

# NEWSCLIPPINGS

*JULY TO DECEMBER 2021*

## ENVIRONMENT



## Urban Resource Centre

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## Seaside or toxic brew?

IN terms of areas of operation in which Pakistan has failed to do anywhere near enough, there is no dearth of points of indictments. Let us take up a mere two: the state's lack of commitment to the welfare of the majority of its population, and its apparent insensitivity to what must be done now for sustainable well-being. Examine the sad realities of Clifton Beach, the iconic face of Pakistan's financial lynchpin Karachi or the 'City by the Sea'. The subject was taken up in a long-form article published recently by this newspaper, detailing the findings of an advocacy group. Given the pandemic's challenges, questionnaires and remote interviews were used to gather the public's views (though a good number of interviews were conducted in person too, with visitors at the venue). Respondents included persons across politico-economic divides, gender, age and occupation.

The lack of safety measures and amenities such as washrooms, gazebos, and lockers, as well as extreme land and water pollution, were overwhelmingly pinpointed as major deterrents to a pleasurable day at the seaside. But also significant were issues of access: large chunks of land are being given over to housing/commercial schemes, and luxury recreation spots, preventing a huge number of the city's some 18m to 20m residents from visiting what is rightfully Karachi's jewel in the crown. Ironically, given the fears voiced over safety (muggings, the harassment of women and the lack of lifeguards and buoys delineating safe swimming areas), also rife were complaints of over-policing, lower-income visitors being questioned for entering posh areas, the erection of walls and barriers and the sale of tickets to what ought to be a venue free to the public. Add to this the 'development' that fails to keep an eye on the future, achieved through the collusion of state authorities, real estate players and wealthy vested-interest parties, and you have a toxic mix where the welfare of the city and its residents are cynically being sacrificed at the altar of Mammon.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 12/07/2021)

## Sindh govt to spend over Rs1bn to address environmental issues

The Sindh government has set an ambitious target for 2021-22 to address the growing challenge of environmental issues, setting aside more than a billion rupees for that purpose — the highest-ever budget for the area in the province's history — with focus on sewage treatment plants in major cities and urban foresting to cover 2,000 acres in and around cities and towns of the province.

The budget announced by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah in the Sindh Assembly last month finally took a shape to get executed with the beginning of several new financial targets that appeared to be an uphill task for the authorities to complete them within a year. However, his Adviser on Law, Environment, Climate Change and Coastal Development, Barrister Murtaza Wahab, sounded confident saying the budget allocations were made considering all deliberations and it was his ministry that had designed the ambitious plans in view of the growing climate and environment challenges.

### *Three sewage treatment plants in Karachi to be made functional*

"Last year [2020-21] our budget was Rs145 million," he told *Dawn* while explaining reasons behind such a jump in the allocations and targets set for the new fiscal. "This year we have allocated Rs1.2 billion, which is multiple times higher than it was last year. But there is a reason for this major shift. We have a lot more work to do this [financial] year. We have already finalised our climate change-related policy and considering challenges of urban infrastructure and major change in the weather trend."

He then referred to a few projects which would get key focus of the provincial government in the current financial year and Karachi, being a major urban centre of the province, would remain under serious consideration of the authorities. He said the government was going to make three sewage treatment plants in Karachi functional to safely discharge wastewater of the city into the sea.

"These three plants, one each in Mahmoodabad, Lyari and Clifton, will greatly help reduce the load of water pollution on our marine environment," he said about the expected outcome of the plants which were officially called TP-I, TP-II and TP-3 with a combined capacity of 150 million gallons per day. However the gradual decline in their functions finally made them non-functional, leaving more than 15 million Karachiites to discharge 100 per cent of their raw sewage into the nearest coastal waters.

The budget document suggests that the environment came at the seventh most prioritised area of the Sindh government in the budget 2021-22 after education, health, agriculture, infrastructure development, local government and irrigation.

The CM adviser said that apart from focus on the environment, the Sindh government had set half of its allocations for the coastal development. In his budget speech, the Sindh CM had announced Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Programme (TBTP/GPP) with 50pc from the federal government and as much share by the province.

"Similarly, a water treatment plant in Tando Adam is being planned that will be a major development in the area of environment," said Mr Wahab. "Apart from this, we have been planning Rs100 million urban foresting. I personally believe that every concerned citizen has to play his or her due part in this regard by planting a sapling for increasing the green cover at their homes, streets, and neighbourhoods. For that we are soon launching a comprehensive campaign."

According to the budget document, the Sindh government for this year had targeted regeneration and forest development in Riverine Forests on 25,000 acres besides development of irrigated plantations on 6,500 acres. Similarly, it has planned mangrove forest that would be planted and protected over 35,000 acres. A huge target of 35 million container plants will also be developed in the network of departmental and youth nurseries for supply of plants to interested stakeholders at subsidised rates.

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 12/07/2021)

## Are lockdowns the answer to Karachi's air pollution?

A fluke triggered by the *Sindh* government's rigorous efforts to curb the viral threat is projected to reduce Karachi's air pollution by almost 40 per cent. If the lockdown persists, the megacity's air quality, which is currently deemed unhealthy for sensitive groups as per IQ Air, could in all likelihood take a turn for the better in the coming days.

The estimate is based on data collected during last year's lockdowns by Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), which sampled air and noise levels from six districts of the city. The data, which was collected with the help of seven accredited environmental laboratories, presented an overall 39 percent increase in air quality and 19 per cent improvement in noise pollution.

Out of the six districts, district East saw the highest improvement in terms of air quality, while district central topped the charts for betterment in noise levels.

According to SEPA spokesperson, Mujtaba Baig, there are two primary sources of air pollution in Karachi: smoke from motorised vehicles and emissions from factories that blow out harmful contaminants through their vents and smokestacks, or by burning waste in open dumps or incinerators.

Results issued by SEPA thus reckoned that a few days of trade and transport closure could dramatically improve Karachi's environmental conditions, which have been set on a road to ruin for the last few years.

However, experts suggest that closure of business is not the answer to the megacity's environmental concerns-it is the need to adopt sustainable strategies in trade that keep Karachi green without capsizing its economy.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, a local environmentalist, who was unauthorised to speak to the media, said that the logical way of doing this is to promote eco-friendly alternatives in industrial and business sectors. "It's not an uphill task because eco-friendly products and services are in high demand right now, not only locally but also in the international market. Our industry can greatly benefit from this" he commented on the condition of anonymity.

Elaborating further, the expert stressed on the need to conduct similar surveys to also chart the environmental impact of the ongoing lockdowns on the city. He explained that the purpose of such a research is not to promote lockdowns, but to learn more about the future steps that the administration, policy makers and businesses need to take in order to mitigate Karachi's environmental crisis.

"The data should be sent to various departments including Industries, Transport, Local Bodies and Site Limited, so that in its light they too can take appropriate measures and protect the environment around them," he said.

The SEPA spokesperson, who also maintained that community participation is imperative to curbing air pollution at its source, said that drivers and vehicle owners should regularly maintain the engine and silencer of their vehicles to make them least damaging to the environment. "At the remedial level, people should keep planting trees to offset the impact of air contamination," he told The Express Tribune.  
(By Tufail Ahmed The Express Tribune, 05, 07/08/2021)

### **Tree plantation drive**

WITH the monsoon plantation drive in full swing in Islamabad and the adjoining areas, the government appears to be making good progress on its Ten Billion-Tree Tsunami Programme. Last week, Prime Minister Imran Khan inaugurated a nationwide monsoon plantation drive by planting a sapling in Islamabad's Fatima Jinnah Park and also in Nathiagali. Over the course of the next few weeks, the Ministry of Climate Change and the Capital Development Authority will ensure the plantation of at least half a million saplings in and around the capital city. Pakistan has one of the world's highest deforestation rates, between 0.2pc and 0.5pc — the worst in Asia after war-torn Afghanistan. Rapid and unregulated development, both industrial and urban, a high population growth rate and a powerful timber mafia have reduced the country's forest cover to a mere 5.7pc, a far cry from the recommended 25pc. A continuation of the Billion-Tree Tsunami project in KP, the 10 Billion-Tree programme seems to have served as a model for international ventures such as the World Economic Forum's One Trillion Trees Initiative. Trees act as lungs for the earth and help in cooling down the atmosphere, while working as a barrier to mitigate the impact of natural disasters such as floods, heatwaves and heavy rains. Climate change is upon us and Pakistan is among the countries most vulnerable to its potentially devastating effects. The mass tree plantation drive, then, is to be welcomed. A similar spring plantation drive was held earlier in February as well involving 51 Miyawaki urban forests in Lahore.

However, for this effort to be effective, it needs to gel within an overarching afforestation framework that aims to conserve and protect the existing tree cover in the country. First, the government must restore the ban on forest cutting (ironically ended in 2014 by the PTI government in KP) and stop allowing private developers to build on forest land. Then drastic measures are needed to control the activities of the timber mafia, and ensure strict punishment for those violating government law and endangering the environment. Lastly, the climate change department should make sure that local communities in remote areas have access to alternative fuel so that they do not cut down trees for firewood; communities must also be educated on the importance of environmental conservation. Environmental ambitions must be reflected in the overall developmental and economic policy of the country if we want to conserve our natural surroundings.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 09/08/2021)

### **Tribunal blocks notification of changes in Sepa Act**

An environmental tribunal has ordered the provincial authorities concerned to maintain a status quo in respect of intended notification of changes proposed to the rules and regulations framed under the Sindh Environmental Protection Act, 2014, till further orders.

