked lanes on the same road. No longer did you need tunnels or overhead bridges to run an efficient urban transit system. The good old bus could come to the city's rescue in an extremely cost-efficient way. By providing a cheap, reliable way for citizens to commute, BRTs could help deal with congestion and provide vital connectivity between people and urban economic activity.

And look at what we did. All of the BRT corridor in Rawalpindi is elevated, as are major sections in Lahore. And, it seems, KP's inspection team wanted the same for Peshawar's. Why are we so excited about pouring tons of concrete into elevated corridors when these buses can very well run on roads that we already have?

The inspection report has some clues to help answer this question. BRT stations and some other structures have reduced road space available to cars, it says. This will make traffic problems worse.

The simple fact is that there is no evidence from anywhere in the world to back this claim. Instead, data from cities around the world is by now clear: long run traffic congestion is not a function of road space or level of service. The evidence from the US is so strong, in fact, that it is now referred to as the 'Fundamental Law of Road Congestion': where roads were widened to ease traffic flow, congestion returned due to increased demand. Where roads were narrowed, and overhead bridges and highways removed, traffic disappeared and found alternative routes. When combined with alternative modes of transport (such as BRT) and adequate road use pricing, congestion can actually decrease even after reducing both number of lanes and lane width available to traffic.

This data suggests that our entire focus on big-ticket infrastructure projects under the garb of BRT is misplaced. The traffic always finds its way, and wider roads only bring more traffic out. The actual congestion problem is at bottlenecks — wide roads that suddenly become narrower — and not at roads that are narrow throughout. Different newspapers quoted the inspection report to claim that road width at BRT stations in Peshawar has reduced by an average of 40 per cent. Perhaps the width of the entire road should be reduced by 40pc to keep it consistent and make sure there are no bottlenecks.

Another problem that the inspection report highlights is about pedestrian crossings. It takes contradictory positions: zebra crossings near BRT stations will cause congestion, and not enough such crossings have been planned in areas where there are no stations. The contradiction is clear for everyone to see; what is worse is that focusing on traffic instead of pedestrians is self-defeating for any high-quality urban transit system.

Any good transit system — especially BRT — is defined by its integration with spaces and people along the areas where it is built. Our focus on cars and traffic congestion has meant that we have relegated pedestrians to the bottom of our priority list, where they must risk their lives or climb tedious bridges to cross roads. That these roads are akin to highways running through the midst of our cities makes it worse.

Such corridors, whether for buses or mixed traffic, are inefficient by design. They restrict the interconnectedness of businesses along their sides; by acting as physical barriers, these corridors create separate markets on either side that are inherently less efficient than one big, connected market. They are therefore isolated from their core social and economic functions and make for cities that are not safe, livable, or vibrant places. Where such a corridor is a BRT, it will risk facilitating economic activity only at its endpoints, without delivering much value to all the areas that fall along it.

The suggestion for Peshawar to demolish some shops or other structures to restore the road to its original width is therefore staggering in its ineptitude. Doing so would create no reason for car owners to use the BRT, meaning that existing demand for road

space would remain as is. This would lead to failure on one of the most important objectives of developing urban transit systems: reducing congestion by forcing an adjustment of road demand.

Moreover, and perhaps more critically, it will directly contradict the principles of an urban transit system by destroying instead of creating and facilitating economic activity. A BRT is supposed to bring workers closer to their jobs; shoppers closer to retail centres; businessmen closer to businesses; clients closer to contractors. If it involves actively destroying the same businesses, Peshawar's BRT would have lost its direction before its inauguration.

(By Faizaan Qayyum Dawn, 06, 08/04/2019)

Five motorcycles, medical unit gutted in fire after oil tanker overturns

A speeding oil tanker overturned and burst into flames at Gulbai Bridge in Shershah at around 6:45am on Wednesday. The incident took a turn for the worse when the thousands of litres of diesel it was carrying, spilled onto the road and caught fire. At least five motorcycles and a mobile medical unit belonging to the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases parked under the bridge were also gutted in the fire.



According to Traffic DIG Javed Meher, the accident occurred on the track leading towards Mauripur from Site Area when the oil tanker was taking a sharp turn and the lock mechanism holding the driver's compartment to the container broke. The tanker overturned and fell on the opposite track after it was separated from the driver's compartment.

DIG Mahesar added that the driver of the oil tanker fled from the scene soon after the accident. In response to a question, the DIG said the ban on heavy traffic did not include oil tankers and water tankers.

As the diesel spread along the bridge and spilt onto the road below, it quickly caught fire, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake.

Fire department officials said they were notified of the accident at 7:02am and fire tenders were dispatched to the site a minute later.

At least three fire tenders were dispatched to the site at first, but looking at the intensity of the blaze, the firefighters called for backup and soon, fire tenders from various parts of the city were sent to aid them.

Fire tenders of Pakistan Navy, Karachi Port Trust and other organisations also participated in the rescue operation. Water was supplied to the tenders through water tankers.

Traffic jam

Law enforcement personnel, including Rangers and police officials, cordoned off the area while the firefighters attempted to douse the blaze.

The Gulbai bridge was closed for vehicular traffic for several hours, causing long queues to form on major thoroughfares connecting SITE Area, Baldia Town, Hub River Road, Nazimabad, Mauripur, Lyari Expressway, Jinnah Bridge and Kharadar.

As it was morning rush hour, scores of commuters traveling to work and schools were left stranded for hours while the rescue teams carried out the work. A large number of traffic police officials were deployed in the area to manage the traffic but it took several hours for the situation to be normalised.

Rescue efforts

When the firefighters had managed to contain the blaze, the authorities called for a crane to lift the oil tanker from the bridge.

Some of the diesel remaining in the tanker was filled in boxes, after which a crane lifted the overturned tanker and set it upright. It was finally removed from the bridge at around 10:45am and later transported to the police station where it was impounded by the police.

According to Chief Fire Officer Tehseen Siddiqui, in addition to the oil tanker, five motorcycles and a medical unit were completely gutted in the fire which also caused some damage to two warehouses located nearby. He added that the diesel which spilt on the road had caused the fire to spread.

(By Raheel Salman The Express Tribune, 04, 11/04/2019)

Growing number of heavy vehicles on Karachi's roads becomes hard to manage

The number of heavy vehicles plying in the city has crossed the 100,000 mark, making it a serious challenge for the authorities to manage the movement of these vehicles as they pose a serious threat to other motorists, it emerged on Sunday.

A report recently compiled by the municipal authorities regarding traffic situation in the city and number of vehicles moving on Karachi roads suggested how big the challenge was amid growing traffic, limited available space and insufficient number of traffic policemen.

“The report says that the number of heavy vehicles in Karachi right now stands at 107,000,” said a source. “Among them is the highest number of oil tankers which are 65,000 in total and then 13,000 10-wheeler trucks. There are some 10,000 long-haul or 22-wheeler trailers which are seen moving in the city; then there are 8,000 water tankers, 7,000 dumpers and 4,000 six-wheeler trucks.”



The heavy vehicles include around 65,000 oil tankers and 8,000 water tankers

He said that the report mentioned the existing four routes of heavy traffic in Karachi, which caused gridlock at different points.

“The first known route of heavy traffic movement is Superhighway to New Karachi Industrial Area via slip road,” he said, referring to the report. “The second route is National Highway to Godown Chowrangi via Manzil Petrol Pump, Younus Chowrangi, Dawood Chowrangi to 8000 Road near Jam Sadiq bridge. The third route involves Northern Bypass, Paracha Chowk, Estate Avenue, Siemens Chowrangi and back to Gulbai, Mauripur Road, Jinnah Bridge, Karachi Port [East and West Wharf], Mai Kolachi Road up to NLC Intersection and vice versa.”

The final and fourth route, he said, included the KPT Interchange to KPT via Korangi Road, left turn from Boulevard Light Signal to Sunset Boulevard, Signal No 2, Defence Library, Punjab Colony, Submarine Light Signal over KPT Underpass in Clifton, Boat Basin, Mai Kolachi, left turn from M. T. Khan Road and Jinnah Bridge.

