

NEWSCLIPPINGS

JULY TO DECEMBER 2021

TRANSPORT



Urban Resource Centre

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Green Line controversy

THE under-construction mass transport project in Karachi, the Green Line Bus Rapid Transit System, already beset with delays, has run into more snags. It recently emerged that the Spanish firm, Grupsa, which is lending its technical support and services for the project, has directly complained to Pakistan's anti-corruption and investigation agencies about fraud being committed in its name.

The firm has accused one of the local contractors, through whom Grupsa is supplying automated platform screen doors, of billing the federal government over 2.7m euros (Rs502m) for the same whereas the issued invoice was for a little over 0.5m euros. Grupsa is alleging that MGH, the Pakistani contractor, "prepared a false/forged/fabricated document/invoice" to achieve its objective. In the process, it "injured the name and goodwill of Grupsa as well as [caused] a huge loss to the exchequer".

Moreover, it has sought permission for its team to be allowed to visit the site, because of reports that substandard equipment had also been installed in its name. Evidently the Spanish firm, considered one of the pioneers of automated equipment, tried approaching diplomatic channels for eight months to get someone in Pakistan's officialdom to take notice, but to no avail.

These are serious allegations, and it reflects poorly on the authorities that they have been so unresponsive to a complaint by a renowned international firm, whose sole interest — given it has already received payment — is to prevent harm to its reputation. The inaction reflects deep malaise in systems of accountability here and could discourage other reputable firms from collaborating on mega projects in Pakistan. For its part, the local contractor, MGH, has issued a statement to say that the company has taken appropriate action in a court of law against the individual involved. The matter must be resolved to the satisfaction of Grupsa and fulfil the demands of accountability. We require the assistance of global firms to develop our infrastructure, and what Karachi desperately needs more than anything else is a mass transit system.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 05/07/2021)

SHC stops cantonment boards across Sindh from collecting parking fee

The Sindh High Court has restrained cantonment boards across the province and their contractors from claiming and collecting parking fee of vehicles until further orders.

A petition citing the ministry of defence and all the cantonment boards of Sindh as respondents stated that these organisations could not charge parking fee in the light of a judgement of the apex court.

The petitioner's lawyer submitted that the Cantonment Board Clifton (CBC) had issued an advertisement in March for awarding a contract for collection of parking fee.

The counsel submitted that according to the 2015 verdict of Supreme Court in the case of Hyderabad Cantonment Board, there was no provision in the Cantonment Act, 1924 that empowers them to charge parking fee and hence such levy was without any lawful authority.

A two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Shafi Siddiqui observed that the CBC had acted under the said act, but its lawyer was unable to assist the court about the law under which the advertisement was given for awarding the contract to claim parking fee.

The court will take up the matter again after summer vacations

"The respondents or any authority/nominee there under are restrained from claiming parking fee till further orders. Counsel for respondent No.2 [CBC] also seeks time to file parawise comments. Let this matter be fixed in court in the first week after summer vacations," the court order said.

Petitioner Atta Mohammad moved the SHC stating that the controversy of parking fee within the jurisdiction of cantonment boards has already been settled by the apex court through its judgement in 2015 and had also dismissed an appeal/review petition of the Hyderabad Cantonment Board in this regard.

However, he argued that all the cantonment boards in Sindh were charging/collecting parking fee in violation of the verdicts of the Supreme Court.

The petitioner further submitted that the cantonment boards had been awarding contracts to private persons for collection of parking fee, which was also unlawful and a violation of the principle laid down by the SHC in case of Continental Biscuit Limited versus the federation in 2017.

He maintained that as per the superior judiciary, the cantonment boards cannot levy fee beyond the scope of Section 200 of the Cantonment Act and levy of the parking fee was without jurisdiction. However, despite this the CBC, HCB and Karachi Cantonment Board had framed parking by-laws in 2015, 2012 and 2018 in violation of the law and rulings of the apex and high courts.

While referring to another judgement of the SHC handed down in 2010, the petitioner argued that as per the order, authority while framing regulations cannot travel beyond the purview of the parent law or rules and maintained that the respondents had travelled beyond the parent statute.

He pleaded to declare the imposition of the parking fee and its recovery directly or indirectly by the cantonment boards in the light of the apex court and SHC verdicts without jurisdiction and unlawful.

The petitioner also asked the SHC to declare the parking by-laws and subsequent notifications/statutory regulatory orders ultra vires to the Cantonments Act.

He sought permanent injunction restraining the boards and their contractor or anybody else working for them from demanding/collecting parking fee from any person.

(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 10/07/2021)

Motorbike riding without helmet banned on Sharea Faisal

The city traffic police on Saturday announced the imposition of a ban on riding motorbikes without wearing helmet on Sharea Faisal in the first phase to be replicated on three other major roads in the second phase to prevent the growing incidents of death mainly caused by non-wearing of helmets.

The decision would be implemented immediately, said DIG Traffic Iqbal Dara.

Launching a special campaign on Sharea Faisal with other senior officers of the local police, the DIG said that around 90 per cent of deaths of motorbike riders were caused by non-wearing of helmets as they suffered serious wounds to their heads in accidents.

He said that in the first phase, they had launched the drive on Sharea Faisal, which would be extended to other roads such as Shahrah-i-Pakistan, Shershah Suri Road and M.A. Jinnah Road to control deaths.

Youth shot dead

A 21-year-old man was shot dead while another person injured when a private security guard opened fire on them over a trivial issue in the Korangi area on Saturday.

The Sharafi Goth police said that Asad Mehmood was killed while Farhan Ahmed, 38, injured by the guard, Ghulam Husain, near Singer Chowrangi. The guard opened fire on them after an exchange of hot words over some issue. The suspect was arrested with the weapon used in the murder.

The dead and the injured were shifted to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre.

Man held for killing wife

The Quaidabad police on Saturday arrested a man with his two friends for the killing of his wife over a week ago.

Investigation officer Zakirullah said that the body of the unidentified young woman stuffed in a gunny bag with her hands and legs tied was found on a garbage dump in Sherpao Colony on June 26. The corpse was around three days old when discovered.

The victim was stabbed and brutally tortured to death and her face was smashed. She was identified as Maryam Abbas, 25.

With the help of witnesses and neighbours, the police arrested her husband, Kalb-i-Abbas, and his two friends, Bakhtiar and Abdul Samad.

The suspect used to torture his wife and he tried to force her to have sexual relations with his friends. The officer said that on the night of June 23, the husband brought his friends to his home and forced her to have relations with them. As she refused, all the three suspects brutally tortured and murdered her and later on threw her body.

The officer said that the victim was "found" by a taxi driver, Mohammed Amir. He is a resident of Chakwal and has probably fled there. He "sold" the victim to Abbas who married her. All the held suspects were addicts who consumed the drug called ice.

(By Imtiaz Ali Dawn, 13, 11/07/2021)

Introducing electric bikes

Last week, Prime Minister Imran Khan addressed the launch ceremony of Pakistan's first locally manufacture electric bike under the Jolta EV technology project. The project focuses on the need to electrify the auto-industry in order to promote an eco-friendly environment. It is part of the ambitious Pakistan Electric Vehicle Policy 2020-2025, the aim of which is to bring about a green revolution in Pakistan and reduce the carbon footprint especially in mega cities.

About 7,500 new motorcycles are sold in Pakistan daily and almost 2 million are manufactured every year. According to recent studies, an electric bike produces 90% less emission than a standard motorcycle — this will prove to be significant. Furthermore, owners can save over Rs4,000 in fuel costs since these bikes only require overnight charge, which is ideal for the working class.

From its very onset, climate change has been an enormous threat for Pakistan because of its geographical location. Millions of livelihoods are at stake. Therefore, we must understand that even though such initiatives might be insignificant from a global perspective — for that Pakistan will have to push the agenda in the international forum — it will however help mitigate the effects of climate change within the country. If enough electric bikes are introduced onto the streets, it will help decrease the heat dissipation and carbon emission, and in turn improve the air quality index of polluted cities like Karachi and Lahore.

Since the battery industry is dominated by East Asian countries such as China and Japan, Pakistan can also look towards improving trade relations and import high-level technology to further enhance the scope of such projects. Furthermore, with the transition of electric powered vehicles, Pakistan may be able to reduce its heavy annual oil import bill. One sincerely hopes that the project expands in scale and the PM continues to remain invested in it. Initiation and implementation are two sides of the same coin. As citizens, we must be conscious of our decisions, adopt eco-friendly practices, and do our part.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 12/07/2021)

Electric motorcycles

THE recent launch of Pakistan's first electric motorcycle by Prime Minister Imran Khan underscores his government's strong push towards lower vehicle emissions led by the adoption of electric vehicles as part of its EV Policy 2020-2025 approved last year. The policy, which gives a slew of tax incentives to EV manufacturers, is targeting a robust EV market having a 30pc and 90pc share in passenger vehicles and heavy-duty trucks and buses by 2030 and 2040. The premier termed the launch as a futuristic step, saying that the push for electric mobility is part of the larger initiative of making the country clean and green. Indeed, the support for greater and early adoption of EVs is increasing ever since electric vehicles entered the limelight following the announcement of the EV policy and the arrival of Chinese automotive manufacturers in the Pakistani market.