The three-member tribunal, headed by retired Justice Sadiq Hussain Bhatti, also directed the provincial chief secretary, the secretary of the provincial climate change, environment protection and coastal development department, and director-general of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) to come prepared for final arguments on an appeal challenging the proposed changes to the existing rules and regulations in the next hearing.

During a recent hearing, deputy director of law Habib-ur-Rehman Solangi appeared on behalf of Sepa. However, the appellant, Advocate Shahab Usto, expressed urgency in the matter, contending that through this appeal, the decision of the secretary of climate change, environment protection and coastal development department and the DG Sepa for the proposed change in the existing rules and regulations in question was challenged.

But, during the pendency of the appeal, they had approved such proposal for changes in the Initial Environmental Examination (IEE)/Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations, 2014 and now they were going to issue and publish such notification within one or two days, so as to frustrate the cause of filing of this appeal, he added.

In this connection, the appellant also placed on record copies of various documents relating to the appeal as well as a copy of the draft notification.

On the other hand, deputy director Solangi sought time on the grounds that the DG Sepa would personally appear before the tribunal and argue on the matter.

The tribunal observed that it appeared that the secretary, environmental department, had not yet filed his comments or objection to the appeal.

Similarly, it also appears that the notice to the provincial chief secretary duly served, but none is in attendance from his side, the tribunal added.

With consent of the parties, the tribunal's head adjourned the hearing on the appeal to Aug 23.

"In the meanwhile, status quo be maintained in respect of issuance of Notification and its Publication in the Official Gazette, till next date of hearing," the tribunal's head ordered the parties.

The head also asked the parties to come prepared on the next date for advancing final arguments on the main appeal, as a short point is involved in the matter.

The appeal was jointly filed by advocates Shahab Usto and Zubair Ahmed, who cited the provincial chief secretary, the secretary of the climate change, environmental protection and coastal development department and the director general of the Sindh environmental protection agency, as defendants.

The appellants submitted that the official respondents intended to change the existing environmental law in clandestine, which showed their mala fide intention to facilitate certain businesses rather than protecting the environment in the province.

They explained that the respondents intended to make changes in the environmental laws in respect of Environmental Initial Assessment (EIA) Regulations, disposal of effluents from the industries and powers of the Sindh environmental protection tribunal.

The appellants along with other concerned lawyers had sent a letter to the Sindh chief minister requesting to look into the matter and order the relevant authorities to comply with Section 18 of the Act, 2014, but as of filing this appeal, no action had been taken, the tribunal was told.

It was further told that another letter was also sent to the DG Sepa for providing copies of the proposed plans, programmes, legislation in compliance with Section 18 of the Act, 2014 but no response was received as yet.

The appellants said that the draft with proposed changes to the existing rules and regulations was uploaded to the official website of the agency and also published in newspapers on Jan 8.

They argued that the respondents were acting in violation of Section 18 of the Act, which required for carrying out the Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) of the policies, legislation, plans and programs with consultation of all those concerned, including the general public.

Section 18 further required all the provincial government agencies, including the Sindh environmental protection agency, departments, local councils and local authorities to submit to and obtain approval from the Sepa DG of all the policies, legislation, plans and programmes to be implemented in Sindh, which may cause any environmental impact in the jurisdiction of the province, they added.

The appellants further argued that the Rules and Regulations, 2015 required the minister to initiate and submit SEA to the competent authority for a final decision, but there was no minister for the climate change, environment protection and coastal development department, as there was only an adviser to the chief minister, who could not perform the functions of a minister.

Furthermore, the Rules 2015 require submission of the SEA before the council for its comments and recommendations, but there existed no council, therefore, before constituting the council, approval of any rules or regulations, would amount to contravention of the provisions of the Act, 2014, they argued.

The appellants contended that the official respondents were infringing upon the fundamental rights to clean atmosphere and unpolluted environment bestowed under the Article 9 of the Constitution.

They had pleaded to the tribunal to declare that framing of the new rules and regulations or making changes in the existing ones without carrying out the SEA, as provided under Section 18 of the Act, 2014, was unlawful, without authority and ultra vires the Act.

They also pleaded to declare that the framing of any rules and regulations without public consultation was also a violation of Article 19-A of the Constitution.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 14, 19/08/2021)

### **50 acres of barren Lyari riverbed turned into urban forest in Karachi**

Fifty acres of barren Lyari riverbed in Keamari district has been turned into an urban forest with thousands of native trees now flourishing in the area, some of them bearing fruit.

Launched early this year, the project is being implemented by the forest department that has so far grown 73,500 trees on both sides of the riverbed from Mauripur bridge to Shershah bridge.

The species included guava, java plum (jaman), sapodilla (chikoo), pomegranate, Indian coral tree (gul-i-nishtar), Indian rosewood (shisham), lignum, Manila tamarind (jungle jalebi), parkinsonia species, neem, gum Arabic tree (keeker), Indian beech tree (sukh chain) and flame tree (gul mohar).

"It's the first phase of the Lyari urban forest project that will soon be extended to a larger area," said district forest officer Maqsood Ahmed.

These trees would help regulate monsoon flood, prevent sea intrusion and improve quality of air in the area, he added.

According to sources, the department has taken a number of plantation initiatives in Karachi and grown thousands of native plants over the past two years in localities, including Memon Goth, Shah Faisal Colony, Model Colony, Jinnah International Airport area, Gulistan-i-Jauhar, Bin Qasim town, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Park in Clifton as well as along the M-9 Motorway and National Highway.

"The department's activities have been enhanced since the launch of Green Pakistan initiative in 2018-19. Most of these plantations have taken place along Karachi's outskirts since the department doesn't own land within the city while the Lyari forest project's site was personally chosen by [Pakistan Peoples Party chairman] Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari," explained district forest officer Tahir Lateef, claiming that the department carried out active monitoring of all plantation sites.

According to him, the department within its limited resources has grown around 320,000 trees since 2019 in Karachi (excluding the plants grown in the Lyari urban forest).

Responding to a question about coordination with other agencies and departments, he regretted that there was no coordination. "Everyone is carrying out plantations independently. The district municipal corporations, Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and the various cantonment boards have their own activities."

Officials said the major obstacle hampering sustainability of plantation initiatives in the city was the absence of Karachi-specific law for tree protection and plantation and imposition of a strict ban on cutting of tree(s) unless it was authorised by an expert committee.

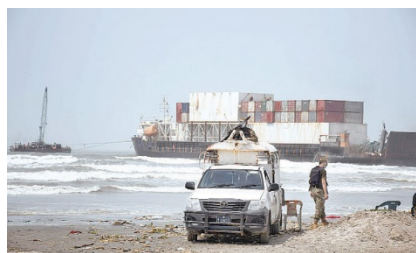
In this respect, they cited a recent incident in Shah Faisal Colony where 1,000 fully mature trees were cut down.

"Nobody including the police was ready to cooperate and we couldn't trace the culprits," said a forest official, adding that the dream of making Karachi green could never materialise unless there was a law on tree protection and it's strictly implemented.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 23/08/2021)

### Beached Heng Tong finally refloated at Karachi's beach after 48 days

Following a successful refloating operation, the beached cargo ship MV Heng Tong 77 was pulled back to deep waters at high tide on Tuesday.



The refloating team rejoiced as the ship, beached off Seaview since July 21, slowly turned its nose towards the deep waters while being pulled by a barge and two tugboats up ahead. It was being dragged at first. Sometimes the waves also threw it back a few metres towards the beach. But the tugs and the rope tied to the barge kept on pulling. Finally, Heng Tong's nose bobbed followed by its tail doing the same and everyone could see that it was finally afloat and completely off the sandy surface of the beach.

Still not forgetting how the ship had returned to another part of the Seaview beach after an almost successful operation on Aug 24, the team was still watching the ship's progress carefully. It crossed 300 metres and the frowns eased. It crossed 1,000m and there were smiles all around. Then when it had gone out about 2,500 to 3,000m there were sighs of relief and celebration.

Altaf Ghanchi, owner of Ayan Ship-Breakers, hired by the shipowners to salvage the ship and carry out the refloating operation, was so happy that he could be seen embracing all his ground staff and divers. He even hugged the police constables keeping picnickers at bay during the lengthy refloating operation of about one-and-a-half months. "I thank God Almighty Who helped us free this ship from the sand and help it get back to the deep sea," he said.

*'This is the first ship that has been refloated in Pakistan'*

"Basically, we did the opposite of what we do at the Gadani ship-breaking yard for scrapping ships. There we brought ships to the beach before anchoring them and here we pushed it back into the sea by dropping the same anchors into the water and pulling the ship outward with the help of winches," explained Ghanchi.

"There were three other ships that had got beached earlier of which two had been stuck at Clifton and one at Manora. All three had to be scrapped. But this is the first ship that has been refloated in Pakistan. So it will not be wrong to say that we created maritime history here today," Ghanchi claimed.

This time the ship had been given two new anchors, which it dropped as soon as it reached the outer anchorage in the harbour area. "We waited for high tide as we started pulling the vessel towards the deeper side. We only had about one hour or so after high tide during the lull period when the depth of water stays the same," said Captain Asim Iqbal, the shipping agent involved in the operation.

Another expert at the spot, the anti-pollution officer of Karachi Port Trust's (KPT) Marine Pollution Control Department, Salis Younis, said that although the KPT and Pakistan Navy had defueled the ship soon after its getting beached at Seaview in order to prevent any leakage or danger to marine life, they had still left some fuel in its tanks for its engines and power generation during refloating.

"Sometimes the weather conditions didn't suit Heng Tong's refloating and sometimes the tide levels were not according to the desired need but we are also glad that the ship is finally afloat and off to the harbour now on its own engine power. It was all a team effort that has shown us all success today," he said.