He admitted that in all four routes heavy vehicles in the city touched mostly those areas and roads which catered to normal and public traffic posing more threats and causing severe congestions.

“There are no dedicated routes which allow the heavy traffic to cross the city without touching its key roads. So one way or the other, the heavy traffic has to encounter with other vehicles on city roads to reach their destinations,” he said.

The report also identified several spots in the city which witnessed congestion due to the movement of the heavy traffic, but so far there had been no permanent solution to the problem.

“There are six points in the city which witness congestions and jams almost every day due to the movement of the heavy vehicles,” said the source. “These include KPT East Wharf to Jinnah bridge. Then there is a point from Jinnah Bridge to Gulbai via ICI bridge.

The traffic also gets stuck on M. T. Khan Road from Habib School to Jinnah bridge. A permanent problem of traffic movement is reported on Sunset Boulevard to Qayyumabad Bridge. Road from West Wharf to ICI Bridge is no exception and same is the case with road from Gulbai to Mauripur Village.”

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 22/04/2019)

BRT, KCR projects will cater to only ‘10pc passenger load of city’

The Rs200 billion public transport projects would cater to only 10 per cent of the city’s total passenger load unless the government backs them up with efficient feeding services and attractive fare structure.



This was stated by Dr Noman Ahmed, professor and dean, Faculty of Architecture and Management Sciences, NED University of Engineering and Technology, at a panel discussion held at the Usman Institute of Technology (UIT) on Wednesday.

Organised by the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler), the event aimed at educating students on the pressing urban challenges Karachi faces and helping them understand roles they could play in the city’s progress.

‘Govt departments responsible for city’s upkeep don’t have capacity to do their job’

Sharing his views on the subject, Dr Ahmed said that one of the biggest issues the city faced was the fact that the government departments responsible for its upkeep didn’t have the capacity to do their job.

“There is a major need for restructuring and to have strong executive institutions,” he said, adding that all government departments required institutional efficiency, including the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and Karachi Development Authority.

Briefly tracing the city’s history, he said that the British realised the importance of Karachi soon after taking it over and laid the foundations of a municipality in 1852.

The city remained a federal capital territory for over nine years after independence and grew enormously as an economic hub and, in the process, also became home to many people who came for jobs from other parts of the country and settled here.

“The government departments, however, couldn’t grow with the same pace as the city’s population increased manifold,” he said. Describing the city’s transport challenges as very serious, he pointed out that the two ambitious government transport projects, the bus rapid transit (BRT) comprising six-plus lines and the revival of Karachi Circular Railway, estimated to cost Rs170bn and Rs22bn, separately, would cater to only 10 per cent of the city’s passenger load.

"This cost is for the projects if they are completed on their scheduled time," he explained, adding that it would be another challenge for the government to bring about change in social habits and encourage people forced to buy their own vehicles due to prolonged public transport crisis to opt for BRT.

'No water shortage: problem is in distribution'

On water shortages, he was of the opinion that it was a hypothesis that supplies of the basic commodity were far less than the city's requirement as the issue seemed to be more connected with poor distribution and lack of efficiency.

"Top officials of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board admit that one third of city's water is lost [due to theft and dilapidated distribution network]," he said.

Responding to a question, he said that it's unfortunate that displacements of the poor marked the beginning of some major city projects, though ways existed to avoid events affecting human lives and livelihoods, like in the case of Lyari Expressway.

Senior researcher at Piler Zeenia Shaukat, the other panellist, questioned as to how 'development' should be defined and who paid the cost for the city's 'development'.

Asked about high-rise issues, she said that it's an old phenomenon which saw a rise in the 1990s and is seen as a problem mainly due to failure on part of the regulatory bodies to ensure compliance with rules and regulations during and after construction.

Referring to the city's violent history, she said that while security agencies praise their efforts in bringing peace to the city, it appeared to be a temporary phenomenon and the root causes of violence should be studied.

During the question-answer session, it was pointed out that the city's growing civic issues also indicated presence of a large political vacuum as it lacked required representation in both provincial and national assemblies.

The idea to bring the city again under federal control wouldn't bring long-term benefits, it was said.

Dr Shoaib Zaidi, the dean of UIT, also participated in the discussion moderated by Abida Ali representing Piler.
(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 15, 25/04/2019)

SHC seeks progress report on safety, security of fuel-carrying vehicles

The Sindh High Court directed the federal and provincial authorities to file a progress report regarding the standards of safety and security about the fuel-carrying vehicles, it emerged on Sunday.

The SHC said that it had directed the authorities concerned on May 30, 2016 to constitute a high-level commission/ committee to examine the existing laws and whether they matched the international standards of safety and security, particularly while transporting explosive or dangerous material.

A single bench of the SHC headed by Justice Salahuddin Panhwar observed that the record was not reflecting if any commission was established or any compensation was paid to the victims of a horrible accident between an oil tanker and passenger coach in a Malir locality in 2015.

More than 60 people were killed in a bus-oil tanker smash near Memon Goth in 2015

The bench also issued notices to federal and provincial law officers for May 3 and called a progress report about the implementation of its May 30 order by next hearing.

The bench issued these directives during the hearing of appeals filed by Mohammad Hanif and Imamuddin against their convictions handed down by a sessions court last year in the case pertaining to an accident between an oil tanker and a passenger bus in the Memon Goth area of Malir in January 2015. Over 60 people were killed in the accident.

The bench observed that such oil tankers appeared to be moving bombs resulting in immense loss of life, adding that since oil was known as highly flammable, it required to be transported strictly in accordance with laws and rules in properly designed vehicles. However, it is noticed that companies concerned were transporting huge amounts of oil in simple trucks and vehicles merely by doing some alterations and this was nothing short of a criminal negligence on the part of the quarters concerned, including traffic police and transport authorities, it added.

Referring to its May 30, 2016 order, the bench said that it had asked the federation with all relevant institutions as well as after taking the provincial governments on board, to constitute a high-level committee/commission consisting of representatives of the Hydrocarbon Department Institute of Pakistan, chief inspector for explosives, the ministry of industries; directorate general for gas, ministry of petroleum & natural resources; inspectors general of police of all the provinces, motor vehicles and fitness departments of all the provinces and the deputy secretary, ministry of petroleum, as its members.

The SHC had said that the committee /commission would examine the existing laws as well as whether they matched the international standards of safety and security, particularly while transporting explosives/dangerous material.

The court in its earlier order had also asked the federal authorities to constitute such a committee/commission within 15 days and it would decide the issues preferably within two months and file a compliance report in the court.

The bench in its previous order had also observed that the authorities needed not only to inform the licensees time and again for complying with safety measures, but also should ensure an action, particularly when such negligence was likely to endanger public safety.

The public safety cannot be left at the sole discretion of the licensee, but the authority is also equally responsible to ensure a proper mechanism of check.

(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 29/04/2019)

Women motorcyclists take to the streets of Karachi

More than 80 women from different areas of Karachi participated in the First Women Bike Riders Rally organised by Pink Riders on Sunday.



The women began their drive from Nagan Chowrangi, making their way through KDA Chowrangi, Karimabad, Sohrab Goth, Nipa Chowrangi, Hassan Square, Karsaz, Sharae Faisal, Teen Talwar, Do Talwar, Old Clifton, Clifton Beach and to Sea View. The rally made stops along the way. In total, they covered 60 kilometres in their journey.

Farzana, who is a resident of Liaquatabad, said that the Pink Riders institute was playing an important role in the grooming of women. "The institute is not only teaching motorcycle riding to the women but also helping them build their confidence.

Alia, who is a resident of Gulshan-e-Iqbal, said that she was a university student and has been riding motorcycle for the last six months. Her ability to ride a motorcycle is helping her save money which would otherwise be spent on her commute from her home to university and back.

A housewife, Gulnaz, who is a resident of Korangi, said that she was a working woman who earns money to meet the expenses at home. She said that she wanted to learn how to ride a motorcycle because she did not want to depend on anyone in managing her responsibilities.