There can be no two opinions that Pakistan should play its part in mitigating the climate impact of vehicular emissions. But, at the same time, the larger goal of promoting cleaner transportation should not let the increasing enthusiasm for the potential of EVs or their public appeal affect the policymakers'

capacity to appreciate such important issues as safety concerns, range anxiety, disposal of batteries, etc involved in the production and adoption of electric motorcycles powered by low-speed lead-acid batteries instead of high-speed lithium-ion batteries. Though the use of the former, which are easier to procure and cost-effective, will help the manufacturers keep the price of their products low, it may result in higher running costs owing to frequent battery replacements. The lead-acid battery powering two-wheelers, the primary source of mobility for middle-class families across Pakistan, make business sense for investors. But the government should be mindful that China was forced to change its policy in 2019 to move towards international safety standards, after years of junk production, and phase out electric motorcycles powered by lead-acid batteries owing to their low capacity and efficiency, depth of discharge and reduced lifespan. In India, electric motorcycles make up only a negligible fraction of its two-wheeler market. The market share of the ones powered by lithium-ion batteries is even smaller because of the higher battery cost. Unless there is a breakthrough in battery technology, electric motorcycles are unlikely to replace their internal combustion engine counterparts. Till such time, we may only see a negligible transition towards electric two-wheeler mobility.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 15/07/2021)

Chinese bus incident

At least a dozen people were killed and several injured after some sort of explosion involving a bus transporting Chinese engineers near the Dasu hydropower plant in K-P's Kohistan district. Pakistani authorities have made conflicting comments on the incident, with political leaders referring to it as a "cowardly attack", while the Foreign Office made it out to be a car accident caused by a gas leak explosion.

Chinese sources have consistently referred to it as a "bombing" and an attack. China has issued strongly-worded statements warning its citizens to "stay on alert...". The Chinese Embassy also "requested" Pakistani authorities to "investigate the incident thoroughly". Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Zhao Lijian, who spent almost 15 years as a diplomat in Pakistan, said Beijing "asked" Islamabad to "thoroughly get to the bottom of the truth as soon as possible, arrest the perpetrators, severely punish them and earnestly protect the safety of Chinese personnel, institutions and projects in Pakistan". Despite using the word "asked", the rest of the language was strong and direct from a diplomatic standpoint, implying that China has confidence that the incident was an attack.

The 'confusion' among Pakistani officials, meanwhile, continues with the federal information minister saying that "initial investigations into Dasso incident have now confirmed traces of explosives, [and so] terrorism cannot be ruled out". Nine of our closest ally's citizens are dead, and Beijing appears to be blaming an intelligence or security failure on our part. However many times the Foreign Office repeats that "Pakistan attaches great importance to safety and security of Chinese nationals, projects and institutions in Pakistan", the fact is that they keep getting attacked.

Pakistan needs to step up security around Chinese interests. It is worrying that such an incident has occurred after the higher-profile 2018 attack on the Chinese Consulate in Karachi. In that instance, Chinese officials took a much more forgiving and appreciative tone, perhaps because no Chinese citizens were killed or injured in it. It appears that 'diplomatic' praise was misconstrued as heartfelt. China has made it clear that it will not accept attacks on its citizens. Hope our leaders have got the message.

(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 14, 16/07/2021)

BRT likely to start in October

The authorities gave a new deadline of October 2021 for the operationalization of the long-delayed Green Line Bus Rapid Transit System according to a statement issued on Friday.

The ground-breaking ceremony of the project was performed by the then premier in 2016. The mass transit project stretching from Nagin Chowrangi to Numaish Chowrangi and from there onward to Jamia Cloth Market was planned in 2012 as part of Karachi Transportation Improvement Project (KTIP, 2030).

Presiding over a meeting of Provincial Coordination and Implementation Committee (PCIC), at the CM's House, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah directed the provincial transport department to complete work on the Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) Green Line by August and make it operational by October.

He also directed the authorities concerned to expedite work on the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR).

Officials told the meeting that infrastructure of Green Line till Numaish Chowrangi would be completed by this August 30, and buses would reach here from China by August 10 while the project would start operation by October 10.

The CM suggested constructing a box drainage channel below the crossing of Green Line at three locations that are Nagin Chowrangi and at two spots of Hyderi Markets, at the cost of Rs400 million, for smooth discharge of rainwater.

The meeting was attended by provincial ministers Nasir Shah, Avais Qadir Shah, Law Advisor Murtaza Wahab, Corps Commander Karachi Lt Gen Nadeem Anjum and Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah.

KCR

The transport department told the meeting that the Pakistan Army's Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) had conducted a survey for detailed design, and estimated cost for flyovers and underpasses along the KCR route. According to the project concept (PC-1), three elevated structures would be constructed in phase one of the project at a cost of Rs4.9 billion. In phase two, elevated structures, over an area of 6.4km, would be constructed at an estimated cost of Rs11.508 billion.

The chief minister said that he had committed to provide Rs6 billion which would be allotted by his government as per the timeline of the railway authorities. KCR Project Director Ameer Daudpota told the meeting that there were some issues which needed to be resolved before starting the work.

BRT Orange Line

The meeting was told that the Sindh government project Orange Line was 3.8km, including four stations and one bus terminal. The infrastructure of the project would be completed by the end of next month.

The Sindh transport department has released Rs2.120 billion to SIDCL for procurement of 20 buses and over Rs587 million for operationalisation of the BRT. The buses will reach from China in December 2021.

Red Line

The meeting was told that the BRT Red Line was Pakistan's first mass transit system with zero carbon emission due to the biogas component. A state-of-art biogas plant would be installed near the city's biggest source of dung, the Cattle Colony. All its 912 vehicles would operate in direct feeder and trunk routes to travel along the corridor..

The meeting was told that the supervision consultant of the project has been selected. The civil contractor was being finalised and then a financial bid opening would be made.

The meeting was told that the Malir Halt and Masumiyat depots were being used by Pakistan Rangers and they were assured that they would vacate them when work would start. The chief minister directed the chief secretary to provide alternate space to the Rangers so that they could continue their operational work smoothly.

Yellow Line

The Yellow Line is another provincial government project of Rs61.436 billion in which World Bank's share is Rs53.540 billion, while the Sindh government will provide Rs2.654 billion and the private sector will lend Rs5.250 billion. It would be developed primarily along Korangi and its industrial road, connecting the city's South-eastern suburbs, South and Central districts.

It is a 21-km project starting from Dawood Chowrangi to Numash. There would be two flyovers, nine underpasses, one U-turn with 28 stations. Its route would have a 42-km motorbike track on both sides. Its ridership would be 300,000 per day. As many as 268 diesel hybrid buses would run on the route. The meeting was told that the contract was being finalised in consultation with the World Bank just after Eid.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 17/07/2021)

Electric bikes charged up and raring to go

With more people becoming environmentally conscious, the demand for electric bicycles is fast on the rise.

The rapidly emerging *Pakistani* technology company, Hopper Holdings Group, has introduced Pakistan's first electric bicycle that can cover a distance of 60 km at a speed of 40 km/h. It needs a mere 2 to 2.5 units of electricity to charge its batteries.

The innovative bicycle is currently priced at Rs32,000, but given the rising demand and increased daily production of up to 200 units, the bike will be better equipped and available at a reduced Rs26,000.

Hopper Holding Group Director Sarim T Syed tells The Express Tribune that his company works in the fields of data analytics, robotics, e-commerce and IT applications. The chargeable cycle is an innovative product of the company which has amassed a positive response since its inception.

"The bicycle is a cheap means of transport," he said. "Many motorcyclists are now turning to bicycles after prices, operation and maintenance costs have gone beyond their budgets. " He continues that electric bicycles offer cheap rides for an individual and also benefit the environment.

Sarim further reveals that 98 per cent of the parts used in the electric bicycle are manufactured in Pakistan. The bicycle's battery takes a modest 2 to 2.5 units of electricity and it costs between Rs30 and Rs40 to charge up the two-wheeler.

The company has initially developed a proprietary design that fits both men and women. However, a consumer may opt for a specific design or may also affix the electric motor of the product on their existing bicycle. Sarim said that the electric bicycle has gone through a rigorous process of on-road testing before its commercial launch. The motor in the bicycle has been tested for a ride up to 650km during which no fault had been reported except declines in speed and battery backup.

However, the bicycle's motor performed well during the trial and did not catch fire, indicating that it is safe and poses no hazard or risks. The chief of the company further says that the electric bicycle has been launched with minimalist features in order to keep the cost of the product low.

"No disc brakes have been installed in the electric bicycle at present, but the company intends to add them and other features in times to come.' The Hopper Holdings chief says an English-Urdu app and a fast charger will soon be developed and introduced for riders. He adds that the due to the limited number of bicycles being manufactured at the moment, limited features have been added to keep the cost low.

Hopper Holdings manufactures bicycles at two facilities situated in Lahore with a total production capacity of 70 bicycles per day. The bicycle was introduced six months ago and has started receiving a fair number of orders without any formal publicity.

The University of Peshawar has placed a large order for electric bicycles that will be used by its students at the campus, Sarim reveals. He adds other universities have also expressed interest in purchase of the economical electric bikes for their students.

According to Sarim T Syed, a bicycle with full features, including disc brakes and fast chargers, will cost around Rs45,000. However, offering a bicycle for such a hefty amount would not be suitable in any way as it out of reach for most riders.

"Given increase in the demand, the production of the bicycles will be more economical and the price will remain lower. If we are able to achieve the production of bicycles at about 200 units a day, a full-option bicycle, which will otherwise cost Rs45,000, can be offered at around Rs26,000."

(By Kashif Hussain The Express Tribune, 04, 06/08/2021)

Fishermen block Karachi Port

Hundreds of fishermen took out a boat rally blocking the *Karachi* Port on Sunday for over six-hour against what they called was manhandling by the personnel of security agencies.

Fishermen along with their families on board their fishing vessels were chanting slogans against the alleged misconduct of the personnel security agencies in the sea.

The protest demonstration started at 8 am at Keamari jetty and continued till 2 pm, blocking all the routine work of the port for hours. The blockade ended and the fishermen dispersed peacefully on official assurance of the resolution of the issues faced by the fishermen.