Arif Shaikh, director of Sea Max Marine Services, the company hired by the ship's owners to organise the refloating team, said that he is most thankful to the Pakistan Navy, KPT and all the other agencies and institutions that made the operation successful. "Everyone went [out of] their way to make this happen and it is the fruit of their labour which you can see today," he said.

While refraining from sharing the exact cost of the operation, he said that had any international company been hired to oversee the refloating of the ship, they would have charged at least \$200 million. "We have not taken even a quarter of it using all local resources," he smiled.

Earlier on Aug 11, MV Heng Tong 77 had been declared "unseaworthy" and detained by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs under Section 394 of the Pakistan Merchant Ordinance 2001. Now as it finds a berth at the KPT, it will undergo repairs including getting new rudders, before it is examined again to be allowed to leave the port.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 08/09/2021)

### City's temperature up by 3 degrees Celsius

Imagine a vast tract of prime land, blessed with temperate climate and a sprawling coastline dotted with beaches, creeks hosting migratory birds from afar, rare green and olive ridley turtles in addition to an inland crocodile sanctuary, shrines and a thriving seaport; a cosmopolitan habitat, famous for its diversity, housing people of almost all faiths and beliefs. And you would have rightly imagined Karachi on the eve of Independence in 1947.



Now imagine a cluster of humanity, being fattened every single moment of each passing day for over seven decades with fellow citizens from the remotest corners of the national boundaries, legal or illegal immigrants and refugees from neighbouring troubled lands and beyond; all pouring in by road, rail, air transport almost unchecked (rather facilitated in their journey by corruption at all levels); and, in the process making this land literally a hot property for greedy land grabbers: Welcome to Karachi 2021.

From day one of the new country, massive demand for housing accommodation, government and private offices, industrial buildings and commercial structures for its first federal capital. Planning was beaten hands down. A loot sale ensued.

The accompanying cropping up of a complex network of roads, highways, flyovers and underpasses replacing the natural plantation further turned the city into a concrete jungle.

Experts blame this race for 'concretization' of the landscape, the preference for a grey environment in total disregard for the green and healthy atmosphere for what eventually emerged as a city growing hotter by adding 3°C to its summer temperature in the last 60 years, according to the investigative report made by senior journalist M Nawaz Khuhro.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department's (PMD) data for over six decades reveals that from April 1961 to June 2021, Karachi's mean temperature of January rose by one degrees Celsius, February by 5.9 degrees Celsius, March by 2.1 degrees Celsius, April by 4.4 degrees Celsius, May 3.6 degrees Celsius and June by 1.2 degrees Celsius.

Dr Syed Raza Ali Gardezi, an environment expert and general secretary at Citizens for Environment, stresses that the construction frenzy in the name of development coupled with arbitrary tree hacking and no plantation gave rise to the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect, which comes into play when cemented buildings absorb warmth of the sunlight during the day and emit it in the evening and night, causing high night temperatures.

He pointed out that the establishment of high-rise buildings in PECHS and other areas had caused the demolition of houses that once had lush green trees. Similarly, high-rise buildings in Gulistan-e-Jauhar and other parts of the city had also caused tree cutting, causing rise in the city temperature.

He suggested vertical gardens in all the new and old buildings besides establishment of rooftop gardens. "Solar panels should be used in place of generators, while wind turbines should be installed in coastal and other open areas."

Ahmed Shabbar, an environmentalist running the GarbageCan initiative, observed that Karachi generates 6.2 million tonnes of garbage on an annual basis. Out of this, 40 per cent is burnt at various places in the city contributing to the rise in temperature.

"Karachi could drown in future as sea level is rising due to melting of glaciers in the northern areas of the country," said Shuhab Usto, a civil rights lawyer and environment activist.

According to a Centre for Strategic and Contemporary Research report, besides UHI effect, the increase in the number of buildings has resulted in the urban canyon effect, the provision of multiple surfaces for the reflection and absorption of sunlight, ultimately increasing the city's temperatures.

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says Karachi could experience conditions equivalent to the deadly 2015 heatwaves on an annual basis.

Dr Qutubuddin, a senior doctor at Dow University Hospital Karachi, said that high temperatures cause heat strokes, dehydration, exhaustion, muscle cramps, heat swelling, fainting and other diseases.

Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) General Secretary Dr Qaisar Sajjad said people should adopt preventive measures like staying under the shed of trees, buildings and houses instead of sunshine during the heatwaves.

### **Green cover**

According to the US Environment Protection Agency, many communities are taking action to reduce UHI by increasing tree and vegetative cover; installing green roofs; using cool pavements, either reflective or permeable; and utilizing smart growth practices.

Though Sindh's forest cover is less than two per cent against 25 per cent UN standard, almost 20,000 trees have been hacked in the area between New Sabzi Mandi and the Cattle Market on Super Highway in the last 10 years, said National Forum for Environment and Health President Muhammad Naeem Qureshi.

Moreover, 7,500 trees were cut along both sides of the University Road; and over 15,000 chopped in different areas of Karachi in the name of development.

An iconic crusader for city planning, Orangi Pilot Project Director Parween Rahman had consistently waged a relentless struggle to achieve an ideal green environment instead of a grey future for the city. She had said that the city wants mega-management, not mega-projects. She was rewarded for her pursuit with bullets on March 13, 2013. Seven-and-a-half years later, many more megaprojects dot the city skyline.

The environmentalists are worried. But are the government and the city authorities? Seems not!  
(By PPI The Express Tribune, 04, 20/09/2021)

### **CPEC panel okays ambitious Karachi coastline plan**

Calling it a "game-changer", the federal government on Saturday unveiled an ambitious plan to rebuild Karachi's coastline under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) with \$3.5 billion "direct Chinese investment" that aims to overhaul city's seaboard with new berths for the port, a new fishery port and a 'majestic harbour bridge' connecting it with Manora islands and Sandspit beach.

The Karachi Coastal Comprehensive Development Zone (KCCDZ) — spread over 640 hectares or 1,581 acres on the western backwaters marsh land of the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) leading to revamp one of the oldest city slums Machhar Colony relocating its more than half a million population — is an initiative of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs.

The KCCDZ is the latest addition to CPEC projects aimed at providing Karachi with an ultra modern urban infrastructure zone, placing it among the top port cities of the world.

The announcement came from the top when a key member of Prime Minister Imran Khan's cabinet shared some details of the project and claimed it carried "enormous potential for global investors as well".

"And the best thing of this project is that it's solely based on foreign [Chinese] investment without any loan," said Minister for Maritime Affairs Syed Ali Zaidi while speaking to Dawn.

"The Chinese work so fast and I guess that it would not take more than five or six years to complete the project. Under the agreed plan, we would relocate some 20,000 to 25,000 families from Machhar Colony and relocate them. Believe me it's a huge thing for Pakistan. It's something massive. It would bring multifold advantages to Pakistan's maritime economy and further strengthen our coastal development."

He said after assuming the office as the minister for maritime affairs he vigorously looked for the opportunity for the KCCDZ and made all-out efforts to include it in the CPEC projects. For this purpose, he added, he consulted a number of Chinese companies, investors and officials of the neighbouring country and his efforts finally yielded results.

Earlier, the federal minister shared the "monumental decision" on a social media platform, coming up with sketchy details of the KCCDZ. He, however, did not explain terms and conditions that convinced the Chinese investors to pour in \$3.5 billion (around Rs592 billion).

"A monumental decision was taken during the 10th Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) on CPEC, held on 23rd September 2021 at Islamabad and Beijing," Mr Zaidi tweeted while sharing a formal statement of the announcement.

"The two countries agreed to include KCCDZ under the CPEC framework. KCCDZ, an initiative of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs focuses on providing Karachi with an ultra modern urban infrastructure zone, placing Karachi amongst the top port cities of the world."

The minister also shared animated and picturesque images of a developed KCCDZ, showing a huge developed coastline dotted with multiple buildings, concrete structures and planned neighbourhoods without mentioning their utilities. He claimed all the developments would take place over "reclaimed area of the KPT" spanning over huge 640 hectares or 1581.474 acres.

"Developed on reclaimed area of approximately 640 hectares on the Western back waters marsh land of KPT, KCCDZ will be a flagship project for not only Pakistan but the entire region," the statement claimed.

"In accordance with PM Imran Khan's vision for promoting low-cost housing, KCCDZ will also provide residential resettlement to more than 20,000 families living in the surrounding slums. The environment-friendly mega KCCDZ envisages four new berths for KPT, adding depth to Pakistan's expanding maritime sector."

The project, the statement added, would also house a state-of-the-art fishing port, with a world-class fisheries export processing zone to boost Pakistan's trade potential. It would also drastically improve the marine ecosystem and reduce pollution by establishing a water treatment plant at the mouth of the Lyari River, it said.

"The KCCDZ will connect with the rest of Karachi through a majestic harbour bridge rising from behind Pakistan's Deepwater Port, with exit ramps for Manora Islands and Sandspit beach," it elaborated.

The statement claimed KCCDZ would unlock "Pakistan's unexplored Blue Economy and significantly enhance development and industrial cooperation between the two brotherly countries. The KCCDZ is a game-changer for Pakistan".

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 01, 26/09/2021)

### Karachi's 'China port' opens again to public

It was back in 2018 when several Karachiites first discovered this new picnic spot at the South Asia Pakistan Terminal (SAPT). But no sooner did social media along with a few newspapers publish its pictures, the hungry-for-outings public thronged the place, which was closed soon after. Well, it has been reopened recently.