Pink Riders founder Payam Khurram said that she felt the necessity to establish the institute when she saw women facing difficulties and inconvenience during the travel. She said that they have trained around 700 women from different walks of life including housewives, business women and students of schools, colleges and universities.

Khurram said that their mission had been met with success so far. She said that through this rally, they were spreading awareness among women who are unable get out of their homes and travel because of dependency on drivers or public transport. The training also helps inculcate a sense of independence among women, she said adding that the institute was also playing a positive role in building the women's confidence.

The women and girls participating in the rally wore pink jackets along with helmets, elbow and knee pads to ensure safety. Filled with zeal, these women rode the motorcycles on the roads without any hesitation, claiming their public space. Some women faced difficulties during this long rally but they did not give up and reached their destination, Sea View Beach. The message they conveyed was that of gender equality and that they were not less than men in this field.

(By Rija Fatima The Express Tribune, 05, 29/04/2019)

In Karachi, Numaish Chowrangi underpass inches closer to completion

The ongoing construction of the underpass at Numaish Chowrangi is one of the most important phases of the Green Line Bus Rapid Transport System (BRTS) in Karachi. To the relief of motorists, the roofing work of the underpass has been expedited because of which the road extending from Britto Road to Shahrah-e-Quaideen will be opened for pedestrians from mid-Ramazan, The Express Tribune has learnt.



Due to the ongoing construction of the underpass, however, authorities are currently considering a change in the route for the central procession that's customarily held to commemorate Youm-e-Ali on the 21st of Ramazan.

Per the planned alternative route, the procession will pass through Gurumandir, People's Chowrangi, Saddar, Preedy Street, Regal Chowk, Tibet Center, and MA Jinnah Road to

conclude in Kharadar.

Roofing work

According to the plan, the roofing of different portions of the underpass will be finished by the end of August this year, after which the underpass will be opened for traffic passing through MA Jinnah Road and the adjoining link roads – all of which are currently closed. The overall construction of the underpass, however, is expected to be completed by December.

Talking to The Express Tribune, the Chief Finance Officer of the Karachi Infrastructure Development Company Limited (KIDCL) Zubair Channa explained that apart from the expedited roofing work of the underpass, the filling of dug up roadsides around Mazar-e-Quaid is also underway and efforts are being made to make the road usable for the Youm-e-Ali procession.

Members from the managing committee of the Youm-e-Ali procession, along with other officials, recently attended a meeting chaired by Karachi Commissioner Iftikhar Shalwani. During the meeting, the KIDCL briefed the attendees with the progress of the development work currently under way at the Numaish Chowrangi, adding that major roofing work of the underpass has been completed and the entire underpass will also be constructed soon.

Shedding light on the meeting's outcome, Shalwani informed The Express Tribune that the route plan for the procession is being finalised after consulting all parties, adding that further details of the route can be sought from Deputy Commissioner Ali Ahmed Siddiqui. Despite repeated calls, however, Siddiqui could not be reached for comment.

Youm-e-Ali procession

The manager of the Youm-e-Ali procession Syed Shabbar Raza said that the procession has been following the same route since 1961, therefore, it is inconvenient to change it all of a sudden.

"Instead of altering the designated route, the BRT administration should speed up the development work, particularly in front of the KGA ground," said Raza. "The procession will pass through the old route even if 80% of the work is completed before the 21st of Ramazan. However, if they are unable to speed up the work, we will have to follow the proposed route."

Raza also mentioned that during the meeting, the officials assured the procession committee that they would try their best to speed up the construction work so that the procession can pass through its conventional route.

Numaish Chowrangi is the busiest intersection of the city and all traffic flowing to Saddar, Tower and II Chundrigar Road passes through it. Moreover, the intersection has around 10 interlinked routes, including two smaller streets and three important thoroughfares, and per an estimate, around 150,000 vehicles pass through it every day.

Owing to the ongoing construction, however, the flow of traffic has been severely disrupted, causing vehicles to take alternative routes and experience frequent traffic jams. As a result, frustrated motorists demand the administration to complete the development work on Numaish Chowrangi at the earliest.

Residents wary

It is not only motorists who are experiencing inconvenience but many businesses, especially shops located near Numaish, have been severely affected.

People living in the vicinity also complain about the pollution caused by construction rubble which causes breathing problems to many.

Under the supervision of the federal government, the development work of the underpass on Numaish Chowrangi is under way for the past six months and, so far, only 40% of work has been completed.

According to the KIDCL engineers, the development work of the underpass had to be slowed down due to the relocation of water and several other utility lines. They added that since utility lines have now been repositioned, construction is expeditiously underway. Similarly, Phase I-B of the Green Line Bus project, extending from Numaish Chowrangi to Taj Medical Complex, has been hit by delays for the past two-and-a-half years.

The development work on Numaish Chowrangi also experienced unnecessary delays several times due to poor planning and mismanagement. An elevated structure, for instance, was to be erected per the federal government's original planning but the Mazar-e-Quaid Management Board raised objections because of which a change had to be incorporated in the design of the underpass.

Similarly, the Sindh government submitted an objection, stating that the underpass will create an obstruction for the red line of the Bus Rapid Transit, together with several other lines which will pass through it. As a result, the work on the underpass remained suspended for several months.

On the Sindh government's request, another change in the design had to be integrated into the plan which wasted another eight months. Finally, the work was resumed in October 2018.
(By Syed Ashraf Ali The Express Tribune, 04, 06/05/2019)

In Karachi, road works in Ramazan add to citizens' woes

Each year, the month of Ramazan – the holiest in the Islamic calendar – brings with it a whole new set of problems for the citizens of Karachi. There is the frequent load-shedding as the power utility struggles to cope with the extra demand for electric power as citizens try to fend off the heat. Then there are the soaring prices of essential goods, which go largely unchecked due to the lack of an effective mechanism implemented by the city administration. Added to these are the traffic jams – made worse this time by the civic agencies that have dug up several major thoroughfares as part of development schemes.

The last of these problems is the easiest to avoid. And yet, in the absence of proper planning and strategy, the citizens are left to brave hours-long traffic jams as they try to make their way home in time to break their fast.

It's quite simple, really: don't dig up roads right before the advent of Ramazan. Or even if you must, at least plan alternative routes to ease the citizens' suffering.

What is even more incredulous is that the University Road, which was constructed at a cost of billions of rupees and was inaugurated amid much fanfare quite recently, has been dug up again because one utility provider forgot to install new lines.

Months after the road was formally inaugurated, the K-Electric decided to install cables and dug a considerable portion of the road.

Here, the question arose as to who allowed for the road to be dug up again. Was it the Karachi Development Authority, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, the provincial government or the East District Municipal Corporation? According to sources who spoke to The Express Tribune on the condition of anonymity, each of the institutions played a part in ruining the road, of which at least a two-kilometre stretch has been dug up.

One of the most important thoroughfares of the city, the MA Jinnah Road, has been closed to traffic for months due to the underpass being built at the Numaish Chowrangi. This has increased the volume of traffic on its adjacent streets and link roads, which are ill-equipped to handle the pressure.

Another two underpasses are being constructed on Shaheed-e-Millat Road, due to which traffic is being diverted to the service lanes. This causes hours-long traffic jams as the service lanes are too narrow to deal with the high volume of traffic passing through.

Meanwhile, Nishtar Road has been completely dug up due to the construction of roads behind the zoo. Commuters trying to reach their destinations through the connecting roads face traffic jams on a daily basis.

Underground water lines are being laid on the road from National Stadium to New Town Chowrangi. The road will be reconstructed after the completion of this maintenance work. This is another important road in the city where two of the biggest hospitals are located.

The Korangi Industrial Area road is also being constructed and one of the tracks has been closed for traffic from Vita Chowrangi.

With around half the city's major thoroughfares having been dug up, it is no surprise that the citizens complain of frequent traffic jams. It seems the city administration has no plan to ease their suffering either.
(By Naeem Khanzada The Express Tribune, 04, 09/05/2019)

Sindh govt to launch 1,000 new buses in Karachi

The Government of Sindh has signed an agreement with Daewoo, a Korean transport company, to launch a new bus service in Karachi.