The officials from Karachi Port Trust held talks with the protesting fisherman assuring them that their issues will be resolved. The talks were delayed till Monday as the protestors demanded the presence of Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali Haider Zaidi. It was learnt that Zaidi will join the talks on Monday.

The indigenous fishermen from Baba and Bhitt islands, Baldia Town, Khada Market, Keamari, Ibrahim Haidery, Kaka Pir chugged into the harbour with their fishing boats and demanded the government to address their issues.

Speaking to *The Express Tribune*, they said that on late Friday night some of the fishermen were compelled not to go into the sea for fishing. "It is not the first time we are being insulted and manhandled," said Sharjeel Noor Muhammad. "Enough is enough. There is limit to tolerate such kind of attitude," he said.

Sharing the details of the protest, Muhammad said that despite having legal fishing permits, the fishermen have been mistreated by officials of different security agencies deployed in the sea. "We are not terrorists or foreigners but are being treated like them," he said.

Another fisherman, Ibrahim, said that most of the time they were tortured and abused. "The security officials humiliate a father in front of a son. We are indigenous people of this land. Do you think we could hatch a conspiracy or get involved in anything against the country," he said.

This is the second massive protest of the fishermen that had blocked the port. The first was staged in 1996. "Every fisherman is united against such attitude of our security agencies," a fisherman Abdul Karim said.

"The protest will be expanded, if our all demands and issues are not met," Karim said.

Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) MPA Shazia Karim Sanghar claimed that all the fishermen in *Sindh's* coastal belt were supporters of the PPP. "This is the reason they are being targeted," she said. She warned that the fishermen will not be left alone to face such kind of inhuman attitude. "We are with them and demand the federal government to change its policies," she urged.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 08/08/2021)

'80 Green Line buses on the way'

Sindh Governor Imran Ismail has said that 80 buses of the Green Line project will soon reach Karachi.

He said that two ships laden with 40 buses each will leave China's Tianjin Port in the middle of August.

He hoped that the buses will reach the metropolis within a week after being loaded on the ships.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 11/08/2021)

20-strong Cycle Staff helping control traffic in parts of Karachi

It's 11.30am and traffic police constable Rashid Ali is excited to be starting another new day at work. A senior member of the newly formed Cycle Staff of the Sindh traffic police, he collects his shiny new blue bike and other safety riding gear, including the matching blue helmet, gloves and sunglasses, from the Abdullah Haroon traffic section and is on the job by 12noon.

"I was taught to ride a bicycle at five or six years of age by an elder cousin. At the time I was so small that I couldn't even reach the pedals while sitting on its seat and pedalled while standing. I have always enjoyed riding a bicycle even after I grew up. So when Traffic DIG Iqbal Dara thought about a bicycle squad, I was among the first to opt for it," Rashid Ali tells *Dawn*.

"Of course, getting in was not as simple as they weren't just looking for traffic constables who could ride bicycles. We were picked for our attitude and pleasant nature because other than tending to traffic and blockades, we were also to spread awareness regarding road safety and abiding traffic rules and who would listen to anyone nasty with attitude?" he laughs.

"I am grateful that I was selected in the Cycle Staff and issued a bicycle and gear. It is a nice Chinese 3x8 24 speed bike, more complicated than my older cousin's, which did not have any gears from what I remember," Rashid Ali beams.

'I can pedal on congested roads and pavements, something which I couldn't do if I had a car instead'

"So you can find me any day on my beautiful duty bike on Abdullah Haroon Road or Zaibunissa Street, where besides controlling traffic, I also have my wheels to get on to see what is holding up traffic ahead, etc. I can pedal on congested roads and even on pavements, something which I couldn't do if I had been assigned a car instead.

"And what's more, I'm admired and approached for what I do. Kids come to me and ask me about my handsome pair of wheels. Sometimes they also dare to request me to let them borrow it for a quick round of the block, which I have to politely refuse after which we compromise on selfies with them, as these days you will also find us carrying the Pakistan flag with pride," he smiles.

The section officer at the Abdullah Haroon traffic section, Mohammed Nawaz Sial, is traffic police constable Rashid Ali's direct supervisor. Besides Rashid Ali, there are four other constables on bicycles that come under him. "We specifically needed to depute traffic police on bicycles in congested areas of the city, especially the market areas. Our Cycle Staff was introduced during Ramazan and since then these men have been instrumental in solving many traffic issues while helping in the smooth flow of traffic. Of course, we wanted constables who could manoeuvre the bicycles very well, and we were lucky enough to find such men amid us," says the section officer.

Traffic DIG Iqbal Dara, whose brainchild the Cycle Staff is, says that he has seen policemen on bicycles abroad, especially in the United Kingdom "but not specifically for minding traffic".

"Here we thought of bringing up such a force to depute our men in the city's congested areas such as market areas. But too often there was a need felt for them whenever there was a traffic jam or when traffic got stuck in a bottleneck," he explains.

"We gave bicycles to regular traffic or foot constables but those who knew how to ride bikes. That way they were equipped to handle such traffic issues. Then this cycling is also environmental friendly and good for health," he adds.

The DIG adds that the constables have been equipped with walkie-talkies so that they can quickly cycle to a point up ahead where there is any issue hindering the flow of traffic and inform their colleagues regarding it.

He says that currently there are 20 constables who have been given the bicycles and they work in batches of five in district South, including Zainab Market; district East, including Tariq Road; district West, district Central and the main city, including the Electronic Market.
(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 16/08/2021)

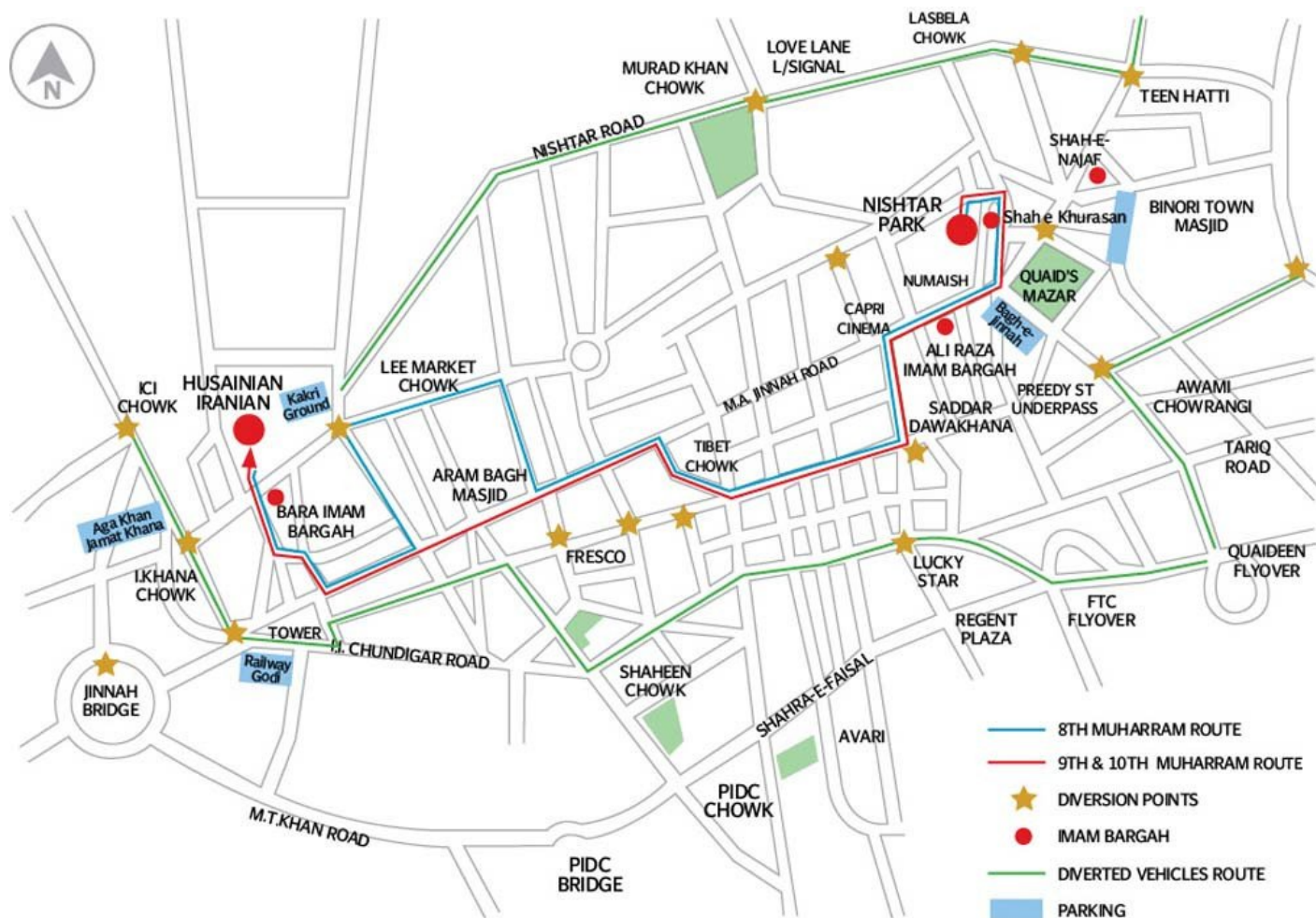
Traffic police notify alternate routes

The *Karachi* Traffic Police announced a traffic diversion plan on Monday to ensure the safe and smooth movement of mourning processions, which will move on their traditional routes on the 8th, 9th and 10th of Muharram - August 17(today), 18 and 19 - and notify alternate routes for commuters.