This comparatively bare portion of the beach presents a clear and closer view of the breakwater, Oyster Rocks and the tall port cranes and all the cargo ships entering and leave port.

There is also a freshness about the sea breeze. A father had brought with him his two children on his bike here to enjoy the view. They were happily sipping on their box of juices while digging into a bag of potato crisps as they animatedly pointed

towards the ships and the fishermen at work before them. Some children are also bathing in the sea.

"We have been coming here regardless of the barriers and closure for our catch," says one of the several fishermen busy sorting out their catch for the day. "But it was closed for the general public as there was plenty of activity at SAPT at the time. Now the Chinese workers seem to have left and this place has been reopened again," he added his observation.

There is all kinds of catch in the pile before them. There is very tiny fish that glitters and shines like small pieces of silver under the bright sun, there are tiny shrimp, which can be used as bait for bigger catch, too, along with different species such as squid. The fishermen are busy separating all the various species from each other and dropping them in baskets.

"Most of the catch from here is used in preparing chicken feed, also for plant fertiliser," says another fisherman. "But we are going to take it all to the Karachi fisheries to sell."

Yet another fisherman informed that they arrive at the place before dawn for the catch.

Dawn tried to call the Karachi Port Trust about the reopening of the China port but was informed that their offices won't be able to respond regarding the matter or for any comments over the weekend.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 27/09/2021)

### Karachi coastline plan

The planned \$3.5 billion plan to redevelop and expand Karachi's coast could well be the "game-changer" promised by the government, as long as it is properly managed. The Karachi Coastal Comprehensive Development Zone will be built under CPEC using "direct Chinese investment", rather than loans. That would normally be welcome news, if not for the fact that we are still awaiting the nitty-gritty of the project, such as how ownership and control of the new zone will be split.

Among the few details on ownership that we have been offered since the first cryptic tweet from Maritime Affairs Minister Ali Zaidi was a statement about its "enormous potential for global investors". This could go either way, with the area quickly developing into an economic engine for the whole country, or, if improperly managed, becoming an exclusive enclave for foreign interests. We hope government planners try their best to ensure that it is the former.

The project itself is among the most ambitious sub-CPEC projects, including the addition of new port berths, upgradation of the Machhar Colony slum and relocation of its residents, water treatment facilities, and connecting Manora Island and Sandspit beach. Much of the "environment-friendly" project is to be built on reclaimed land currently controlled by the Karachi Port Trust — almost 1,600 acres.

A lot of the project's success will depend on the government's ability to satisfactorily relocate hundreds of thousands of residents of Machhar Colony, which is one of the country's largest slums.

Zaidi noted that the project could be completed in "five or six years", meaning that the incumbent PTI government in Islamabad and the PPP government in Karachi will have to work together to meet this target, which in itself is no easy task. That said, we hope they can find a way to make this work, not just for the benefit of shipping, fishing, Karachi or Sindh, but the country as a whole. This is because the project — though primarily intended to bolster and expand the 'blue economy' — would create commercial opportunities beyond fishing through the expansion of the port and establishment of a massive new city area.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 28/09/2021)

### Restore parks, orders SC

The Supreme Court, while issuing a written verdict in the encroachment case, ordered the immediate restoration of playgrounds and parks across the city.

It ordered that they be returned to their original form and the court also sought details of welfare plots across Karachi.

The apex court also termed the report of Karachi Administrator Murtaza Wahab as unsatisfactory and directed the activation of a tribunal against the encroachments and to file cases.

In the written verdict, the apex court said that playgrounds and parks across the city should be restored to their original form immediately.

All facilities should be provided to the citizens in parks and playgrounds. The written decision stated that Wahab had said in his statement that 9,500 shops of KMC have been rented at very low prices. KMC huts on Hawke's Bay were also rented at a much lower rate.

The Supreme Court directed the Karachi administrator to provide full details of all the shops.

The apex court has also ordered immediate restoration of the Gutter Baghicha Park to its original condition. "Corruption has taken an administrative form in Sindh. All legal means should be exercised to eradicate corruption," the court remarked.

The SC has also directed the administrator Karachi to approach the tribunal against the encroachments. The Supreme Court has sought a report from Administrator Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab in the encroachment case within two weeks.

Nullah victims The Supreme Court, while issuing a written order for the hearing on October 25, sought a report from the Sindh government every month with photographs on the rehabilitation of nullah victims.

The apex court said that the system of KDA, KMC and other relevant administrative bodies had failed. The hasty transfers of heads of civic bodies have led to poor governance and the transfers have not led to the implementation of policies, it observed.

A bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Gulzar Ahmed and comprising Justice Ijazul-Ahsan and Justice Qazi Muhammad Amin Ahmed, issued a written order for the October 25 hearing.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 28/10/2021)

### Sandy beaches on the cards

There finally seems to be something for the people of *Karachi* to look forward to as the Sindh Government has inaugurated the Rs650 million Water Front Development project at Manora Beach.

*Sindh* Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah said it was one of the beautiful recreational places that his government developed to provide a safe, secure and clean family recreational place to the people.

"We are planning to develop a Jetty at Sea view to start a ferry service from the Clifton area to Manora beach." This he said while speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the Rs650 million project.



The ceremony was attended by provincial ministers Nasir Shah, Syed Sardar Shah, Bari Pitafi, Gianchand Israni, Zia Abbas Shah, Karachi Administrator Murtaza Wahab and others.

"The project is part of an overall development scheme of Karachi," the CM said. He added that at present, Manora beach is underutilised and there is a low volume of visitors due to lack of facilities such as sitting space, dining area, restrooms and shade.

Shah said that the objective was to develop fundamental facilities and basic activities to get public attraction to the area. "This will eventually increase visitors and improve development of this area," he said. Shah continued that the project aimed to ensure public access to the waterfront, improve the image of the abandoned waterfront area of Manora and achieve economic regeneration by breathing new life into such recreational activities.

According to Murad Ali Shah, the main attraction of Karachi is its beaches and coastline which distinguish it from the rest of the country. He said that due to the dearth of entertainment avenues, especially for middle and lower middle class, people rush to Clifton, Sea View, Hawkes Bay and Sandspit.

"Since those places are just beaches and not developed, they get stale. There is a dire need of some new developments to provide an area for public refreshment," he said.

Shah revealed that he proposed that Manora Beach should be an addition to this list. The chief minister said it would be the first developed beach in Karachi and added that the proposed design provides everything required for a healthy and secure family environment.

The chief minister said that in 2019, he had visited Manora area and was given a detailed briefing about the need for development of the area.

"Despite Covid-19 and other issues, we are able to develop the area," he said. Shah recalled that when he was a child, he used to visit Manora with his parents on a boat. "Today's child has become a hostage of mobile phones and other gadgets."

Shah said the government also developed Jahangir Park which was abandoned for a long time. The CM said that Manora has a rich history.

"It is said that the fleet of Alexander the Great had anchored at Manora. Then during the Talpur era, a port was developed to protect the city."

The CM said after completion of the project, Manora would be handed over to the cantonment and he hoped that the area would remain open to the public.

He also announced plans to develop Allama Iqbal Park at Gulberg.

Local Government Minister Nasir Shah said that KDA's professional team had constructed the Manora project. He said similar projects of recreation and grounds would be developed in the city.

Speaking on the occasion, Karachi Administrator Murtaza Wahab announced the construction of a road from Machli Chowk to KANUPP at a cost of Rs500 million. He added that 250 new buses were being brought in the city to resolve the issue of the transport from Jan 2021. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 31/10/2021)

### Development and climate

THE link between climate change and development is no longer indirect. Over the years, Pakistan's increased vulnerability to global warming has seen natural disasters such as floods and droughts occur more regularly. These, in turn, have incurred a substantial loss of life and property, besides reversing development gains in the country. A recent World Bank report describes not corruption, incompetence or state negligence but climate change as the biggest challenge for development in Pakistan. South Asia Climate Change Action Plan 2021-25 states that the quality of life in Pakistan is set to decline by 4pc to 5pc by 2030. This is mainly due to our increased vulnerability to natural disasters that are a consequence of global warming. The report estimates that since 2010 droughts, floods, cyclones and earthquakes have cost the country more than \$14bn, ending up reversing development gains of the past 15 years. It is stated that 49m people reside in high-risk areas where their health and well-being are directly affected by water scarcity, disease outbreak and water and food insecurity.

With Pakistan being the fastest urbanising country in South Asia, according to the report, the damage is amplified. Unplanned development in the face of surging urban populations and the emerging challenges of waste disposal and water supply and drainage, are compromising the country's resilience to extreme weather events. Moreover, the report also advises Pakistan to reform its energy sector where carbon emissions are predicted to increase by at least 380pc between 2015 and 2030. Though the government has pledged to significantly curtail its carbon emissions, its current policies indicate the opposite. The same is true for other sectors such as construction, agriculture and water security and distribution where the government still appears to be following outdated methods, worsening the country's vulnerability to climate change and curtailing opportunities for development. The authorities need to do more than just pay lip service to the goal of reducing the impact of climate change. The country's survival depends on sincere action in this direction.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 31/10/2021)

### New Manora Beach Front visitors face long waiting lines

A large number of citizens turned up at the Manora Beach Front on Sunday a day after inauguration by the Sindh chief minister. However, the Pakistan Navy security personnel and the unusual rush of the visitors heading to the otherwise quaint beach were in for a surprise. Many visitors rushing to the newly developed beach front were unaware of the security linked to the nearby naval installations causing undue encumbrance to the security staff.