The project was announced by the Sindh Transport Minister Syed Awais Qadir Shah, during a press conference on Saturday. He said that the Government of Sindh and the Daewoo bus service Managing Director Shehryar Chishti have signed a contract to launch a project under which 1,000 buses will be introduced in Karachi.

Initially, buses under the new project will run on 40 routes, each 10 to 15 kilometres long, in Karachi and soon the project will be extended to other cities in the province, he added.

It has been decided that initially 60 buses will be introduced in the metropolis in 60 days, during the first phase of the project. After two months, another 200 will be added to the fleet, in the second phase of the project.

Speaking about the utility of the new bus service, Chishti said that all the buses running under this project will be air conditioned.

Adding to it, minister Shah said that all buses under this project will run on CNG but will not stop running despite CNG outages.

The government of Sindh has taken the transporters and other stakeholders into confidence regarding the initiation of the project and it will not harm anyone, said the transport minister, adding that it should negate that Pakistan Peoples Party has abandoned Karachi because it doesn't get elected from the city.

Past Promises

PPP has to its credit a long list of promises for bus services in Karachi during different tenures of its governments in Sindh.

The transport minister had recently announced the launch of a bus service in February this year, during a question-answer session of the Sindh Assembly. During the session, he sought quotations from interested investors for a bus service consisting of 200 buses covering 10 routes in Karachi.

Previously, in 2017, Chief Minister (CM) Murad Ali Shah had also approved a plan to introduce 600 intercity buses in Karachi, as a part of the Sindh Government's five-year loan programme through the Sindh Modarabad Management Limited. The Sindh government had announced to facilitate transporters in generating funds for new buses.

In the following year, another ten buses were introduced in the city, under the Peoples Bus Service project, launched by the then transport minister Nasir Hussain Shah. Buses run under this project were also owned and operated by Daewoo. This project was shut down just after a year in April 2019.

Other Transit Projects

Transport minister Shah also answered questions about other transit projects during the press conference.

While responding to a question about the Green Line project, Shah said that he doesn't see the project getting completed till 2020. He further said that the Government of Sindh is ready to work together with the Federal Minister for Railways Sheikh Rasheed to remove the encroachments from Karachi Circular Railway's tracks and is only waiting for the no-objection certificate to be issued by the federal minister.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 12/05/2019)

New fleet of buses to hit Karachi's roads within 2 months, says minister

The Sindh transport ministry has signed an agreement with a large private bus service provider that would translate into running of 1,000 buses in the provincial capital in coming months, Transport Minister Awais Shah said on Saturday.

The intra-city bus service on a fast-track basis is in furtherance of the government's plans to launch bus rapid transit systems and rail mass transit systems, he said.

Speaking at a press conference at his office, Minister Shah termed it good news for the people of the metropolis, saying that an agreement had been signed between his ministry, under the People's Bus Service, and the Daewoo Pakistan Express Bus Service Ltd under which 1,000 buses would be running on various routes of Karachi.

"The Sindh government is set to execute the plan to run 1,000 buses on various routes of Karachi under the People's Bus Service for which we have inked an agreement with the Daewoo Company," said the minister.

He said 200, out of the total 1,000 buses, would be running on the roads of Karachi within the next two months in the first phase of the plan. Similarly, the same number of buses would be added to the system in the space of couple of months.

The new AC buses to cater to 40 routes, each route not to be longer than 15km

The new bus service would cater to the city's 40 routes and each route would not be longer than 15 kilometres.

"We are finishing the routes' plan as each route would be as long as 10km to 15km," said the minister.

He said similar bus services would soon be launched in other cities of Sindh.

"This is a gift for the people of Karachi from [Pakistan Peoples Party] chairman Bilawal Bhutto," said Mr Shah.

Criticism rejected

He rubbished the constant criticism by certain opposition parties that the ruling PPP was ignoring the sprawling capital of Sindh, saying such projects clearly showed how "baseless" those claims "against our party are".

"[With] each project like this offered and executed by our government, we continuously expose those elements who are criticising us on baseless grounds. These elements claim that we don't care for Karachi or punish its people because the PPP has not won seats from there. Our actions clearly prove such claims as nothing but false and politically motivated," the minister said.

"This is good news of huge proportions that will certainly mitigate the city's most neglected problem,"

He said the project had the financial implication of Rs15 billion, which the government, despite enduring worst financial hardships due to stoppage of Sindh's funds by the Centre, had approved to provide people quality means of transport.

Sheikh Rashid attacked

Answering a question regarding the Karachi Circular Railway, the minister grabbed the opportunity to criticise Railways Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, claiming that the ministry could not efficiently run as long as Mr Ahmed was its minister.

"He has the habit to change statement with the blink of an eye. The Sindh government is ready to begin work on the KCR. We are waiting for the no-objection certificate from the minister, we are waiting to see when he begins removing encroachments on the track of the project as he has recently claimed in a recent statement of his. We are ready to join hands with him, but he is not coming forward," said Minister Shah.

He said he did not see completion of the federal government's Green Line Bus Project by 2020. However, he added, the provincial government would not stop other bus services because of delays in the Green Line project.

The transport minister said the provincial government had taken all stakeholders, including transporters, in confidence for the project assuring them that “this project will not hit anyone of them”.

He said all buses would run on CNG and would not be affected even if there was no CNG available in the city.

Shehryar Chishti, chairman of Daewoo Bus Company, said best business model had been devised by his company for the sprawling city and soon the new buses would be there to ease transport issues of the people of Karachi.

He said all buses would be air-conditioned that would offer quality transport facility on economical fares.
(By Hasan Mansoor Dawn, 15, 12/05/2019)

Sindh transport dept struggles to retrieve occupied land worth billions

The Sindh Government’s Transport and Mass Transit Department has once again sprung into action to get its lands, worth billions of rupees, vacated. The properties scattered across the province, belong to the Karachi Transport Corporation (KTC) and the Sindh Road Transport Corporation (SRTC), and are occupied by various institutions.

The department has written letters to the Sindh Police chief, Karachi Commissioner and the deputy commissioners and DIGs of Sukkur, Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas and Shaheed Benazirabad, seeking help to retrieve the land.

The properties

According to the transport department’s records, the said properties, some measuring hardly an acre (a land measure equivalent to 4,840 square yards), while others much larger, have been encroached upon by various government agencies and departments.

In all, the various departments have upon 69 acres and 345 gantay (a land measure equivalent to three acres), besides smaller parcels totaling up to 14,969 square yards in Karachi alone. This is besides the 69 acres and 636 gantay land occupied in rural Sindh.

Out of the most expensive pieces of land is the KTC Depot in Korangi, located on main Korangi Road. Of the 24 acre-plot, five acres are in use of the Sindh Rangers, while 19 acres have been allocated for a judicial complex.

Another tract of the KTC’s land at Malir S. No. 155 located near the Malir Halt, measuring 12.1 acres, is currently under the use of the Sindh Rangers, who also possess a 10-acre plot of land, bearing the title KTC Mehran Depot, in Model Colony. A third tract of land in use of the Sindh Rangers is the KTC’s 8.36-acre Depot on Street 1, Gulistan-e-Jauhar Block 6.

Meanwhile, the transport department only has the possession of three acres of the 7.48-acre plot of its Manghopir Central Workshop. The remaining was allotted, with approval from the chief minister, to the Sindh Industrial Trading Estate Limited.

Another 6.15-acre plot belonging to the KTC near Abdullah College, Nazimabad, is under the possession of Pirabad Police Station, K-P General Bus Terminal and the BRTS terminal.

Swedish Pak Bus Private Limited possesses a 5.9-acre land where a former KTC Depot was located in UP Mor, North Karachi. A 5.3-acre plot at Dawood Chowrangi, Landhi, is under the possession of Al-Aziz Private Bus Operators. Another 2.4-acre land, marked as the KTC Bus Terminal in Surjani, North Karachi, is under the possession of the Green Bus Company.

Around half of the 0.72-acre plot, 21 G-Garden Road, Karachi, has been encroached upon by private bus operator, Raja Sikandar Hayat. The case is being heard in court.