According to the traffic police spokesperson, on all three days, the main procession will start from Nishtar Park and end at Hussainian Iranian Imambargah in Kharadar. During this time, the procession route will be secured by containers.

Vehicles travelling from Sharae Quaideen towards Numaish Chowrangi will not be allowed to move past the Society traffic signal except those having security clearance stickers on the windscreen.

The traffic police have issued special stickers to vehicles intending to take part in the procession after clearance from the special branch, the intelligence wing of the police. The vehicles will be parked at designated places and commuters will have to walk to the imambargah and onward with the procession. "No vehicle will be allowed to ply or park on the route of the rallies," the spokesperson apprised in a statement issued on the day.



According to the traffic police, the central procession on Muharram 8 (today) will emerge from Nishtar Park at one end of the MA Jinnah Road and will culminate at Hussainian Iranian Imambargah on the other end after passing through the traditional routes.

The main majlis is to be held at Nishtar Park at 1.30pm and the procession will emerge from the park on Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto Road then move on to, Father Jaminis Road, Mehfil-e-Shah-e-Khurasan Road, Mansfield Street, Preedy Street, Tibet Chowk, MA Jinnah Road, Baba-e-Urdu, Chand Bibi

Chowk, Nishtar Road, Nigar Cinema, Altaf Hussain Road, Denso Hall, again MA Jinnah Road, Kharadar Police Station, Bombay Bazar to culminate on Hussainian Iranian Imambargah.

Meanwhile, on Muharram 9 (tomorrow), the main procession of Shia scholars will start from Imambargah Martin Road and will reach Nishtar Park at about 2pm where a central majlis will take place. Following the majlis, the mourners will head from Nishtar Park and culminate at Hussainian Iranian Imambargah after passing through the traditional routes of Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto Road, Mehfil Shah-e-Khurasan, MA Jinnah Road, then a detour towards Mansfield Street, on to Preedy Street and then back on the MA Jinnah Road to move onward to the Bolton Market, Bombay Bazar, Kharadar and Nawab Mahabat Khanji Road to end at Hussainian Iranian Imambargah.

Similarly on the 10th of Muharram (Thursday), the Ashura procession will emerge from Nishtar Park, Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto Road, Father Jaminis Road, Mehfil-e-Shah-e-Khurasan, MA Jinnah Mansfield Street, Preedy Street, Tibet Chowk, MA Jinnah Road, Bolton Market, Bombay Bazar Kharadar, Nawab Mahabat Khanji Road, to culminate on Hussainian Iranian Imambargah.

Traffic plan

As soon as the rally leaves Nishtar Park, all the traffic coming from the old city area would be diverted towards Jubilee or Nishtar Road through Soldier Bazar, Bahadur Yar Jang Road, Coast Guard Headquarters and Anklesaria Hospital intersection.

All the traffic travelling from Nazimabad towards MA Jinnah Road will be diverted from Teen Hatti intersection towards Jail Road through Martin Road and all such vehicles will be allowed to travel up to Jail Chowrangi flyover and all these vehicles would be able to reach their destination while passing through Jail Road, Jamshed Road, Dadabhoy Naorji Road, Kashmir Road, Sharae Quaideen and on to Sharae Faisal.

Similarly, commuters heading from the National Stadium Road towards MA Jinnah Road will be allowed to pass through New MA Jinnah Road. These vehicles will be able to travel to Sharae Faisal through Dadabhoy Naorji Road, Kashmir Road, Society Traffic Signal and Sharae Quaideen.

All such traffic, which goes from Gulberg and Super Highway towards MA Jinnah Road will be diverted from Liaquatabad No10 towards Nazimabad Chowrangi No2.

The traffic police spokesperson said the participants of rally coming from Nazimabad will join the rally through the routes of Lasbela, Albela Sweets, Garden Jamaat Khana, Soldier Bazar No3 Traffic Signal until Numaish, Liaquatabad, Teenhatti, Jahangir Road, Gurumandir till Numaish, Society Traffic Signal till Numaish, Gulistan-e-Jauhar and Gulshan-e-Iqbal, University Road, Old Sabzi Mandi, Kashmir Road, and from Society Traffic Signal till Numaish.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 17/08/2021)

Consultant for Red Line BRT to be hired next week, Murad says

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah said on Saturday that the civil work of the Red Line bus rapid transit (BRT) project would be contracted out next week and a similar initiative was being made for the Yellow Line project.

He was presiding over a meeting of TransKarachi here at CM House. The meeting was attended by Transport Minister Awais Qadir Shah, Karachi Administrator Murtaza Wahab, Transport Secretary Shariq Ahmed and others.

The chief minister was told that the consultant for Red Line was being appointed next week and the transport department was also hiring a contractor to start the work.

The Red Line is a 26-kilometre-long project starting from Airport to Numaish and is being launched with the assistance of the World Bank. The meeting also decided to finalise all the formalities to hire a consultant and contractors for BRT Yellow Line so that its work could also be started.

Announces Rs1m compensation for families of each victim of Mowach Goth tragedy

The Yellow Line is a 21-km-long BRT system starting from Korangi to Numaish.

Mari Petroleum gives Rs3.12bn for Ghotki uplift

Meanwhile, the CM said that Rs3.123 billion given by Mari Petroleum Company Ltd (MPCL) against petroleum bonus and social welfare obligation would be spent on the development of local communities of district Ghotki.

This he said while talking to the company's chief executive Fahim Hyder, who called on him here at CM House and handed over a cheque for Rs3.123bn.

The chief minister said that the area from where oil was being extracted must be developed properly. "It becomes the utmost responsibility of the company to provide employment opportunities to the locals and develop the infrastructure of the localities," he added.

He urged the company to prefer local people for employment. The CEO invited the chief minister to visit their field and the CM accepted the offer.

Meanwhile, the chief minister offered condolence to the family members of Mohammad Ali Shah, the late chairman of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, who died three days ago.

He said that late Shah struggled for the rights of fishermen and his services for the cause of his community would always be remembered.

Compensation for Mowach Goth victims

CM Shah has said that Karachi being the economic hub and industrial engine of the country had always been the target of terrorists but with our political will, support of people and dedication of our law enforcement agencies the nefarious designs of the enemies had been nipped in the bud.

This he said while talking to the media after expressing condolences with the family members of the Mowach Goth tragedy.

"We have problems on our eastern and western borders, therefore such kind of incidents as happened in Mowach Goth take place," he said.

He said that keeping in view the Afghan situation and Indian unrest he had chaired the Apex Committee meeting to chalk out a strategy to face the potential threat.

He termed the Mowach Goth incident as one of the cowardly attacks against women and children, that's why no banned organisation or any other outfit claimed responsibility.

He said that the culprits of the incident would be brought to book shortly.

Mr Shah offered condolence to the family members of the victims of the Mowach Goth terrorist incident and gave a Rs14.44 million release order to the deputy commissioner of Malir to issues cheques for Rs1m each to the heirs of the deceased and Rs200,000 to each injured.
(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 22/08/2021)

Govt to hire BRT Red Line contractor next month

The contract of civil work for the Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) Red Line project will be awarded next month. The 26km-long BRT track will connect airport with MA Jinnah Road.

This was stated by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah while presiding over a meeting of Trans-Karachi at CM House on Saturday.

The meeting was attended by Minister Transport Awais Qadir Shah, KMC Administrator Murtaza Wahab, Planning and Development Department Chairperson Shireen Narejo and Transport Secretary Shariq Ahmed.

The chief minister was informed that appointment of consultant for launching the civil work of BRT Red Line was in progress and decision to this effect will be taken next week.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 22/08/2021)

Action against underage bikers ordered to curb alarming rise in road accidents in Sindh

The Sindh High Court has expressed serious resentment over the alarming number of road accidents of teenagers and directed the inspector general of police (IGP) and DIG-traffic to take steps to prevent underage bikers from coming on the roads.

A single-judge bench headed by Justice Aftab Ahmed Gorar asked the officials to hold a campaign across the province, particularly in the provincial metropolis, issuing warning to the parents of underage bikers that they would be held responsible if their kids were found on the roads riding bikes/motorcycles.

The bench issued these directives while passing an order on the pre-arrest bail applications of two teenagers in a case pertaining to the death of another teenager in bike racing a few months ago.

The police had booked the suspects under Section 320 (unintentional murder for rash negligent driving) of the Pakistan Penal Code at Sharea Faisal police station on the complaint of the victim's father.

SHC grants pre-arrest bail to two underage bikers booked for manslaughter

The bench confirmed the interim pre-arrest bail of the applicants on the ground that reasonable doubt was raised about their participation and it needed a further inquiry in terms of Section 497 (2) of the criminal procedure code.

However, the court in its order noted that the alarming number of cases of fatal road accidents involving teenagers caused widespread concerns calling for effective intervention of the departments concerned.

The bench said that the teenagers who did not know how to safely operate a motorcycle could end up injuring themselves fatally and also causing serious injuries to other people.

Since teenagers' accidents and especially fatal wrecks are increasing day by day in the city, it is important to consider the pros and cons of allowing the teenagers to ride motorcycles on the roads, it added.

The bench directed the IGP and the DIG-traffic to take thoughtful measures to stop such activities by circulating directives to their subordinates/SSPs/SHOs deputed in the entire Sindh province, particularly in Karachi.

It said they must in the first instance conduct campaigns in their respective areas issuing warning that parents of teenage bike riders would be held accountable in case any of their children were found on the roads riding motorcycles and the vehicles would also be seized.

Seizing the vehicles and booking the parents can help focus on safety of children and keep everyone in the know with an expectation that parents will take appropriate action to prevent minors from repeating the offence, which puts lives at risk, it further added.