Families riding rickshaws, motorbikes and private vehicles arrived at Manora from the lone road link via Hawke's Bay to Kaka Pir and onwards to the Manora beach had to wait for security reasons. Entry of CNIC of the vehicle's driver and names of people inside it remains mandatory at the Navy Check Post. For this, the driver has to park the vehicle on one side and get the national identity card number, vehicle number and names of people accompanying him registered.

The security staff has to write it manually. Due to the arrival of a large number of citizens on the weekly holiday, queues of vehicles were formed and citizens had to wait for entry. Meanwhile, the entry of media in the public entertainment area has been completely blocked. Security officials said that media was barred from entering as per the standard operating procedures of the naval installations. Cameras in particular are allowed only on permission of higher authorities.

Meanwhile, the citizens waiting at the security point to go to the beach resort of Manohra said that they reached the beach from the other side of the city but were having to wait for the entry with the ID card and most of the entertainment time was spent in fulfilling the formalities. Kids, in particular, were struggling to get there as soon as possible after watching the unique beach resort on TV but no one was allowed to enter without completing formalities by the security personnel.

On the other hand, those returning from the beach resort said that an entrance fee of Rs50 per person is being charged for entering into the resort which is very high. A family of six will end up paying Rs300, they fumed. The Sindh government has built an entertainment venue with public money, why should the people pay for entering a public space, they said.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 01/11/2021)

### **Tribunal suspends IEE approval for Karachi's Seaview beach 'commercialisation'**

An environmental tribunal has suspended the Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) approval accorded by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) to a project meant for allegedly commercialising the seafront in the name of development by the Cantonment Board Clifton (CBC).

Headed by its chairman retired Justice Nisar Muhammad Shaikh, the tribunal also remanded the matter back to Sepa with the direction to decide the same afresh in accordance with the law.

The tribunal passed these directives while disposing of an appeal filed by a group of citizens — including Arif Belgaumi, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Ayesha Tammy Haq and others — expressing their concerns about the proposed commercialisation of the seafront from Nishan-i-Pakistan Park to Chunky Monkey in the Phase-V of the Defence Housing Authority.

Their counsel submitted that the CBC had purportedly in compliance with Section 17 of the Sindh Environmental Protection Act, 2014 had filed an IEE report with Sepa on Dec 18, 2019 about the project spread over 20.89 acres, which entails the development of one-kilometre-long Seaview beach.

*Residents challenge development of one-km-long beach from Nishan-i-Pakistan Park to Chunky Monkey*

"It is planned to build two beach docks, a jogging track, fountains, monuments, restaurants and tuck shops, hawkers and street stalls, a children's play area, green areas spreading over 13.5 acres and watchtowers," they explained.

They alleged the said project was actually a part of a plan for commercialisation of the Clifton beach, which the CBC was attempting from many years, adding that the CBC was occupying the beach in parts from Dolman Mall to Village Restaurant.

It allowed construction of the Dolmen Mall on an amenity plot and commercialised the area adjacent to it for private car parking and on its other side the area was used for discharge of untreated solid waste into the sea after a commercial fast food outlet was constructed and adjacent to it a few years ago new boundary walled Nishan-i-Pakistan Park was constructed.

The area between Nishan-i-Pakistan to Village Restaurant was open for citizens, but from quite some time the mushroom construction of small and large eateries were allowed, the appellants claimed.

The appellants also submitted a copy of the Google map showing trespassing on the beach in the last 20 years.

The appellants alleged that Sepa had granted IEE approval dated Feb 19, 2020 in respect of the "Development of Beach" of the CBC in violation of the provisions of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Review of Initial Environmental Examination and Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations, 2014 arguing that said project in fact required filing of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) instead of IEE.

The counsel argued that the project required an EIA as it was falling under the entry number (4) and (5) of the category "I" namely "Urban Development and Tourism" and the entry (2) of the category "K" in respect of the project likely to cause an adverse environmental effect, which were the categories listed for the projects requiring an EIA under Schedule-II of the Regulations, 2014.

He maintained that though the proposed project did not fall within any of the listed categories requiring an IEE under the Schedule-I read with Sub-regulation (2) of the Regulation 6, it was patently illegal in the absence of mandatorily required recommendations of the committee, which was never constituted in compliance with Regulation 24.

On this contravention of the relevant law the impugned decision of approval of the proposed project is liable to be set aside being of no legal effect, he added.

A counsel representing the CBC and law officer for Sepa contended that the appeal was time barred as the same was filed on Nov 12, 2020 after the delay of about eight months of the impugned decision though the period of limitation as provided under Section 27 of the Act, 2014 was 30 days only. Therefore, on this ground the appeal was liable to be dismissed, they added.

The counsel for the appellants rebutted that his clients came to know about the project in July 2020 and then they approached Sepa on July 15, 2020 with an application for supply of copy of the IEE report, which they finally succeeded to get on Oct 15, 2020.

The tribunal's head observed that Section 27 of the Act of 2014 provides that any person aggrieved by any order or direction of the Agency may prefer an appeal within 30 days of the date of communication of the impugned order or direction to such person.

A law officer for Sepa submitted that the project of the cantonment board was not a mega project but a small project, therefore, the IEE study report filed by the cantonment board was duly approved under the category "K" of Schedule-I read with Regulation 6(2) of the Regulations, 2014.

Likewise, the CBC chief executive officer also filed objections.

However, the tribunal's head observed that in his detailed objections nowhere the CEO stated if they were not directed or required to file an IEE and they voluntarily filed the IEE and their project did not fall in any category listed in the Schedule-I and II, as claimed in the arguments.

(By Naeem Sahoutara Dawn, 13, 12/11/2021)

### Civil society ready to fight CBC over beach 'uplift' plan

The environmental tribunal's order to suspend the Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) approval accorded by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) to a project meant for allegedly commercialising the seafront in the name of development by the Cantonment Board Clifton (CBC) has set a precedent for overall real estate and development related activities along the city's coastline, officials and experts said on Friday.

Civil society and DHA residents are also gearing up to plead their case against the proposed commercialisation at all levels.

An official said that the orders from the environmental tribunal emerged as a crucial development that could affect overall activities along the Karachi coast.

However, he said the particular project, which was initiated by the CBC, had faced a major blow and now required the authorities to get prepared to face a much larger challenge.

"Sepa had granted IEE approval dated Feb 19, 2020 in respect of the 'development of beach' of the CBC," said an official.

"A group of citizens, had filed an appeal against the move and their pleas have been endorsed and now an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be held, which requires inputs from all stakeholders including those having reservations."

He said the size, cost and stakes of all people concerned in fact determined the exercise of IEE and EIA.

The decision, on the other hand, has lifted hopes of many and those who have taken up the issue are determined to pursue it at next stages.

Arif Belgaumi, member of the group of citizens who had file the appeal against the CBC project, said that the proposal to develop the beach on these lines and on such a huge space along the coast was never shared with the people.

"Somehow, we came to know about it, but it was not shared or made public," he said. "We came to know about the project in July 2020 and we formally approached Sepa seeking a copy of the IEE report and it took us three months to get that copy. So you can imagine how things are being run. We hope to plead our case further with strong participation in public hearings whenever they are held."

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 13/11/2021)

### Migratory birds shy away from Sindh

Sindh has seen a dramatic decline in the number of migratory birds during the last three decades due to poaching, trapping, Afghan war, pollution of beaches and lakes, deforestation and reduction in food and habitat.

Although, the number of waterfowls, an order of swimming birds, has increased slightly in the last two years due to strict laws and heavy rainfall in different parts of the province, but their overall numbers are still low while guest birds are facing various problems.

A waterfowl census is conducted every year by the federal and provincial governments. According to a survey conducted on 22 waterways from November to January of the winter season of 2020-21 last year, 612,000 local and migratory water birds were counted in the region. In the year 2019-20, the number of domestic and guest birds was 7,42,043. In 2017-18, their population was counted to be around 1,53,916. In 2016-17, the number of these birds was 88,345, while per the 2018-19 census, their number was 98,358.

According to the 1992 census, this was the year Sindh welcomed the highest number of birds, counted to be around 1.692 million while in 1994 their number was 1.178 million. Since then, although the number has been increasing but is yet to hit the one million mark.

Speaking in the regard, Sindh Wildlife Department Deputy Sanctuary Warden Rasheed Ahmed Khan, stationed at Haleji Lake, said that water birds visit Haleji Lake from November to January, while at present these birds roosting in other parts of the province. He said that from November to January this year, the provincial and federal governments would start a series of statistics on these birds at various places including Haleji Lake, the official report of which would be completed next year.

Per information received by The Express Tribune, after the approval of Sindh Wildlife Protection, Conservation and Management Act 2020, the new laws for protection of wildlife have been made stricter than the previous laws.

The powers of the wildlife department have also been significantly increased and steps are being taken but due to lack of staff, vehicles, funds and resources, the department is still not able to work in its full spirit.

Experts of wildlife and aquatic birds however believe that hunting is legally allowed in only a few places across Sindh, but remains prohibited in the remaining 34 wildlife sanctuaries where migratory birds live. But despite the implementation of the new laws, ruthless poaching is still rampant in most of the restricted areas. While another big problem are the region's feudal landlords, many of whom have set up private hunting grounds on their lands where they allow hunting on a commercial basis.

The Sindh Wildlife and Zoological Survey of Pakistan inspected Hawke's Bay, Korangi Creek and 22 lakes and coastal areas along the coast of Sindh to count water birds from November 21 to January 2020-22. These lakes include Hadero, Langh, Dargah, Huml, Manchar, Nerradi, Hub Dam Mehrano, Keenjhar and Haleji and other lakes and coastal areas.