Meanwhile, the town municipal administration, without the transport department’s permission, has turned the SRTC’s Plot No. S-26, spread over an area of 3.47 acres on Gulbai Maripur Road, into a football ground.

The total area of the third and fourth floors of the KTC’s Head Office located in the Civic Center is 12,751 square yards. The fourth floor is physically under the possession of the Excise and Taxation Department while the transport department is using the third floor.

Outside Karachi

Currently, an accountability court, the offices of the Rural Development Department DG, Katchi Abadi Director, Human Rights Director, UC-IV Chairman and others are situated on a 15-acre tract of land belonging to the Sindh Road Transport Corporation (SRTC) in Hyderabad’s Wahdat Colony.

Former SRTC employees and other individuals have occupied the 105 colony quarters located on this land, while the space for the workshop is vacant. There include one type-A bungalow, four type-B bungalows, 19 type-C quarters and 80 type-D quarters, besides three staff quarter and a Maulvi quarter.

Another 20-acre tract land, formerly the SRTC headquarters at 10-A Latifabad, Hyderabad, is under the possession of the Military Police.

Meanwhile, land measuring 6.15 acres near the Makli Eidgah in Thatta, which was meant to serve as the SRTC's depot and workshop, has been encroached upon by former SRTC employees and other individuals.

Separately, the Sindh Rangers and the Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) are in the possession of open plot numbers 77, 79, 83, 84 and 85, which are part of a 9.53-acre tract of land belonging to the SRTC. These are located on Meeru Khan Road, Larkana.

A police check post is built on a 0.41-acre of land on the SRTC's bus stand in Larkana.

The total land of the SRTC depot's workshop numbers 360, 561, 367 is nine acres, which has been turned into a football stadium by the town municipal administration without taking any permission from the department.

Former Transport Secretary Akhtar Hussain Ghauri, who wrote the letters and was recently relieved from the post, told The Express Tribune that the department planned to run buses in Karachi, after retrieving all the land so that the transport woes faced by the public could be resolved.

The government has decided to reach out to investors to introduce standard buses in the city. As an incentive, the provincial government will provide them with depots on these pieces of land for the next 20 years to park their buses.
(By GM Jamali The Express Tribune, 05, 13/05/2019)

Pakistan's 30% vehicles to go electric by 2030

Prime Minister Imran Khan has directed federal and provincial authorities to ensure liaison for taking effective steps to prevent floods in Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).



The prime minister issued this instruction on Friday in a briefing on climate change in the G-B and the AJK during a high-level meeting of the Climate Change Committee.

According to a press release issued by the PM Media Office, "The PM called for vigilant coordination among the authorities to take necessary steps for tackling any situation due to possible floods."

Imran Khan also directed the Climate Change Ministry to finalise electric vehicle policy in the next two weeks and present it before the federal cabinet for approval.

Earlier, PM's Adviser on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam briefed the meeting on the electric vehicle policy. He said smoke emitting vehicles was a major cause of environmental pollution, particularly in Punjab.

He said the electric vehicles, besides reduction in environmental pollution, would also lessen oil imports and increase business opportunities in the country. "Pakistan will upgrade about 30 per cent of its road vehicles to electric vehicles by 2030," he later told the media.

The adviser said the world is now moving towards the electric car and that Pakistan would follow suit. "The technology will help cut the demand for oil and we could save about Rs2 billion annually. In addition, pollution will reduce by up to 70 per cent," he added.

The meeting was also briefed on a strategy to control smog in the province and was informed that Punjab Green Development Programme had started to work in this regard.

Ten smog monitoring centres have been established across the province. The smog working groups have been set up to create awareness among people regarding the preemptive measure. The meeting was told that the government is guiding the brick kiln owners to adopt modern methods.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) is going to be signed with a bio-energy company for destruction of crops' residues, the premier was told. The adviser also briefed the prime minister on 'Ten Billion Trees Tsunami' – government's most important project towards environmental betterment.

"Various proposals were under consideration to gather financial resources of the project which include Green Sukuk, Forest Bonds and the establishment of Green Fund, a Chinese cooperation project."

He said all legalities have been completed to check plastic bags use in the federal capital. In this regard, a complete ban on the use of plastic bags would be imposed on 14th August this year.

Minister for National Food Security Mehboob Sultan, Minister for Planning Khusro Bakhtiar, Minister for Energy Omar Ayub, PM's Adviser on Commerce Razak Dawood, Special Assistant to PM Firdous Ashiq Awan, Nadim Afzal Chan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan, Balochistan CM Jam Kamal Khan, AJK PM Farooq Haider, Gilgit-Baltistan CM Hafeezur Rahman attended the moot.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 01, 18/05/2019)

Electric vehicles by 2030

The good news is that the government is encouraging the use of electric cars in the country in place of the present fuel driven ones. The PM's Adviser on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam has briefed the media about a new electric vehicle policy under which Pakistan aims to raise to about 30 per cent the share of electric vehicles on the roads by 2030. This will help cut oil consumption but more importantly play a part in reduction of air pollution, particularly in Punjab province where smog has become quite a big problem. Vehicle emissions play a major role in air pollution and in the past all attempts to try and check the quality of vehicles on the roads have yielded limited results. By and large, we need to adopt better and more efficient technologies like electric-powered vehicles to deal with the problem instead of trying to run after poorly maintained vehicles.

While electric cars are an attractive alternative, the technology is still an expensive one and can only be successful if the local industry plays a part in introducing it here. For us to achieve the ambitious target set in terms of the number of electric cars on the road, the government would have to give a number of incentives to car makers on the one hand and achievable targets on the other. What we have seen in the past is that while the industry is quick to grab the incentives, it usually lags in reaching the targets set for it. Take for example the indigenisation programme that the government has been trying to have implemented for the past thirty odd years. Not much has come out of it. This mistake should not be repeated. While it is always good to adopt new technologies, a proper groundwork will have to be laid to ensure their success. Otherwise, it will remain an elusive dream for all.

(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 16, 20/05/2019)

Work on Yellow Line BRTS likely to begin next year

The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) has approved the Yellow Line bus rapid transit system (BRTS) for provision of transport facilities in Karachi. The 21-kilometre-long route starting from Dawood Chowrangi in Landhi will end at Numaish Chowrangi to merge with the Green Line.

A CDWP meeting chaired by the federal minister for planning and development, Khusro Bakhtyar, last week in Islamabad gave approval to some major projects presented by the Sindh government. These projects included Karachi Water and Sewerage Services Improvement Project Phase-1 worth Rs14.729bn and the Yellow Line worth Rs61.4bn.

The projects will now be forwarded to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) for formal approval.

Senior officials of the Sindh Planning and Development Department, Sindh Mass Transit Authority and other relevant departments attended the CDWP meeting. These officials told The Express Tribune that earlier the Sindh government was planning to build and operate the Yellow Line project under public-private partnership model. However, since the private companies failed to make a good offer even after the passage of one and a half year, the idea was dropped. Just five months ago, the World Bank showed an interest in the project and consequently, the work has been started in this direction.

The Managing Director of the Sindh Mass Transit Authority, Iqtedar Ahmed, told The Express Tribune that CDWP approved the Yellow Line Project last week and the work on it has already been initiated in collaboration with the World Bank. The initial design of the project has been prepared, but the detailed design has yet to be made, he said.

According to the details gathered by The Express Tribune, the work on the project will start next year and will take two and a half years to complete. The total cost of the projects is estimated at \$438.9 million of which, \$381.9 million will be provided by the World Bank. The Sindh government will contribute \$19.5 million towards the project cost while the private sector companies will bear \$37.9 million of the cost. The buses for the Yellow Line project will be bought and operated on public private partnership basis.

Under the Yellow Line project, eight underpasses will be constructed at Murtaza Chowrangi, Singer Chowrangi, Bilal Chowrangi, Vita Chowrangi, Brooks Chowrangi, Khyaban-e-Ittehad, Korangi Road intersection and the intersection on Sunset Boulevard. Jam Sadiq Bridge will also be widened for the project.