The bench directed its office to facsimile the copy of the order to the provincial home secretary, IG Sindh as well as DIG of traffic police for compliance.
(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 01/09/2021)

Locked escape routes

Must the doors of escape routes be locked from outside and remain closed forever for the trapped factory workers of Pakistan? Are they destined to be burnt alive, inhaling smoke, carbon and chemicals, their lungs choked with soot and their bodies scorched with fire.



The 258 workers in Baldia Town and 17 in Korangi's Mehran Town died screaming with pain and agony, unable to escape from the locked emergency exits. The truth is that they were murdered by the cluelessness and connivance of the Sindh Labour Department. Its disinterested Directors and Inspectors, drenched in years of ignorance and palm-greasing, have no capacity, knowledge or appetite for the task assigned to them.

Pakistan and its workers will continue to suffer these tragic consequences as long as we do not (a) change the mindless, archaic and compromised governance of the Labour Departments and (b) adopt scientific and digital processes to manage Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) at the national level. OHS is not about who all must be hanged after an occurrence but how to operate a system that prevents accidents from

happening.

We could begin by building a professional OHS Department that reports directly to the Secretary of the Ministry of Labour. It must be mandated to work closely with stakeholders to promote and ensure workplace safety through legislation, policies and capability building. Today we know very little about the factories that exist in the province. We must therefore begin by preparing a database of all factories — may they be located in industrial zones, residential areas or homes. This can be easily done through media announcements asking all concerned to electronically register with the OHS Department by filling a form placed on the OHS Department's website.

The next step is to ask all organisations to fill and submit a web-based questionnaire that should adequately identify the key processes, products, materials, hazards, controls, OHS system elements, safety equipment, safety responsibilities, safety audits and emergency procedures of each organisation. The role of the OHS Department is to analyse this data, seek clarifications and offer advice and help where needed. All this can be done electronically without anyone visiting a factory or an office.

A key responsibility of the Government's OHS Department is to proactively provide OHS information, guidance, support and training to the industry. This is typically a web-based activity that provides guidelines on establishing an OHS system, appointing OHS teams, conducting risk assessment, complying with laws, handling emergency situations, having appropriate workplace facilities, training of workers, handling hazardous materials, applying operational controls, reporting of accidents and seeking further help on OHS issues.

The tasks described above are knowledge-based and can only be performed by competent and trained staff. Thus the staff of the newly formed OHS Department must be adequately trained on OHS systems, standards, risk assessment, controls and compliance, besides being well versed in working on computers. Knowledge and experience of OHS system audits must be an essential component of such training programmes.

The existing Sindh OHS Act 2017 needs to be simplified and rewritten. Loaded with 6 pages that dwell on offences and penalties, four on powers of inspectors, four on definitions and three on OHS Council (that never met), this document is too convoluted for any practical application. Interestingly it has no requirement of establishing an OHS system or to take 'corrective actions'.

Pakistan's 90 million workers deserve an escape from poverty, disease, hunger and exploitation. About 50% of them do not receive even the minimum legal wage while 90% are not registered with EOBI or SESSI. They deserve safe workplaces. They deserve employers that will build safety in their jobs and a government that will promote and ensure its compliance. It is not the workers' fault to be trapped behind the locked escape routes. They are trapped by the closed minds and archaic processes of the clueless Labour Departments.

(By Naeem Sadiq The Express Tribune, 14, 05/09/2021)

SHC hears plea to run public transport on Lyari Expressway

A transport company has approached the Sindh High Court against the failure of authorities to issue it a licence for a route permit on the Lyari Expressway.

The petition has been filed by Saleem Khan, Muhammad Ishaq, Gul Mohammad and Habibur Rehman.

It was argued that the petitioners wanted to run a public transport service on the Lyari Expressway.

"In 2019, an agreement was also signed with the Karachi Public Transport Society. Under the agreement, transport will run from Sohrab Goth to Gulbai. Vehicle fitness checks and regulations are also complete. However, the route permit is not being issued. The court should direct the concerned authorities to issue route permits," the petition read.

The Sindh chief secretary, regional transport authority secretary, Karachi commissioner, transport secretary and others were named respondents.

Illegal construction

Meanwhile, a resident of the Nazimabad No5 area has filed a petition against illegal construction in his neighbourhood.

"The portions and illegal construction will cause severe hardships for local residents. Therefore, the SBCA may be ordered to take immediate action," he argued in his application.

The local government secretary, DG SBCA, real estate builder Ali, SBCA director and others have been made parties in the petition.

Medical expenses

Also, a retired government officer has filed a petition in the Sindh High Court, seeking reimbursement of his wife's medical expenses.

Former junior director of labour, Ali Anwar Ghanghro, argued in the petition that his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer.

He added that due to lack of facilities at public healthcare institutions, she had to undergo treatment at the Aga Khan Hospital which ended up costing around Rs1.1million.

He said when the department concerned was asked for reimbursement, it refused. "My family's medical treatment is the responsibility of the government. I have paid the amount to the medical facility. Therefore, I may be reimbursed for the medical expenses."

The Sindh chief secretary, secretary finance, secretary labour and human resources department have been made parties in the petition. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 12/09/2021)

SHC allows one-time release of vintage cars imported during 2019-21

A full bench of the Sindh High Court with a two-one majority judgment has allowed release of the vintage vehicles imported between 2019 and 2021.

Earlier, a two-member SHC bench had allowed release of imported vintage vehicles impounded by the customs authorities.

While disagreeing with such order, another bench during hearing of an identical petition had referred the matter to the chief justice recommending constitution of a full bench to finally decide the matter.

In the petitions decided by the earlier benches, the petitioners had sought release of vehicles on the basis of SRO 833(I)/2018 issued under Section 19 of the Customs Act 1969 levying certain taxes and duties on import of vintage vehicles.

One member of the full court rules the petitioners cannot seek release of imported vintage vehicles by enforcing an SRO

The full bench comprising Justices Muhammad Shafi Siddiqui, Muhammad Iqbal Kalhoro and Adnan Iqbal Chaudhry considered the proposition as to "whether the subject SRO No. 833(I)/2018 issued in terms of Section 19 of Customs Act, 1969 can also be treated as SRO issued by the Ministry of Commerce in terms of Section 3 of the Import & Export Control Act, 1950, permitting import of vintage cars which are otherwise not importable as being old and used in terms of the Import Policy Order of both 2016 and 2020?"

Justice Siddiqui while dismissing all the petitions held that constraints and restrictions of Section 3(1) of Import & Export Control Act, 1950 were not taken into consideration in the judgement delivered by the first bench in the case of Moin Jamal Abbasi and, therefore, the petitioners could not seek release of their respective vehicles by enforcing the SRO 833(I)/2018 as long as restrictions and prohibitions of Ministry of Commerce in Import Policy Orders, 2016 and 2020 are not relaxed.

Concurring with Justice Siddiqui to the extent that the SRO 833(I)/2018 cannot be treated as an SRO under Section 3(1) of the Imports and Exports (Control) Act, 1950 permitting the 'import' of vintage cars, however, Justices Kalhoro and Justice Chaudhry differed with (Justice Siddiqui's) to consequences of the SRO 833(I)/218.

While allowing the prayer of the petitioners to the extent of release of vintage vehicle, the two judges held: "It is not the case that SRO 833(I)/2018 was issued by the Revenue Division without lawful authority or that it was issued with any mala fides."

Referring to the arguments advanced by the assistant attorney general and the counsel for the Customs, Advocate Shahab Imam, the two judges observed that both the lawyers accepted that the SRO 833 was to follow in consequence of a SRO under section 3(1) of the Imports and Exports (Control) Act, 1950, also by the federal government albeit through the commerce division, which was to be issued prior to or at least simultaneously with SRO 833 to expressly permit the import of vintage cars, but that was not so done, nor was the SRO 833 recalled.

The two judges also referred to the comments of the federal government, which they observed, conceded that the anomaly in the policies lead to confusion and litigation.

While disposing of all the petitions, Justices Kalhoro and Chaudhry directed the federal government to consider the case of the petitioners for a one-time relaxation/permit of import under clause 21 of the Import Policy Order, 2020 in respect of vintage cars falling under SRO 833(I)/2018 already imported by them, and to decide the same within 10 days.

For the purpose of allowing a one-time relaxation, they ordered that a copy of petitions shall be forwarded by the learned AAG to the commerce division, which shall be treated as applications under clause 21 of the Import Policy Order.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 14, 13/09/2021)

First batch of 40 Green Line buses arrives in Karachi

A batch of 40 buses, which will be part of the federal government's Green Line project in Karachi, arrived here from China on Sunday.

After a gap of 40 years when the tragic death of a girl in a road accident drastically changed its political situation, Karachi is for the first time getting a modern transport system, observed federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar while addressing the ceremony held at the Karachi Port Trust about the delivery of the buses that arrived under the Rs27 billion project.

Mr Umar was apparently referring to the 1985 traffic accident in the city in which Bushra Zaidi, a student, was killed. The incident triggered ethnic violence that lasted for a long time, affecting political situation in Karachi.

Governor of Sindh Imran Ismail also spoke at the event.

The two in their speeches said "another milestone" had been achieved as part of Prime Minister's Karachi Transformation Package aimed at improving the transport system in the provincial capital.

"For the first time, we are bringing modern transport system to Karachi," declared the minister while regretting that the country's mega city, which gave most of the taxes, had been deprived of a modern transport system in the past.

This was the first batch of vehicles as 40 more buses would arrive next month, thus a total of 80 buses would operate on the 22km dedicated corridor from Surjani Town to Gurumandir and Numaish in phase-I.

The minister said commercial operation of the buses would start within next two months as software would be installed and drivers would be trained while the tracks and stations had already been completed.