The survey revealed that the total number of water birds in this census was 6,12,397, which included native and migratory birds. Per Sindh Wildlife Deputy Director Rasheed Khan, lack of rainfall and climate change are causing small waterways to dry up. Whereas, the use of explosives in the four-decade-long Afghan war has affected the migratory birds' route to Pakistan, and for the past several years, thousands of migratory birds have been migrating to neighboring countries instead. Furthermore, fishing on lakes, speed motor boats and other human intervention are also affecting the arrival of waterfowl.

The arrival of migratory birds in Pakistan starts from the end of August every year, the return journey starts in February and by March the migratory birds have completely migrated back from Pakistan. Rasheed Khan says that waterfowls are most common in Sindh because there dwell in both brackish and freshwater sources.

World Wide Fund for Nature's Technical Adviser Moazzam Khan, says that there are various reasons for the decline in migratory birds. These include effects of climate change, such as lack of rainfall in the past and drying up of waterways, especially drying up of lakes at Tharparkar, Nawabshah, Sanghar, Khairpur. Furthermore, pollution of sewerage and industrial waste in the coast are also responsible for affecting the habitat of waterfowl. Moazzam Khan said that many water bodies in Sindh including Karachi have been [illegally] captured. These places, he alleges, are being used for agricultural purposes and fisheries or construction. "However, the main reason for the shortage of migratory birds is still illegal hunting and trapping. In the distant past, hunting was a hobby, not it's a commercial-lust driven activity," he commented.

Khan believes that the wildlife department is although trying to do better on its own, but much remains to be done. "The real issue is awareness. People should be aware that these are guest birds that travel thousands of miles for food and shelter. Therefore, instead of hunting them, they should be protected because they are our heritage," he told The Express Tribune.

(By Syed Ashraf Ali The Express Tribune, 04, 19/11/2021)

### Most polluted city

LAHORE is choking on smog these days. The metropolis is consistently being ranked as the world's worst city for air quality by the US Air Quality Index, or AQI, with pollution levels ranging from very unhealthy to hazardous for human health, putting the city's 11m people at risk of contracting serious heart and lung diseases and even cancer. There is a significant surge in the number of people visiting doctors for treatment of breathing issues. On days when it is not on top of the list, the provincial capital is among the dirtiest and most polluted cities on the globe. Lahore's air quality has worsened in recent years because of increasing industrial pollution, a growing number of smoke-emitting vehicles, increased use of substandard fuels by transporters and factories, burning of sulphur, dust and the seasonal burning of crop residue by the farmers.

The government's response has ranged from outright denial of the problem to blaming India for the smog to a mere announcement of ad hoc anti-smog measures. The on-ground implementation of such actions remains far from satisfactory. For example, the government has forced around 8,000 brick kilns across Punjab to shift to the more environment-friendly zigzag technology to reduce carbon emissions in the last few years. But the owners do not cooperate and turn off the blowers and fans installed to prevent the emission of black smoke in order to save the expense on electricity. Likewise, the Punjab government has recently ordered fuel pumps to supply only better-quality Euro V petrol for one month to motorists in the provincial capital in place of the relatively inferior Euro II. But no one seems to be listening. The authorities have also set up anti-smog squads to ensure that polluters implement the directions. But these squads appear helpless before more powerful groups and the scale of the pollution. Before tackling the problem, the authorities need to first acknowledge its existence and then take long-term measures to combat it. The issue of hazardous air quality becomes more visible during the colder winter months but it is an issue that the residents of Lahore must face throughout the year. The increasing incidence of conditions such as asthma and bronchitis testifies to this. Polluting industry, poor quality transport fuel, faulty vehicles, crop burning, etc are not issues that can be dealt with in one month or through ad hoc actions. The improvement will come with consistent efforts and long-term planning.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 19/11/2021)

### SC orders restoration of lakes, parks

The Supreme Court has directed KDA to restore four lakes in PECHS, remove debris from KMC Sports Complex on Kashmir Road, take action against illegal constructions on government lands, open spaces, welfare plots, alongside Malir River and ordered restoration of all KDA parks and playgrounds.

A bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Gulzar Ahmed and comprising Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Qazi Muhammad Amin Ahmed, heard the petitions pertaining to illegal constructions on amenity plots, nullah lands and occupation of Karachi Development Authority (KDA) parks and playgrounds. Karachi Administrator Barrister Murtaza Wahab and other officials appeared in the court.

The CJP inquired from the Karachi administrator about the whereabouts of four lakes in Karachi. At this Wahab replied that a football ground was constructed at a place in the Jheel Park whereas plantation was done in another part of the park.

Amber Alibhai, general secretary of Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment (CBE), said that Pony Lake was destroyed. "A housing scheme has been set up on the lakes around Tariq Road in Ferozabad," Alibhai said.

Chief Justice remarked, "Where did the water of these lakes go?" Sindh Advocate General Salman Talib-ud-Din stated that the lakes had dried up due to depletion of water level.

The chief justice while giving remarks said that there was such a beautiful area around the Jheel Park and foreigners used to live there. "How will you restore the lakes of Karachi?" the CJP asked Murtaza Wahab. At this the KMC administrator said that he would be able to respond after seeking guidance from experts.

During the course of hearing, the CJP inquired about the Pakistan Engineer Cooperative Housing Society (PECHS) members. "Even today no one from the PECHS came forward," the judge remarked.

Wahab told the court that 25 highways were commercialised in 2003 following the commercialisation during the period of former mayor Mustafa Kamal. The chief justice remarked that the whole city is in chaos. Justice Ijazul Ahsan remarked: "What is the solution?"

Wahab lamented that the Sindh High Court gave stay in several cases which was causing hurdles for the government.

"There should be parks on University Road. Whose job is it to take care of lights on Shahra-e-Faisal which now lies in complete darkness," the CJP asked.

Wahab said that Shahra-e-Faisal falls within the limits of cantonment board.

The CJP remarked that from Natha Khan onwards there is complete darkness. There are no lights on these poles but different flags are there which look bad, the CJP remarked.

Wahab told the court that he is trying but there are issues of cantonment areas. At this Amber Alibhai said that Karachi has 17 owners while Wahab has the control of 33 per cent of the city. "The problem will not be solved until Karachi comes under one umbrella," Alibhai said.

Justice Ijazul Ahsan remarked that this means that legislation is needed for Karachi.

"Let us summon all the officials of all the cantonment boards," the CJP remarked.

Justice Ahsan remarked that there should be a single authority to look after the parks of the entire city.

The court directed the KMC administrator to restore all the parks and playgrounds and remove all illegal constructions.

The parks and grounds, remarked by the court, should be restored and made safe and there should be no entry fee to the parks and playgrounds.

The court also asked the KMC administrator to ensure renovation and maintenance of parks including provision of required furniture and lights. The court directed the administrator to submit the progress report within two weeks.

On the petition seeking rehabilitation of gutter baghicha, Amber Alibhai said that the land for gutter baghicha has been allotted for KMC Officers Society.

The court remarked that the land of the gutter baghicha could only be used for welfare purposes. "How can a society be there?" the court remarked. The Supreme Court ordered to cancel the allotment of the society. The court also ordered KMC to take the possession of the land.

The court also sought report of KMC Society in Gulshan-e-Faisal, Bath Island.

On a petition regarding rehabilitation of New Karachi Playground, KDA DG said that sewage and garbage in the playground has been cleared. Tender has been issued for rehabilitation of the park.

The CJP directed the KDA DG to remove all illegal structures built on the park lands.

The CJP remarked that many buildings are being constructed on Korangi Industrial Area nullah.

"All these buildings will have to be demolished. Go and seal all these illegal buildings. What about buildings with Korangi Bridge?" the CJP remarked.

The KDA DG said that if you order, all the buildings around the nullah will be demolished. "I am working in very difficult conditions but I will continue to do so. I am not afraid of anyone. When I started working, retaliatory action was initiated against me," the DG said.

"My wife is a grade 20 officer. She was sent home," he added.

At this, the CJP asked the advocate general in surprise: "What is happening?"

The KDA DG said: "When I approached the court, action was taken against me."

The court directed the DG to submit comprehensive reports. The court issued a major order against the buildings adjoining Jam Sadiq Ali Bridge in Korangi and ordered action against the buildings constructed on the Korangi Nullah.  
(By Nasir Butt The Express Tribune, 05, 25/11/2021)

### **Air pollution wraps city in choke-hold**

Although Karachi may seem like a breath of fresh air in comparison to the current environmental conditions of Lahore, the coastal city is still faced with what is considered its worst air quality levels in a long time.

According to Mehmood Alam Khalid, President of Farozaan, a non-government organisation working locally for the protection of environment, Karachi is currently listed among the most polluted cities in the world. "A recent report of Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change warns that coastal cities of the world are expected to experience rise in sea level and face worst impacts of climate change. This also includes Karachi," the NGO president told.

Speaking in the regard, Muhamad Toheed, an urban planner, said that according to experts, temperature in Karachi this year was highest in last the 74 years. "Reports from some of the most reputable research institutes of the world have mentioned Karachi among cities directly affected by climate changes. About 70 percent of Karachi's population lives in slums and low-income areas, which suffer the most damaging impact of climate change," he added.

Different organisations monitor the city's air quality through an international application, IQ Air. Its readings deem pollution level in Karachi's air is almost 'unhealthy' and 'unhealthy for sensitive groups'. The monitor suggests that air quality level in city remained 167 US AQI on November 21 and is likely to remain between 113 US AQI to 148 US AQI during last five days of November.