Sindh government officials hoped that ECNEC will give final approval in coming few months. They said soon after the ECNEC okays the project work will begin on the detailed design of the project. This will be followed by tender processing and the actual development and construction work will begin sometime in 2020.

Ahmed said that after the approval by ECNEC, the federal government and World Bank will settle the loans following which, the developmental work will begin.

(By Syed Ashraf Ali The Express Tribune, 04, 23/05/2019)

Highway projects worth Rs60bn in the offing

The federal government has decided to initiate several highway projects costing around Rs60 billion on the basis of construct, run and transfer (BOT) in the next financial year.

These projects include the conversion of Karachi Northern Bypass from a two-way lane to six-way, expansion of Swat Expressway from Chakdara to Bagh Dheri and the construction of eight highways.

The National Highway Authority (NHA) will expand Swat Expressway from Chardar to Bagh Dheri. The cost of the project is estimated at Rs36 billion. The land for the project will be purchased at a price of Rs20 billion.

The total cost will come up to Rs56 billion. It is recommended that Rs20 billion be allocated in the upcoming budget for the project.

The motorway from Kharian to Rawalpindi will be converted into a two-way lane on the basis of BOT at a cost of Rs57 million.

The conversion of Karachi Northern Bypass from a two-way lane to six-way will also be carried out on the basis of BOT.

A sum of Rs1.35 billion will be allocated for the project. Land will be bought at a cost of Rs1.3 billion and Rs50 million will be spent on its feasibility study. Overall, the project will cost Rs13 billion.

The conversion of **Sambrial-Kharian** Road two-way has also been recommended at a cost of Rs40 billion.

A feasibility study for restoration of the Karachi-Quetta-Chaman Road has also been recommended.
(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 03, 30/05/2019)

Rise and rise of fuel prices

It is the season for relatives to meet and greet one another, driving across town for rendezvous that only happen on an annual basis but with full excitement. The government has taken away some of this excitement, however, by increasing fuel price by Rs4.26. Somewhat obligated to do so following a drastic rupee depreciation, the timing is most unfortunate.

Eid has been made more difficult for majority of the population because while Muslim countries will be more in tune with the lunar Islamic calendar in the next week, the global economy continues to operate on the Gregorian calendar. Hence, the Pakistani government raised prices just before Eid to align with the beginning of the new month. Holiday travellers have been forced to reconsider their plans, especially those travelling far across the country to visit remote villages for Eid.

Still, the situation could have been more costly. Ogra recommended a price hike double of what it is currently, initially suggesting a 7.8% increase or Rs8.5 per litre. Other types of fuel such as diesel also experienced price hikes but not at the rate originally recommended by Ogra. Owing to the rupee's devaluation, a price hike was inevitable. Opposition parties lambasting PM Khan are merely acting as opportunists to take a swipe at the PTI whenever possible. For Shehbaz Sharif to term this 'economic terrorism' is dramatic and harmful to the progress of the country.

Nevertheless, while the price increase is a fraction of what was recommended, we could expect a further rise in prices later on, possibly after a mild decrease, as per the usual pattern. Further rupee devaluation can also be expected, according to analysts.

The overall reductions in prices of crude oil may or may not prove relevant in lowering the fuel prices offered to Pakistani citizens. A logical solution to solving people's problems with being unable to afford high fuel prices is to revamp the transportation system. Public transportation issues are often talked about but hardly acted upon. Impoverished persons continue to greatly suffer the effects of inflation.
(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 16, 03/06/2019)

Sindh govt to begin work on Red Line Bus Project

Fearing that the Green Line BRT project, managed by the federal government, would not suffice to improve the appalling state of traffic in Karachi, a city with a population of over 15 million, the Government of Sindh has reportedly initiated work on the Red Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project.

The provincial government expects to complete the project within two years, by 2021.

The Red Line project includes the construction of a 29.1-kilometre-long corridor- a 24.4-kilometre-long passage will be constructed from Malir Halt Depot to Numaish and another 2.4-kilometre-long passage will connect Municipal Park to Merewether Tower. Sindh Mass Transport Authority and Trans Karachi Company have been given the responsibility to oversee the project's construction, security, maintenance and operation.

Reportedly, Sindh Government will spend \$88 million on the project, while the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other financiers will contribute \$474.321 million to the project's overall cost. The procurement phase of the project will last from March 2019 to the middle of 2021.

Buses and route

As many as 29 stations will be constructed along the route of the Red Line project, 24 of which will be main corridor stations and remaining 5 will be joint corridor stations. The main BRT lane will be 3.5-metre-wide and the gap between the stations along this lane will extend from 0.3 metre to 0.6 metre. Sidewalks, 1.2 to 3-metre-wide, will also be constructed along the BRT lane.

The BRT fleet will comprise 199 vehicles, including 19 buses extending to nine metres in length, 134 buses extending to 12 metres in length and another 46 buses which will be 18-metre-long. The project will also include two trunk services running along the length of the main BRT corridor.

Opportunities for employment

According to an estimate, the project, once completed, will offer employment to as many as 2,118 individuals. This will include 1,424 jobs pertaining to station services, security and cleaning services. It is also projected that the Red Line project will offer 615 jobs related to bus operations and will result in the creation of 79 new job vacancies at the Trans Karachi Company.

Almost seven per cent of Karachi's population, amounting to a million, is residing nearby the Red Line corridor. It is expected that about 20,000 of these residents will get employment after the Red Line project is materialised.

Sources of income

Revenue from the Red Line BRT project will be generated in the form of fares from passengers, rents from shops and earnings in return for services offered at the stations and through advertisements.

It is estimated that during 2021, the first year of Red Line bus service's operation, fares from passengers will make up the major chunk of the revenue collected from the project, amounting to approximately \$19.47 million (Rs2,686 million). The estimate is based on the assumption that Rs35 will be earned from each passenger on a single trip.

Similarly, the revenue to be generated from advertisements is estimated at \$2.26 billion (Rs365 million) annually. This will account for 10 per cent of the total revenue generated from the Red Line BRT project.

It is also estimated that the rent collected from shops at the stations will be \$ 4.35 million (Rs600 million) annually. This calculation considers commercial rents rates for per square metre. Additionally, it is also expected that the rents collected from shops would suffice to meet the operational and maintenance cost of the project as well as buy new buses to replace the old rundown ones.

Contracts will be given to different companies for services, such as cleaning and security, offered at the stations.

Financial analysis

The financial analysis of the project is based on four assumptions: purchasing local biofuel on 25 per cent margin; purchasing biomethane from local companies on 30 per cent margin; importing biomethane and compressed natural gas (CNG) on 25 per cent margin; and importing CNG on 30 per cent margin.

If CNG is purchased on commercial rates, then cash flow is expected to be 25 per cent instead of 30 per cent. Also, if locally produced CNG, from biofuel, is purchased to run the buses, entire cost of the project will be recovered and it will engender better financial results. In light of this analysis, locally prepared biofuel is suggested to be the preferred option to run the buses.

Drainage System

Keeping in view the potential flooding caused during rainy season in Karachi, additional funds have been allocated for the construction of a drainage system. Also sidewalks along the BRT lane will be tiled allowing the flow of excess water outside the track. Plants will be bedded along the track, which will absorb a considerable amount of excess rainwater.

Arrangements will be made for pedestrians to cross the road so that there is no threat of any accident.

Depots

Sindh Government's land in Malir Halt and near Mausamiyat will be allocated for the construction of depots where BRT vehicles could be parked. Apart from this, land for the construction of offices for vehicle operating companies and service areas for washing the buses will also be provided by the government.

Security

To monitor the BRT corridor all throughout the day, CCTV cameras will be installed along the track, inside the buses and on stations as well. Sensitive spots, particularly cabins where fares will be collected, will be monitored 24/7 through these CCTV cameras.

Apart from this, all items in possession of passengers will be thoroughly checked by security officials and there will be separate queues for women. There will also be a separate compartment inside the bus for women passengers.

Resettlement

Although, no private land will be acquired for this project but around 925 individuals will be displaced for the Red Line project.

The construction will also affect 293 shop owners and 80 institutions, both private and public. Additionally, 493 small traders will have to shift their businesses elsewhere. It is estimated that structures which will be affected by the construction of Red Line project include 207 semi-permanent structures and 86 permanent structures. These structures also include power generators and sign boards.