“This is the first project under the Karachi Transformation Project while five other mega projects are underway,” noted Mr Umar.

He said Ecneec was likely to give final approval of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project in its meeting on Monday (today) and the premier was expected to perform ground breaking of the project, which would gradually provide transport facility to up to one million passengers, initially catering for 450,000 passengers. He said three more projects of “big roads” on Orangi nullah, Gujjar nullah and Mehmoodabad nullah spread over 54km were expected to complete soon and concrete walls would also be erected along the banks of the drains.

“Within next few weeks, Karachiites would continue to hear good news,” said the minister.

He said the federal government was paying special attention to Karachi because the PTI and its allies won 19 seats out of total 21 seats of parliament from the city besides it was the mega city of the country that gave more revenue to the Centre.

The past governments ignored the metropolis, he regretted and noted that Prime Minister Imran Khan took keen interest in uplift of Karachi.

“For last several months, we tolerated criticism but mega projects take time in their completion,” said the minister.

“We are not giving any favour to Karachi but it deserves this.”

He said the PTI-led federal government was also giving special attention to 14 other districts of Sindh.

He said the concerned board would give approval to bidding for Rs200bn worth Hyderabad-Sukkur Motorway very soon.

Replying to a question, Mr Umar grudgingly admitted that the Green Line bus project was launched in the past but uttered some sarcastic words for the previous rulers.

The minister said importance of modern transport system for Karachi could be gauged from the fact that it was a road accident resulting in killing of a girl, Bushra Zaidi, that had changed the city’s political situation drastically. He lamented that no bus project was launched in last 40 years.

Governor Imran Ismail said he was happy to see that his “first mission” had been completed. He said the federal government would provide 100 per cent funding for the bus project.

He regretted that during last 13 years, no bus project was launched for the city.

He said his “second mission” was providing drinking water to the residents of Karachi before the end of his tenure and he was striving for completion of K-IV project.

Federal minister Aminul Haq said the Green Line was the first state-of-art project for Karachi. Fare of the bus would be between Rs20 and Rs40.

He said another demand of Karachiites pertaining to census was also being addressed. He said the federal cabinet in its meeting on Tuesday was expected to take up the census issue and hoped that next general elections in 2023 would be held under new census.

Nadeem Lodhi, CEO, SIDCL, explained to the audience that the buses were based on low entry 18m articulated diesel-hybrid self-charging technology. These buses were equipped with modern Intelligent Transport System such as automatic location system, real time passenger information, surveillance cameras and auto-doors.

The buses were designed to offer comfortable modular seats, air-conditioning, digital screens and space for advertisement, he said. They were also designed to cater to people with special needs, would also benefit environment by reducing the use of fossil fuels, limiting emissions and reducing journey time.

Mr Lodhi said post-KPT clearance, the fleet would be transported under the supervision of a Chinese technical team to its new home at the dedicated bus depot in Surjani Town.

KMC tax collection through K-E bills

To a question, the governor and Asad Umar vowed to resist the KMC’s tax collection through K-E bills.

Imran Ismail said conservancy tax was collected in return of services. He wondered as to why the Sindh government or the KMC was collecting conservancy tax when they did not remove garbage and clean nullahs (drains) besides the citizens were deprived of drinking water and health facilities.

“The KMC should address these issues first,” suggested the governor. He said the KMC should improve its tax collection capacity instead of “forcibly” taking tax from the citizens through K-E bills.

Asad Umar asked as to why “all experiments” were being conducted in Karachi and said that ‘this (KMC tax collection through electricity bills) is not acceptable to us’.

The ceremony was also attended by Federal Minister for Ports Ali Zaidi, Special Assistant to the PM on Maritime Mahmood Moulvi, KPT and Pakistan Navy officials and lawmakers of the PTI.

(By Imtiaz Ali Dawn, 01, 20/09/2021)

Green Line buses

There is a reason for Karachiites to smile as the first tranche of 40 buses of the Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS), also known as the Green Line, have arrived. It is part of the Rs27 billion allocation under the gigantic Rs1.1 trillion Karachi Transformation Project. The Green Line project was conceived by the previous government but could not materialise in time. A total of 80 buses would run on the first-ever mass transit in Karachi as a special 22km corridor has been built for the purpose. It is hoped that half a million commuters would benefit from this in the first phase scheduled to get operational in two months.

With a hurrah beginning, one hopes the metropolitan will see development in all civic avenues. This 22km driveway transcends a mere 20% of the city, and what is needed is similar mass transit buses plying on other arteries, especially the peripheral routes. The potholes-laden roads and streets are in need of re-carpeting, as they are a nuisance to motorists. Last but not the least is the Karachi Circular Railway, which has become a white elephant project owing to a plethora of blunders and non-seriousness of relevant authorities. It is unimaginable to learn that the city is deprived of its due share of water, and it necessitates an immediate completion of K-IV project, apparently a victim of provincial and federal bureaucracy. Similarly, rainwater drains and desilting are other blind corners that need instant attention to make the city liveable.

The megacity of around 25 million people has for long been a victim of poor planning and biased allocations when it comes to development. This is why its civic infrastructure is dilapidated, and people long for even basic recreation facilities. This culture of ad hocism has been toiling and heart-burning for Karachiites who are, in fact, the real revenue generators for the country. The ruling PTI, which has a lion's share in the National Assembly from Karachi, has a responsibility and mandate to deliver. Erecting an edifice of a modern metropolitan cannot be lingered on any more. (By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 21/09/2021)

Green Line BRT far from completion

Despite the arrival of 40 new buses, the much touted Green Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system may hit yet more snags as its infrastructure and machinery rot in neglect despite millions billed for their maintenance.

Launched in February 2016, the timeline for the Green Line BRT project has been moved ahead several times. Five years on, the construction of the stations and tracks for the federal government's mass transit project awaits completion.

Meanwhile, the infrastructure and machinery installed at the cost of Rs27 billion suffer from lack of maintenance despite Rs300,000 charged daily by a private company for this purpose.

As many as 84 guards have been deployed to oversee the 22-kilometre-long BRT track but essential parts of the machinery have been stolen from several locations. In April this year, the Green Line BRT was slated for completion by August.

Sindh Infrastructure Development Company Limited (SIDCL) CFO Bilal Memon had told The Express Tribune that 21 stations had been constructed for the Green Line BRT corridor.

A 100 hybrid buses were to be imported from China - 80 for the Green Line and 20 for the Orange Line BRT projects by June, trials were to be held in July and the mass transit systems were to be made fully operational in August.

Then in July the authorities announced that the buses would reach by August 10, the infrastructure for the Green Line BRT till Numaish Chowrangi would be completed by August 30 and the system would be functional by October 10.

Last Sunday, however, as 40 shiny new green and black buses imported from China reached Karachi Port, Federal Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar said the project was yet two months away from completion.

It would take that long for the government to install the required software, train the drivers and set up the ticketing system, he said, adding that a second batch of 40 more buses is slated to reach the port city in five weeks. Meanwhile, the project's infrastructure suffers from neglect.

Dirt and garbage line the switch rooms and elevators built along the track. One station, near the Karachi Development Authority, serves as a garbage dumping ground while other stations are frequented by drug addicts and the homeless.

The track itself sits in dilapidated condition, yet in want of basic electrical wiring, repairs and drainage systems at various spots. It is also dotted with construction debris and garbage, which will take weeks to clear.

Electricity and internet cables are being laid on the track for the hybrid buses now between the Board Office and Haidery but the wiring is being done by digging up completed portions of the track.

This week, after the arrival of the first batch of buses, the Green Line BRT project managers buckled up and expedited the final touches on the escalators along the track between Nagan Chowrangi and the Board Office.

Commenting on the condition of the escalators, repairmen told The Express Tribune that only 25 out of the 70 escalators installed can be salvaged.

Too many essential parts of the remaining escalators are missing, they shared. On their part, the authorities have directed the contractor to ensure that at least six to seven escalators at various stops are made functional in the next two weeks.

Moreover, most of the stations completed thus far require repainting and finishing touches. The long-awaited mass transit project may yet be at least a few months away from completion given the state of affairs. (By Kashif Hussain The Express Tribune, 04, 22/09/2021)

SBP puts brakes on financing for imported vehicles

Ballooning trade and current account deficits have forced the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to slow down import growth with changes in prudential regulations and reduce the financing limit and period, particularly for imported vehicles.

The central bank on Thursday revised prudential regulations for consumer financing. "This targeted step will help moderate demand growth in the economy, leading to slower import growth and thus supporting the balance-of-payments," said the SBP.

The country is facing a serious problem of balance of payments with a burgeoning trade deficit due to very high import growth which was earlier termed essential for economic growth. The current account deficit rose to \$1.5bn alone in August indicating it may surpass the SBP's projection of 2 to 3pc of GDP for FY22 with a wide margin. The current trend clearly shows a much higher deficit is awaiting the country.

"The changes in the prudential regulations effectively prohibit financing for imported vehicles, and tighten regulatory requirements for financing of domestically manufactured or assembled vehicles of more than 1,000cc engine capacity and other consumer finance facilities like personal loans and credit cards," said the SBP.

According to new changes, the maximum tenure of auto finance has been reduced from seven to five years. Auto industry is flourishing while the demand is still very high.

Maximum tenure of personal loan has been reduced from five to four years — another step to curtail higher use of personal loans which has been used to buy vehicles.

The amended regulations said the maximum debt-burden ratio, allowed to a borrower, has been decreased from 50 to 40pc.

It further said that overall auto financing limits availed by one person from all banks and DFIs, in aggregate, will not exceed Rs3,000,000 at any point in time while minimum down payment for auto financing has been increased from 15pc to 30pc.