In addition to that, high levels of compounds such as nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) have also been making routine occurrence in the city's air. Nitrogen dioxide is of particular pertinence due to the large amount of it given off primarily by vehicles (as well as it being found in open burn sources and industrial emissions), so much so to the point that high levels of nitrogen dioxide in the air will often directly correlate with a large amount of traffic.

According to Green Pakistan Coalition's Yasir Hussain, air pollution levels in Karachi remain their highest at around 08:00 AM and 01:00 PM, on week days, mostly owing to school pick and drop timings and the number of vehicles on the road.

"It means millions of children are at risk twice in a day. Normally, Nagan Chowrani, Universiy Road, Sharea-e-Faisal, Bohrapir, M.A Jinnah Road, Bandar NIPA Chowrangi, Gulshan Chowrangi and such other spots remain most polluted throughout the year due to vehicular traffic. It is said that citizens of Karachi suffer serious health problems especially lungs diseases due to continued exposure to environmental pollution," he opined.

Supporting Hussain's rationale, Dr Ghafoor Shoro, a local pulmonologist, reiterated that air pollution can severely affect human lungs. "The infection starts from ear and nose and ultimately causes respiratory diseases, and in worst cases some patients can also develop conditions like tuberculosis, cancer and other serious diseases," he warned.



Speaking further, Dr Shoro said that currently, some 70 per cent of his daily visiting patients suffer from upper and lower respiratory infections due to change of whether.

Dr Shoro, who is also the General Secretary of Pakistan Medical Association (PMA), said that the PMA has expressed its concern about the situation at various times. "The relevant authorities of the government should take necessary measures for improving air quality to save lives of the people," he urged.

It is said that the lack of enforcement of environmental laws is the main reason for increased pollution in the city. Sindh government had made its own environmental laws after devolution of Environment Department along with other subjects from Federation to the provinces under 18th Constitutional Amendment. These laws were introduced through Sindh Environmental Protection Act, 2014.

Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) was made responsible for implementation of these laws. Under the law no person can discharge or emit any effluent, waste, pollutant, noise or any other matter that may cause or likely to cause pollution or adverse environmental effects. According to Advocate Zubair Abro an important provision, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), was also made part of the SEPA Act, 2014 but never implanted in Karachi.

Under the provision all provincial government agencies, departments, authorities, local councils and local authorities were bound to get Strategic Environment Assessment of their policies, legislation, plans and programmes for assessment of their environmental impact. "However, it was never implemented in Karachi. For example, Khaliqz Zaman Road was made commercial without conducting assessment of its environmental impact in the city under this provision," he told The Express Tribune.

The Express Tribune tried to contact SEPA Director General Naeem Ahmed Mughal for his comment on the matter, but he did not reply to the various telephone calls and text messages.  
(By Razzak Abro 04, 27/11/2021)

### Plan to make Karachi smoke-free

The commissioner of Karachi on Sunday announced setting up of a tobacco control desk in his office for monitoring to make Karachi a smoke-free city.

The commissioner, Muhammad Iqbal Memon, said that district implementation and monitoring committees (DIMC) on tobacco control would also be formed for effective monitoring in all districts under the supervision of deputy commissioners.

He was speaking as a chief guest after inauguration of the Smoke-Free Karachi Cycling Rally from Empress Market to Mazar-i-Quaid held in collaboration with the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination (NHSRC).  
*'Money spent on tobacco reduces households spending on food, health'*

He said that steps would be taken to make public service vehicles and restaurants smoke free.

"According to the data, the economic cost of smoking in Pakistan is Rs615.07 billion, which is equal to \$3.85 billion and equal to 1.6 per cent of Pakistan's GDP," he added.

"An estimate suggests that in 2019, the economic cost of smoking was about five times greater than the revenue from the tobacco industry. Money spent on tobacco reduces households' spending on food, health, education, housing, and household durables," he said.

He said in Pakistan, tobacco-consuming households spend an average 2.7 per cent of their monthly budget on tobacco.

The Karachi commissioner referred to a report of World Health Organisation that says the tobacco epidemic is one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced, killing more than eight million people a year around the world.  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 14, 29/11/2021)

### Collision course on heatwave in Karachi

Ghulam Hussain is one of the residents of the port city whose life was devastated, disturbed, and changed after the *heatwave* of 2015. He lost his beloved wife, Razia Bano. Hussain, by profession a fisherman, is one of the victims and witnesses of the climate change that has affected everyone everywhere in the metropolis.

He spent all his life with this profession like other residents of Ibrahim Haidery - one of the earliest settlements of *Karachi*.

Bano, Hussain's wife, was among the over 2,500 people who died of heatstroke in the 2015 killer heatwave. "It devastated the life of my family," Hussain said. "Fishing is my profession. All my golden years were spent in the sea," he said. "This is a different time now. People hardly earn something," he narrated.

Hussain said that a fisherman goes for work about 10 days a month. The father of eight children, Hussain understands the impact of poverty on his family. "I try my best but cannot afford," he added. "I allowed her [his wife] to go to work to support the family," he remembered.

The death of Bano and the destruction of her family cannot be undone, but there may be ways we can prevent similar tragedies in the future.

Experts predict the rise in temperature in the coming years. Rainfalls will occur frequently and their intensity will increase drastically. Karachi with its estimated population 25 million is Pakistan's largest city, financial hub and major center to rural to urban migration.

Set to become the seventh-largest city in the world by the end of this decade, Karachi was ranked one of the tenth least livable cities in the world by the Economist Magazine. "Karachi needs 1.4 million trees to counteract the amount of heat that is being dissipated by the urban environment," said Architect Shahid Syed Khan.

"All of us have to be involved in the reduction of carbon," said Khan. Khan sees a looming threat in Karachi's densely populated areas. "I did a study of the Punjab Colony locality of Karachi," he said.

"And you see these buildings so close to each other. The rooms look into each other. These are eight-storey building and ten and some of them 12-storey high," he pointed out. "Because they built close to each other and there is very little ventilation that is going through. And because you are using concrete it's very hot living inside these buildings," he explained.

Khan said that the reason for having heatwaves is climate change. "The climate is changing. Cities like Karachi become heat sinks because of all the concert elements that are here," he explained.

Realizing the restricted social environment provided to women, Hussain said that men often leave their homes and find a better place when there is hot weather and no electricity. "What about these women? Where should they go," he questioned.

Talking about the marginalised groups especially women in Pakistan, environmental journalist Afia Salam said that women suffer more because of the space they have been given in society. She pointed out that women did not go outside their homes when heatwaves hit the city.

"They do not have such space," she said. Urban planners like Farhan Anwer said that the communities living in the city are physically exposed to a major climatic event like urban flooding. People have health-related issues and many have no shelter in this city.

Reminiscing past, Hussain said that there were houses which had cross ventilation. "But now we have no space for ventilation," he said, adding that the power outage makes the life too difficult for the residents. "Power outage is another major issue," he smiled wryly. "People cannot sleep and come out of their houses." We have very difficult times." Like other people of Karachi, Hussain has been advised by the authorities to take precautionary measures during hot days.

"I am aware of the precautions but there is continuous load shedding." And, life is very tough for at least 10 million people in Karachi without access to running water, proper sanitation or reliable electricity and gas.

The film titled 'Collision Course on the heatwave in Karachi' aired on *Express TV* on Sunday disclosed how climate change has affected people in the port city. He has pointed out various impacts of climate change, including heatwave, urban flooding, water scarcity and other such issues.

Water scarcity Water is a fundamental human right. Every state must provide safe, sufficient and affordable water to its citizens. The United Nations also says that the cost of water should not exceed 3 per cent of its household's income. The city's water-providing body, KWSB, is unable to provide water to roughly 10 million people. More than 50 per cent people in Karachi do not have access to tap water at home. Climate change will only make it worst.

According to the World Economic Forum, Faqeer Colony located in Korangi town is named as one of the five biggest slums in the world. Noor Jahan, one of the residents of this area, also complained that that was a shortage of potable water.

"The challenge to arrange water is for women only- not for men," she said. "Every woman in this area has to do it. It's very painful but we have to do it." Noor Jahan and her brother collectively earn about Rs17,500/month and they spend 30 per cent of their income on water.

Salaam suggests that the people who were spending their income on water could use that amount on the education and health of their kids. "Hundreds of thousands of people going down of poverty line each year," she explained.

"The same money I could use for my daughters' education, on their clothes," Noor Jahan realised. Urban flooding Anwar urged that the cities [like Karachi] needed to be conceptualized, designed and planned according to changing the weather pattern.

Given the recent rains in the United States, Anwar said that such flooding will occur. "But we will have to see response mechanism that how you can recover," he added. He said that Karachi had a natural mechanism in the shape of nullahs - natural drains. "People have encroached upon them," he said, adding that they [people] were not responsible for such encroachments.

"It will happen because the government is not facilitating them with low-income housing schemes," he said. "We have ill-planned growth," he said that because of this kind of development the chances of inundation will increase.

When record-breaking monsoon rains hit Karachi in 2020, the flooding destroyed homes and civic infrastructure. About 41 people died at that time. "It will continue until you bring here sewage system, affordable housing to people and introduce a proper solid waste management system," he urged. (By Sameer Mandhro *The Express Tribune*, 05, 06/12/2021)

### **Activists stage rally to highlight climate injustice**

The Peoples Climate March (PCM) was about marching for clean air, for water, for looking into the housing crisis, for land rights, for an end to land reclamation, an end to demolitions, an end to forced displacement, and for putting a check on turning already dense areas into concrete spaces.

That's what brought out some 25 organisations and many individuals to the Boat Basin, Clifton, for a peaceful march to Bilawal Chowrangi on Sunday afternoon.