(By Hassan Abbas The Express Tribune, 04, 11/06/2019)

Sindh govt allocates budget for public transport infrastructure

The Sindh government has earmarked Rs5.2 billion to improve public transport infrastructure in its 2019-2020 budget. The reserved budget will be allocated for the Red Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and the Yellow Line Projects to be built with the support of international financial institutions.

Out of the total allocation, Rs3.15 billion have been reserved for the nine ongoing developmental projects, while Rs2.05 billion have been set aside for eight new schemes.

In addition, Rs690 million have been reserved as the initial development fund for the Redline BRTS which would be completed through the financial assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The overall cost of the project is estimated to be Rs74.68 billion, out of which the ADB will provide Rs28.3 billion in the form of a loan, while Rs6.76 billion will come from the Green Climate Fund reserved by the French Development Agency (AFD). The Sindh government will spend Rs12 billion on the project.

Similarly, the provincial government has also kept initial funds for the Yellow Line BRTS project. The project will be constructed through the financial assistance of the World Bank, while the Sindh government will contribute a share of Rs5.25 billion.

The overall cost of the Yellow Line BRTS project is estimated at 61.43 billion, of which the World Bank will spend Rs534.7 million, while the Sindh government has reserved Rs275 million for the purpose in its budget proposal for 2019-20.

The government has also earmarked Rs370 million as the initial fund for the construction of the inter-city bus terminal at the National Highway, which is expected to incur an overall cost of Rs1.5 billion.

Similarly, Rs500 million has been reserved as the initial fund for the Inter-District Peoples Bus Service project. The project is expected to incur a total cost of Rs2 billion and would serve as a mass transit system for the biggest cities of Sindh, including Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Larkana, Mirpur Khas and Shaheed Benazirabad.

Moreover, Rs25 million has been earmarked to construct the office buildings of the district regional transport authorities in Hyderabad, Thatta, Badin, Mirpur Khas, Sanghar, Umarkot, Tharparkar, Shaheed Benazirabad, Naushahro Feroze, Khairpur, Sukkur, Ghotki, Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Larkana and Dadu.

Likewise, Rs25 million have been allocated for the automation of the public transport system managed by provincial and regional transport authorities, while Rs78.9 and Rs80 million have been apportioned for the construction of bus terminals in Sukkur and Larkana and bus stops in Shaheed Benazirabad, respectively.

(By Kashif Hussain The Express Tribune, 04, 15/06/2019)

Par(kings) of Karachi

Want to make a quick buck in Karachi? Interested in starting a business that requires almost no investment and is bound to get you cash fast?



Well then, all you need is a high-vision jacket [similar to the ones worn by labourers at construction sites], a yellow cap, preferably with the words 'KMC' or 'DMC' inscribed in block letters and a few forged receipts [that you must always reuse] and you are good to go.

You can now make your way to any major thoroughfare or market in the city and start charging people for parking their vehicles.

Is it illegal? Absolutely! Unethical? Of course! Who cares though? Soon, you'll be making enough cash to brush those thoughts aside.

Obviously, you must set aside a certain portion of your income for the authorities. Greasing palms is part of the business. In fact, the most difficult part of the business, you will find, is to locate a spot that isn't already taken.

You see, charged parking is big business in Karachi, raking in millions of rupees every day.

King of the road

Once you establish yourself as the 'contractor' of a particular site, no one will dare question your authority. Every motorist, whether they arrive in an over-priced SUV or a two-wheeler, must bow to your whims and pay the fee to park in your realm.

You can demand anywhere between Rs20 and Rs100 from each vehicle and most motorists would be happy to pay, believing that at least you would look after their property while they go about their business. How naïve can someone be?

The little receipt that you have recycled for the umpteenth time clearly states that you are not responsible for any damage to the vehicle. But who reads the fine print anyway? It really is the perfect business. You just wear a jacket, demand money off anyone parking in your mini-fiefdom and give no service in return.

Official stance

Under the law, only the civic agencies can collect charged parking fees – that too, after a spot is designated for charged parking after a debate in the relevant local government body.

The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation's (KMC) law for charged parking applies across the city, even though the six District Municipal Corporations (DMCs) manage the majority of these sites. In fact, the DMCs cumulatively have over 150 sites between them, compared to the 31 sites operated by the KMC.

When The Express Tribune reached out to the KMC's Director for Charged Parking, Abdul Khaliq Baloch, he admitted that the "parking mafia" had become a nuisance for the citizens of Karachi.

Not only do they set up their own designated sites, the parking mafia, according to Baloch, was overcharging motorists manifold. Under the KMC's law, the charge to park a car at any site is Rs20 and for a motorcycle is Rs10.

You will be hard-pressed to find this rate at any charged parking site in the city. When this was pointed out to Baloch, he admitted that they have been receiving complaints from across the city.

He added that they had taken action against some persons involved in the illegal operation, but the problem only seemed to be getting worse.

What Baloch failed to justify was how anyone can simply establish their own fiefdom on a public road and start demanding money from citizens.

Whither the state, one may ask.

But then, you must be naïve to ask that question. For the state apparatus – in this case – the traffic police, the KMC, DMCs and other civic agencies all get their share from the profitable venture.

The only losers are the citizens.

(By Sajid Rauf / Naeem Khanzada The Express Tribune, 04, 19/06/2019)

Police told to solve Liaquatabad's traffic problems in one week

Following his meeting with elected representatives of the District Municipal Corporation Central, Karachi police chief Dr Amir Ahmed Shaikh directed his subordinates on Wednesday to solve the problem of traffic congestion in Liaquatabad and take action against sale of drugs in New Karachi.

The city police chief met with DMC Central chairman Rehan Hashmi and chairmen and vice chairmen of union committees in the district. The DIG-West, DIG-Traffic, SSP-Central and other senior officers were also present.

After listening to problems raised by councillors, Dr Shaikh gave one week to police officers concerned to end traffic problems in Liaquatabad and curb sale of drugs in New Karachi.

He also asked the officers to play their role for curbing crimes in their respective areas in collaboration with the elected representatives.

"We have to work together against peddlers," he said and warned that if any police officer was found involved in drugs, action would be taken against him.

He claimed that compared to last year, street crimes had been reduced during the current year.

He said that youths were involved in 65pc of street crimes and most of the criminals were addicts.

He said that besides drugs, unemployment was also another cause of street crimes.

He said that the police had launched a campaign against beggars and urged the UC chairmen to play their role in this regard.

Separately, while inaugurating the IT lab of the West zone police in district Central, the city police chief directed all investigation officers to get their case files prepared by this IT lab in future.

Despite resource constraints, the city police were making endeavours to improve investigation as there were many problems, he said, adding that efforts were also under way to improve performance of the prosecution department to bring culprits to justice.

In the first phase, IT labs were being set up at police zone level, which would be extended to district as well as police station level to provide a favourable environment to investigators to build an effective case against criminals.

Meanwhile, Rangers on Wednesday held a programme at their anti-terrorist wing in which snatched/stolen vehicles and mobile phones were handed over to their original owners after fulfilling legal formalities.

(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 15, 20/06/2019)

Sindh chief secretary told to play role for allocating land to KMC for truck, bus stand

The Sindh High Court on Wednesday directed the chief secretary to arrange a meeting with the Karachi commissioner, municipal commissioner and director (land) of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation to solve the issues of land for the proposed truck and bus stand.

Hearing a set of petitions about the issues of heavy vehicles and deteriorating traffic situation in the provincial metropolis, a two-judge SHC bench headed by Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar observed that the land was required in the public interest after the KMC official submitted that the provincial authorities had not handed over the land to municipal authorities with proper demarcation. The bench asked the chief secretary to address the issue.

In compliance with an earlier order of the bench, the senior member of the board of revenue, Shamsuddin Soomro, and transport and mass transit secretary Ghulam Abbas Sehto were in attendance when the petitions came up for hearing on Wednesday.