"All these steps have been taken to slow down imported vehicles and easy financing for it. It will work to reduce the buying of imported as well as local luxury vehicles," said Samiullah Tariq, head of research at Pak-Kuwait Investment Company.

He said the demand for cars is high and it takes up to six months to receive a car after buying it from a company. The easy access to financing was one of the reasons for higher demand which was curtailed by reducing the amount of financing and tenure of financing.

Analysts also pointed out that the recent increase in the interest rate should also be seen in the same background — the costly money would reduce financing to consumers. The SBP increased the interest rate by 25 basis points to 7.25pc.

The State Bank further said that with the objective to protect lower to middle income category purchases, these new regulations are not applicable to locally manufactured or assembled vehicles of up to 1,000cc engine capacity.

"They are also not applicable to locally manufactured electric vehicles to promote use of clean energy," said the SBP, adding that the financing of these two categories of vehicles will continue to be governed by previous set of regulations.

"In order to encourage Roshan Digital Accounts and facilitate overseas Pakistan who have opened these accounts, regulatory instructions for Roshan Apni Car product of the banks or DFIs have also not been changed," said the SBP.

Analysts said the impact of the amendments in the prudential regulations would be visible after couple of months but it would not slow down the economic activities.

The import of road motor vehicles in FY21 was of \$2.142bn compared to \$1.276bn in the preceding year reflecting the high growth of import. During July-Aug FY22 the import of the same was of \$495m compared to \$160m in the same period of last year.

(By Shahid Iqbal Dawn, 01, 24/09/2021)

Asad Umar says Sindh govt never shared Green Line flaws

As several parts of the metropolis remained submerged by rainwater on Friday after Thursday's light-to-moderate rains, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government made it clear that it was primarily the responsibility of the provincial authorities to fix flaws, if any, in the infrastructure of the Green Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project that could have damaged the Central district's drainage and sewerage system.

The reaction came from a key member of Prime Minister Imran Khan's cabinet, who claimed that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government in Sindh was only raising a hue and cry over the media as it had never formally approached the authorities in Islamabad regarding any flaws in the Green Line project infrastructure.

He went on to offer the role of the federal government to fix the problem once and for all if the Sindh authorities could not handle the situation and found it hard to find any solution.

Project work blamed for flooding after rain

"When we came to power [in August 2018] and took charge of the Green Line project, the ground infrastructure was very much built as the project was already launched [in Feb 2016]," Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar told *Dawn*.

Mr Umar was responding to a question about the allegations of the Sindh government, which after Thursday's rain and urban flooding, mainly in the Central district, had warned that the situation was unlikely to improve because of huge, concrete and kilometres-long infrastructure of the Green Line bus service that reportedly had led to almost collapse of the Central district's drainage and sewerage system.

"We continued with the project and the project has now been completed. We have never received any complaint from the Sindh government about any drainage or sewage problem they are facing. Now the sewage, drainage or whatever local problems, they are needed to be fixed by the provincial

government. While taking care of Karachi Transformation Plan, I personally hold frequent meetings with Sindh officials, including the chief minister, but I was never told about any such shortcoming in the project. I only heard it last night [Thursday] over media.”

On Thursday Karachi administrator and Sindh government spokesman Barrister Murtaza Wahab called the federal-funded Green Line project as the main source of flooding in the Central district. He even complained of receiving ‘no response’ from the federal government’s Sindh Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (SIDCL) despite bringing the complaint in its notice.

“Last year we had witnessed the same hue and cry after rains and this year here it’s again,” said the administrator. “We have both — formally and informally — requested the SIDCL to fix this problem but they don’t pay any heed. The situation here [Nagan Chowrangi and Shehrshah Suri Road] would not improve if they [SIDCL] don’t fix it.”

Claim of ‘visible difference’ this year

However, the PTI’s government doesn’t sound convinced and to strengthen his claim Mr Umar referred to other parts of the city where the Islamabad-funded projects had helped drain the rainwater out and saved them from urban flooding.

“It’s not alone the Central district which faced the same situation, as there were other parts of the city as well where rainwater always caused damages,” he said.

“But this year a visible difference was seen due to cleanliness of three major nullahs by the federal government — Mahmoodabad, Gujjar and Orangi Town,” he claimed.

The minister went on to say: “If the Sindh government is not capable of fixing the problem in the Central district, we would do this as well. But please say that you [Sindh government] cannot do it. The federal government will do it happily.”
(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 25/09/2021)

City areas hit by severe hours-long traffic jams

City residents suffered hours-long severe traffic jam mainly in its South district on Tuesday, where security arrangements for the procession of Chehllum and a protest by area residents of Lyari against prolonged electricity outages and water shortages resulted in blockages of many important arteries and caused several-kilometer-long queues of hundreds of vehicles that became stuck on neighboring link roads.



However, a traffic official said that the police had already notified closure of several roads in Saddar, M. A. Jinnah Road and adjoining areas located on the route of the main Chehllum procession.

Although the law enforcement agency had already mentioned alternative routes for road users, the light rain in different parts of the district and then impact of Monday’s rains in several areas made smooth driving impossible for motorists.

“The main procession of Chehllum was taken out from Nishtar Park,” said the official. “The mourners went through parts of M.A. Jinnah Road and after passing through the Preeedy Street, Empress Market and Regal Chowk, the procession reemerged on M.A. Jinnah Road. The traffic along all these roads was suspended and diverted to alternative routes. So the pressure was obviously on the alternative routes.”

He added that the major pressure came from Mauripur Road where a large number of residents of Lyari staged a sit-in on main Mauripur Road and ICI bridge to protest against water shortages and electricity crisis in the locality.

The hours-long sit-in began in the first half of the day and continued till late in the evening. Led by Jamaat-i-Islami MPA Abdul Rasheed, a large number of youths, women and children participated in the protest.

In district south, hundreds of vehicles were stuck in snarl-up on I. I. Chundrigar Road, M.R. Kyani Road, Sarwar Shaheed Road, Abdullah Haroon Road, South Napier Road, Old Outram Road, Hasrat Mohani Road, Wood Street, Shakra-i-Kamal Ataturk, Burns Road, Belassis Street, Shakra-i-Liaquat and Nicol Road, etc.

“The movement of vehicles on roads which were open for traffic was also slow due to rainwater accumulation after two days rains,” said the traffic official.

“In some areas drivers lost patience with traffic jams and began lane violations and wrong-side driving that resulted in gridlocks. It was only south which remained worst affected. Many offices of private and government organisations and companies are located in this district. Similarly, key commercial places are also in the same area from where people left for home and other destinations only to put extra pressure on roads.”

(By Newspaper’s Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 29/09/2021)

SHC seeks report on BRT route houses

The Sindh High Court sought on Tuesday a comprehensive reply from the military lands and cantonment department over a petition pertaining to a no-objection certificate for houses allegedly constructed on railways land and restraint on construction of Gulistan-e-Jauhar Railway Society Project 2A-One.

A two-member bench comprising Justice Irfan Saadat Khan and Justice Muhammad Faisal Kamal Alam was informed by the Pakistan Railways’ counsel that the houses in question were falling on the route of the Green Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. The military lands department’s representative stated that as per the Supreme Court’s judgments, railways land could not be used for any other purpose.

At this, the bench remarked that it appeared that the petitioners were being mistreated by the respondents. The petitioners’ counsel argued that his clients’ houses were located 400 yards away from the railway track. These houses are not being given security clearance but new private housing

projects are being built adjacent to them, contended the counsel. He argued that the respondents' contentions were baseless and the petitioners' houses were "absolutely legal".

The court sought a comprehensive reply from the military lands department by October 11 over military land security clearance and land claims.

Plea dismissed

Meanwhile, a two-member bench headed by SHC Chief Justice Ahmed Ali Shaikh and comprising Justice Yousuf Ali Sayeed dismissed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Haleem Adil Sheikh's petition seeking disqualification of Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah over dual citizenship.

The bench ruled that the petition alleging CM's dual citizenship and false affidavit was not maintainable.

Haleem, who is also the Opposition Leader in Sindh Assembly, had contended that the CM was disqualified by the Supreme Court in 2013 for concealing dual citizenship but Shah still contested by-polls and won. The PTI leader argued that the CM should be declared ineligible under Articles 62 and 63 of the Constitution of Pakistan as is no longer Sadiq or Amin.

After the SHC's verdict, Haleem announced that he would appeal the court's decision before the Supreme Court.

Bail plea

Pakistan Peoples Party leader Nisar Khuhro, facing a probe into embezzlement of wheat worth millions of rupees from the government's granaries, has approached the SHC for bail before arrest, though the investigators have yet to issue an arrest warrant.

The SHC has sought a reply from the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on the bail plea moved by PPP Sindh President Khuhro and others.

A two-member bench comprising Justice Muhammad Iqbal Kalhoro and Justice Shamsuddin Abbasi heard Khuhro's petition.

The NAB prosecutor told the court that they are only at an inquiry stage and have yet to decide whether to take the former food minister into custody for questioning. The prosecutor sought more time to complete the inquiry.

The court questioned the NAB prosecutor as to whether the arrest warrants of the accused had been issued. "If the accused's arrest warrants are not issued, we may dispose of the application," the court remarked.

The prosecutor asked the court to grant him time to file a reply regarding the arrest warrant of Khuhro. The court while seeking reply from the NAB at the next hearing extended the bail of the accused persons till November 5 and adjourned the hearing.

According to NAB, an inquiry is underway against Khuhro pertaining to corruption in the food department. The accountability watchdog is conducting three inquiries against the PPP leader.

The same bench heard Khuhro's appeal to remove his name from the Exit Control List (ECL).