They came with printed panaflex to support their demands, they came with handmade placards with messages such as Nalko main paani do (Put water in the taps), 'Your greed, our death', Tum karo tau development, hum karein tau encroachment (When you build, you call it development, when we do the same it is encroachment), 'Remove weapons, private guards, tents', 'Housing crisis is a climate crisis', Mahol nahi, nizaam ko badlo (Change the system to change the environment), etc.

Representatives of the Malir Expressway Affectees Action Committee were the first ones to arrive. Hanif Dilmurad, Azeem Dehkan and Haji Azizullah Memon spoke to Dawn about the planned Malir Expressway. "It is planned to connect DHA Phase-8 to DHA City [on Suprehighway]. There are 20 old goths in Malir that will fall prey to the expressway," said Dilmurad.

"And not just the villages, even the historic system of distributing water to Karachi created by the British, the Dumlottee Wells, will have to be sacrificed. At least eight of the 12 wells fall in the path of this expressway along with the Samo Goth water pumping station," he pointed out.

The exploited affectees of the recent demolitions around Karachi's storm water drains also came and demanded for their inclusion in environmental decision-making and policy-making that involved them. "We are stakeholders and it is required by law to listen to us along with the concerns of experts during hearings and before taking drastic steps in favour of commercial projects,"

said one forcibly displaced protester representing the Awami Workers Party.

Muneeba from the Women Democratic Front said that in this society women were expected to stay within the four walls of their home. "But where does she go when you take away her four walls? What does she do without a roof over her head?" She questioned.

"In the name of development, the government is destroying nature. It is cutting hills, bulldozing villages to replace them with posh houses for the rich. It is dredging rivers for silt that filters the water. Thus it is killing our rivers too. It is taking away islands from the fishing community," she pointed out.

Many fisherfolk also joined the protest to raise their voice about pollution in the sea and the government's eye on their islands such as the Buddo and Bundal.

Appreciating the huge turnout, Dr Nausheen Anwar from Karachi Urban Lab said that it was very much needed. "It is an unprecedented and critical moment for climate change action," she said.

Environmental activist Afia Salam said that it was great to see the coming together of different constituencies under the banner of the People's Climate March. "Urban issues are integral to any conversation about climate change. It's good to see people making their case in numbers," she said.

Shahzad Qureshi of the Urban Forest said that it was about time that the people woke up to climate change. "We are already very late in climate awareness," he said.

As more people arrived and were assembling themselves to march up to Bilawal Chowrangi on the service road of Khayaban-e-Saadi along Boat Basin, some police mobiles started arriving and pulling up too. At first it was thought that they were there to offer protection to the protesters, but then they blocked their path and informed them that they did not have permission to walk up to Bilawal Chowrangi. The protesters then stood their ground and marched up and down whatever little space they had on the service road while chanting slogans.

The joint demands of the 25 organisations participating in the march included an end to the demolition of working-class homes and villages and realisation of the right to shelter, the passage of a bill in reference to the affectees of Gujjar and Orangi Nullahs, the Karachi Circular Railway and Haji Lemo Goth with the same urgency as displayed to protect buildings and the affectees be given alternative housing of 120 square yards based on the household size in their districts. Also, ceasing the planning and construction of roads in the affected areas and land be returned to the people.

They said that the Malir Expressway should be taken over to the left bank of the Malir river, which is vacant so that the agricultural land and houses of residents can be protected. They demanded a fresh survey for the project. They wanted the activities of the reti-bajri (river silt) mafia, which they say is working under the patronage of the government, to be halted.

They also demanded the removal of industries from Malir and Kathore's agricultural and residential areas as they are not only dangerous for Malir, but pose an environmental threat for all of Karachi. They wanted projects of Bahria Town, DHA City, Commander City to be stopped and their leases cancelled.

They wanted the entire Indus Delta to be designated a Marine Protected Area.

They said that the transgender community had been rendered particularly vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination when accessing their right to shelter and safe housing so they demanded that the government set up a network of safe houses and community centres across the city for the community to run itself.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 13/12/2021)

### **Karachi's forest in peril**

The mangroves - the lifeline of the port city - are being cut gradually. The danger looms over the city. The timber mafias have hacked away thicket after thicket of mangrove trees lining the coast, leaving the people vulnerable to threats brewing at sea.

"We need to save these trees. They provide us oxygen and protect the ecosystem," said Architect and Filmmaker Tariq Alexander Qaiser. In his documentary titled 'A Forest In Peril' aired on the Express TV, Qaiser tried to sketch a clear picture of the mangroves near the city.

He tries to introduce the value of flora and fauna. Qaiser has been visiting the mangrove forests for last about 15 years and see them being reduced regularly.

"This jungle is near to the city," he said. "We need to protect it. The law is there but not being implemented." It is estimated that 90 per cent commercially important tropical marine species, like prawns, spend some part of their life in the mangroves. In 1998, the IUCN had warned that if mangroves deplete, up to 250,000 tons of fish caught off the Sindh coast will be at risk.

According to Flora of Pakistan, eight species of plants have been identified along the coast of Pakistan, out of which four have completely disappeared. Meanwhile, three species are on the verge of extinction and only Avicenna Marina is surviving in the Indus delta.

The experts said that due to urbanization and industrialization, the growth of mangrove shrubs has been affected badly. "It's necessary to protect and preserve these forests for generations to come," Qaiser urged. "I caught crabs in these forests during my childhood," Ismail, a fisherman, commented.

He also witnessed mangroves being cut and sold in the market. Mangrove locally called 'Timar' not only protects us from natural disasters, but also provide shelter to the marine life which earns the local fishermen a living. "They produce oxygen for us," Qaiser said.

Conservationist and Photographer Taimor Mirza said: "Karachiites spend all their life within homes made of concretes. They do not have trees or had already cut them," he said.

These mangroves, he pointed out, is a natural gift to the people of Karachi. Qaisar briefed that the law allows local communities to collect the wood from the forest. "But the mafia exploits it and I see them cutting mangrove trees regularly in last two years."

He said that those who cut mangroves were poor people. "But the mafia behind this is powerful." "The wood is being used in factories," Waqas, a fisherman said. Another fisherman said that: "we have fish and prawns because of these trees. He also pointed out that deforestation is common. "The government should take appropriate measures," he demanded.

Qaisar said that the demand of mangrove wood was going up because of the shortage of gas. On the other hand, about 7,000 tone garbage and 400 million gallon sewerage water is being released into sea regularly. Even the hospital waste is thrown in the sea.

Similarly, the government and the non-governmental organization have been trying to plant mangroves at different spots along the coast. But, Qaisar said, the only to preserve mangrove forests near Karachi city is to declare mangroves as natural reserves.

"There should be a complete ban on the sale and purchase of mangroves in the market," he suggested. "These are protected forest," he said.

Though the local communities are aware of the value of having mangroves around them and they have been cutting them for decades. "But the commercial demand is a recent phenomenon," Tariq said.

(By Sameer Mandhro The Express Tribune, 05, 13/12/2021)

### **Activists call for awareness on climate change**

Climate change and environmental activists on Tuesday underlined the need to create awareness about negative impacts of the climate change on the citizens' lives and environment of urban centres. For this purpose they suggested to have a close liaison between climate change activists, organisations, environmental protection and other government agencies.

The experts were speaking at a meeting on climate change, organised by The Knowledge Forum (TKF) at the office of National Commission for Human Rights. Representative of climate change movements, government departments, environmental activists, urban planners and some representatives from the European Climate Fund and their partners participated in the meeting.

"People in the major cities like Karachi are facing heat waves, delayed winters, where people suffer in Lahore and other cities of Punjab due to smog," said an urban planner Muhammed Toheed.

According to him, people in the cities are still not taking the climate change challenges seriously. He said that the gap for creating awareness of the environmental impacts should be bridged through continuous awareness programmes.

Adil Ayub of Climate Action Pakistan pointed out that the concerned citizens had organised climate marches in the city this year and in 2019, for creating awareness about climate change. This year, the climate march was held in the city last week, but the administration did not allow it to move from Clifton Beach to Bilawal Chowrangi, he lamented.

Earlier, in 2019 a climate march was held in major cities and was attended by thousands of people in Karachi and Lahore, he said adding that mobilisation of people on environmental issues is a must.

Zahid Farooq from the Urban Resource Centre said the local government has allowed erecting contract mountains in the form of high-rise building, which is the cause of heatwaves in the city.

He said close cooperation between the environmental agencies and the citizens' groups are a must. He pointed out that all industrial and municipal waste is directly going into the sea without any treatment. There were three water treatment plants, but all are non-functional.

Mushtaq Gaadi from TARA Foundation said that people's movement can create a major impact on the protection of the environment. He pointed out that it was a local people's movement that raised the issue of environmental threats due to coal power projects in Tharparkar district. He said external support to Thari activists arrive later but initially, it was affected people, who mobilised themselves and protested against the violation of their rights.

Speaking on the occasion a representative of Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF), Aslam Mallah said that due to coal mining and coal-fired power plants in the Tharparkar region people have started suffering displacement and diseases. Two power plants have started generating power on Thar coal in Block-2 and more are coming in. Human beings and animals are facing environmental threats due to coal projects, he added.

Irum Ayaz from Pakistan Red Crescent Society said that her organisation is working for climate change at three levels: with global movements and at the national level and internally at Red Crescent.

Dr Nuzhat Khan Director-General of the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) suggested that business solutions for environmental protection should be promoted which would protect the environment and would also help in the overall development of the country.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 05, 22/12/2021)