In the last hearing, a representative of the All Pakistan Bus and Van Welfare Association had submitted that 30 acres of private land was available near the Lyari Expressway for intercity long-route terminal.

The law secretary is working on a regulatory system for use of CNG in vehicles, SHC told

Both the officials submitted that a committee had been constituted to visit the private land and it would also examine the title of the land and consider whether it was feasible for the terminal. They said they will file a progress report on the next date.

A representative of the commissioner office submitted that around 50 acres, located at Deh Mochko in Mauripur, had already been handed over to the KMC.

However, land director Shaikh Kamal submitted that the proper handing over had not taken place with demarcation.

In order to solve the controversy, the bench directed the representative of the commissioner office along with mukhtiarkar and director (land) to visit the land in question for its proper demarcation and handing over.

The director (land) will come up with proper proposals for construction of an oil tanker terminal.

Replying to another submission of the transport secretary that 150 acres at the Northern Bypass were available to the KMC for the purpose of terminals, the director (land) said that no such land had been given to the KMC.

At this, the commissioner's representative submitted that the land would be handed over after payment of the cost and the same argument was advanced by the lawyer for the board of revenue.

The director (land) submitted that the KMC had no funds for payment of land and it was facing a financial crunch.

The bench asked the chief secretary to convene a meeting and resolve the issue so that modalities of the transfer would be settled. It directed that the outcome of the meeting must be conveyed to the court on the next date.

A representative of a transporters' association submitted that the land near the Northern Bypass would not be feasible. He suggested that the senior member of the board of revenue might search more lands for terminal so that he could convince all members of his association to make some contributions for the purchase of the land through the KMC if possible.

The commissioner's representative submitted that apart from 150 acres, 250 acres of land were also earmarked at the Northern Bypass, but again it would be handed over to the KMC after payment.

The bench adjourned the matter till Aug 6, directing the land utilisation member to appear in person on the next date.

Faisal Bengali and others had moved the SHC over worsening traffic situation in Karachi and seeking rerouting of heavy vehicles through non-residential areas as well as improvement in public transport.

They asked the court to issue directives for the authorities to improve public transport and introduce other alternatives to help commuters and reduce the burden on the existing transport. The court was further asked to order the authorities to strictly conduct fitness tests of vehicles running on city roads.

Use of CNG kits in school vans

The provincial authorities informed the same bench on Wednesday that the law secretary would prepare a draft law on the CNG-related issue including creation of a regulatory system in cooperation with the secretaries of the transport and industries departments.

The bench was hearing a number of petitions about use of substandard CNG kits and cylinders in commercial vehicles as well as school vans.

At the outset, the additional advocate general filed a statement along with the minutes of a meeting attended by secretaries of transport, industries, consultant to the chief secretary and additional advocate general.

The bench was informed that besides the draft law and proposed regulatory system, the district implementation committees had been constituted to implement the ban on use of CNG/LPG cylinders in school, college, university and seminary vans.

Money laundering case

The Federal Investigation Agency on Wednesday submitted its reply in the SHC on a petition challenging the transfer of a money laundering case related to the Khidmat-i-Khalq Foundation, a charity wing of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, to Islamabad.

MQM leader Ahmed Ali moved the SHC against the transfer of the case to Islamabad and contended that the interior ministry and the director general of the FIA had violated the law by transferring the case to the federal capital.

An assistant director of the FIA appeared before a two-judge SHC bench headed by Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi and filed his comments.

When the bench asked the FIA official whether the KKF was still operating in the provincial metropolis, he replied that the KKF was not operative on paper but was working on the ground.

An assistant attorney general informed the bench that the petitioner, Ahmed Ali, himself had been a part of the KKF.

The matter was adjourned to a date to be fixed by the office in August after court holidays.

(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 15, 20/06/2019)

Karachi traffic police identify 19 'black spots' in city prone to accidents

Traffic authorities have marked 19 'black spots' in the city, where a majority of fatal accidents occur, mainly due to overspeeding, rising number of vehicles, dilapidated roads, darkness, open manholes, violation of traffic rules and lack of road sense among pedestrians.

According to recently compiled data and a senior official, fatal accidents continue to pose a serious threat, mainly to the lives of motorcyclists and pedestrians, at these 19 spots, some of those located on major roads and key traffic intersections.

The latest figures compiled by the Karachi traffic police show that a total of 88 cases of road accidents took place at these spots in 2018.

Sharea Faisal has topped the list of the accident-prone locations; 88 accidents took place at black spots in 2018

"Among the [88] accidents, 71 are those in which a number of people lost their lives," said an official citing the data. "Most victims included bike riders or their pillion passengers and pedestrians. Majority of the victims sustained head injuries, which proved fatal." The official said that in 2019 a total of 29 fatal accidents had been reported at these spots.

The trend of fatal accidents demanded immediate attention of the civic authorities so that they could fix issues like poor condition of roads that was a major source of accidents, he said.

But, he believed that reckless driving, unnecessary hurry and a lack of patience by drivers were also responsible for fatal traffic accidents.

Arterial Sharea Faisal is on top of the list of the 19 black spots, as a total of 18 people had died in 2018 in fatal accidents that took place on the 20-kilometre-long road.

The main Khayaban-i-Shujaat crossing in Phase VI of the Defence Housing Authority came second on the list. Six people died in road accidents there last year.

"Other spots are main Khayaban-i-Mujahid; Shahrah-i-Pakistan near Azizabad in Federal B. Area Block 7; Hakeem Ibn-i-Sina Road near Erum Bakery in Liaquatabad; S.M. Taufeeq Road near Teen Hatti; a patch of Rashid Minhas Road from Jauhar Mor to Drigh Road; ICI Bridge on Mauripur Road; a spot near Saeedabad Police Training Centre on Hub River Road; Gulbai Chowk on main Mauripur Road near a government-run primary school.

"A spot of M.A. Jinnah Road near Shell Petrol Pump; a road in front of KPT Gate No. 15 in Keamari; Baloch Colony Bridge over Shaheed-i-Millat Road; road between Vita Chowrangi and Chamra Chowrangi in Korangi Industrial Area; main National Highway; the U-turn near Malir jail on main National Highway from Quaidabad to Malir; road near Raja Petrol Pump in Gulberg and 4-K Chowrangi in Surjani Town" were the prime spots where road accidents occurred in the metropolis.

Although accidents are being reported from every city neighbourhood on a daily basis, people have been advised to be extra careful while travelling or passing through these areas.

Professionals associated with traffic engineering seek joint efforts to address the problem. So far, they see a good response from the local and provincial governments, which they said agreed to increase the number of pedestrian bridges linked to bus stops, as most pedestrians meet accidents while crossing busy roads.

Traffic officials said rehabilitation of major roads and extensive development in the city caused problems for pedestrians in some areas. Furthermore, speeding and “deliberate violation” of traffic rules both by pedestrians and motorists led to road accidents and the numbers can only be brought down through collective efforts, they added.

“There are a few reasons for marking these [19] areas as black spots,” said DIG Traffic Javed Ali Mahar. “We have spotted the areas where fatal accidents are quite frequent. Some of these spots required relevant traffic signs and zebra crossings. At some points pedestrians face immense difficulties while crossing wide roads and these are the areas where accidents occur most of the time. We keep updating the authorities concerned to get these flaws fixed.”

Secondly, he said, speeding by motorists and manoeuvring by motorcyclists coupled with people’s ignorance of traffic rules emerged as the second major cause of fatal accidents.

“The people should understand that the rules are for their own benefit and non-cooperation from their side would only put their own lives in danger,” said DIG Mahar. “We observe that speeding has been the major cause of fatal accidents, but, unfortunately, a majority of drivers of commercial vehicles are not ready to follow the defined rules on city roads. It’s quite unfortunate that in our society violation of traffic rules is seen as pride or bravery and not as a crime.”

He admitted that off and on campaigns launched by his department to streamline the traffic system were not a lasting solution to the problem.

“The police are part of the system which involves several other institutions and most importantly, drivers. They all need to improve their mindsets and follow the rules. It will not only reduce the number of accidents but also make the traffic smoother,” he added.
(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 15, 26/06/2019)