The Assistant Attorney General of Pakistan sought time to file the reply. The court directed the federal government to file a reply by October 21. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 03, 29/09/2021)

Green Line will offer services from next month, says governor

After having suffered several hiccups over the five years since its groundbreaking and incurred almost double the cost, the Green Line bus project is all set to offer its services to Karachiites at a launching ceremony to be graced by Prime Minister Imran Khan next month.

Sindh Governor Imran Ismail made the announcement to media persons on Monday after performing the first dry run of the project. "I am hopeful this service will be available to Karachiites within a month and a half after a few minor jobs are completed," he said at one of the 21 stations of the bus on main Shershah Suri Road off North Nazimabad.

"The first shipment of 40 buses is already here for which drivers are being trained and the process is in its final stage. The next shipment of 40 buses will arrive here on Oct 13, raising the fleet to 80 buses, and then Prime Minister Imran Khan will formally launch the service," he said.

He said the Green Line did not lack any standard applied around the world for Bus Rapid Transit Projects (BRTs) and referred to London metro service where the same quality of stations and services were available for the Londoners.

Imran Ismail attends test run of service; 40 more buses will reach city on 13th

"This project has been completed at a cost of Rs35 billion," he said. "It's a world class project which has all the qualities and services to offer which you see in any developed country. Those who are frequent visitors to London suggest that the Metro Service of London has the same design of stations and services. This project is a reflection of the PM's efforts for the development of Karachi and its people."

Project cost reaches Rs35bn

Envisaged and executed in February 2016 by then prime minister Nawaz Sharif, the Green Line bus project was originally estimated to get completed within a year at around Rs16.85 billion funded by the federal government.

However, it took more than five years and Rs35bn to finish and years of frustration, stress and painful experiences of hundreds of thousands of Karachiites who had to trudge through main Shershah Suri Road every day during painfully slow construction of the project.

Approved by the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne), the Green Line project was executed by the Sindh Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (SIDCL). Starting from KESC Powerhouse Chowrangi in Surjani Town, the bus service is to terminate at Merewether Tower after passing through Nagan Chowrangi, North Nazimabad, Nazimabad and Gurumandir, with 21 stations along its route to cater to 300,000 passengers on a daily basis.

With over 23-kilometre dedicated tracks, including an 11km elevated section, the bus service project offers special services for the disabled. "The project has set special provisions for the special and senior citizens," said the governor.

"Apart from elevators installed at each station, each bus has automated stairs to support wheelchairs and those who cannot board on the bus due to its height. Once this project is launched, the Karachiites will soon see speedy restoration of Karachi Circular Railway which will resolve transport problem of the mega city to a large extent."

He said in answer to a question that despite appeal by the prime minister, Sindh had not yet responded to or reviewed its decision over Bundal Island.

He criticised the Pakistan Peoples Party government for its "anti-development" approach.

"The PPP has a very simple problem. They [PPP] don't do any good nor want anyone to do it for the province. They don't have a single argument to oppose development of Bundal Island. It will create 100,000 jobs for Sindh people and bring US \$14bn investment to the province. How is it against Sindh people's interests? They can't convince anyone and don't want to get convinced by others," he remarked.

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 05/10/2021)

SHC questions charged parking on roads

The Sindh High Court sought on Wednesday detailed replies on charged parking on roads from the traffic DIG, Karachi commissioner and the district municipal corporations. A two-member bench led by Justice Muhammad Iqbal Kalhoro expressed annoyance at the collection of parking fee from citizens while hearing a petition against charged parking.

"Parking contracts have been awarded for the city's roads. Collectors of parking fee misbehave with citizens," remarked Justice Kalhoro. "Citizens' dignity is violated in the name of the parking fees."

The court questioned under which law is parking fee charged. Who gave permission for cars to be parked on both sides of roads, asked the bench, observing that illegal parking caused traffic jams in the city.

To this, the commissioner's representative said that there was no law to charge parking fees. Fees is only charged for the repairing of roads, added the representative.

The additional advocate general stated that parking contracts have been issued for parking vehicles on the streets of the city.

The bench remarked that it would not permit extortion from citizens in the name of parking fee.

The bench sought detailed replies from the relevant officials and adjourned the hearing till October 29.

Absent edu officials

Another bench, headed by SHC Chief Justice Ahmed Ali Shaikh, issued notices to the relevant officials of the Sindh education department over a non-functioning higher secondary school in Mirpur Bathoro, Sujawal district. CJ Shaikh expressed annoyance at the absence of the education secretary and another relevant official despite being issued notices.

During the hearing, the principal of the school submitted a report before the court.

When asked about the number of teachers specialising in science subjects employed at the school, the principal said there were none. All seats are lying vacant and the school is not properly functional, said the principal.

The court issued notices to relevant officials of the education department again and adjourned the hearing till October 25.

Plans sought

Hearing a petition pertaining to encroachments on a nullah on Abul Hasan Isphahani Road, a two-member bench led by Justice Irfan Saadat Khan sought site plans for the nullah in question.

The petitioner's counsel contended that the nullah was encroached upon in connivance with the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation. The counsel said a high-rise building was constructed. He prayed the court to issue directives to restore the nullah.

How can a nullah be leased, questioned the court. Justice Khan asked how a lease could be issued for a building constructed on the nullah. The bench reminded of the Supreme Court's directives in this regard and sought the original site plan for clarity on the matter.

The bench issued a notice to the KMC's land director, seeking his reply by November 14.

Contempt plea

Separately, the court sought a comprehensive reply from the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) director general by October 30 on a contempt plea pertaining to the demolition of a citizen's wall and bathroom during an anti-encroachment operation.

The court was hearing a contempt plea filed against the SBCA. The petitioner's counsel submitted that his client was a resident of KDA Scheme 36 in Gulistan-e-Jauhar Block-III. A wall, bathroom and valuables inside my client's house were destroyed during an anti-encroachment, said the counsel. He maintained that the petition has been pending since 2019 but no reply has been received by the respondent. The petitioner's counsel moved the court to initiate contempt proceedings against the SBCA DG.

The court sought clarification from the SBCA DG and directed him to submit his reply by October 30.

Bus owners' plea

Meanwhile, the bus owners association filed a petition before the court challenging action taken against illegal bus stands in Sohrab Goth. The petitioners submitted that the police were constantly harassing them. They moved the court to halt the anti-encroachment operation till alternate space is allocated. The home secretary, transport secretary, Sindh IGP, traffic DIG and the East deputy commissioner have been named as respondents.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 07/10/2021)

Officials earn SHC's ire over charged parking on city roads

The Sindh High Court on Wednesday came down heavily on local administration and traffic authorities over the issue of charged parking across the city and put the DIG-traffic and administrators of all seven district municipal corporations (DMCs) on notice.

A two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Iqbal Kalhoro directed the DIG and DMCs to file comments till Nov 29 and also assist it whether there is any structure available to regulate charged parking in the provincial metropolis.

A citizen filed a petition stating that the Supreme Court had clearly restrained the authorities concerned from charging fee on the pretext of parking, but the respondents were still charging it in different parts of the city by using public spaces.

The bench asked the authorities that under which law parking fee was being charged from the citizens and who had authorised vehicles parking on roads and even in several areas both sides of thoroughfares were being used for parking, which had severely been disturbing the flow of traffic.

Court imposes cost on a petitioner for frivolous petition against 5G technology, Covid vaccination

The counsel of the director-charged parking of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) sought time to file comments. Another counsel representing the Cantonment Board Karachi also made a similar request.

It was pointed out during the proceedings that the administrators of DMCs were necessary authority to assist the court on the question of charged parking. An additional advocate general, however, submitted that the DIG-traffic was also the relevant party.

"Accordingly let notice be issued to the administrators of all DMCs, Karachi, DIG traffic Karachi with directions to file their comments and assist the court about structure, if any, to regulate charged parking in Karachi city," the court order said.

Earlier in July, another SHC bench had restrained the cantonment boards across the province and their contractors from claiming and collecting parking fee of vehicles until further orders after a petition citing the ministry of defence and all the cantonment boards of Sindh as respondents stated that these organisations could not charge parking fee in the light of a judgement of the apex court.

While referring to an advertisement issued by the Cantonment Board Clifton in March for awarding a contract for collection of parking fee, the petitioner had submitted that according to the 2015 verdict of Supreme Court in the case of Hyderabad Cantonment Board, there was no provision in the Cantonment Act, 1924 that empowers them to charge parking fee and hence such a levy was without any lawful authority.

Plea against 5G, Covid vaccination dismissed

Another SHC division bench on Wednesday dismissed a petition with cost filed against 5G technology and Covid-19 vaccination.

The bench headed by Justice Mohammad Shafi Siddiqui directed the woman petitioner to deposit the cost of Rs25,000 in the SHC clinic within two weeks.

It observed that the petitioner did not utter a single word as to how the consequences of 5G technology could be a health hazard as she had only rested her arguments to the effect that it was injurious to health and hence illegal and unlawful.

"Fifth Generation technology is making its roots across the world and almost all the countries have framed policies to get benefit out of it," the bench added.

As so far as Covid-19 was concerned, the bench said that perhaps the petitioner was not even remotely aware of the consequences of this disease that triggered in 2019 and had yet to be controlled.

"One should not be an obstacle by saying that he/she is not interested in such scheduled vaccination as this might result in rapid growth/increase/ontogenesis of coronavirus," it added.

The bench further noted that earlier the SHC had also dismissed a petition filed against Covid-19 vaccination.

(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 07/10/2021)

Plan to connect KCR with city's five BRT lines

In addition to efforts to restore the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) to its original route, the federal government has also decided to add some value and come up with an idea to connect the circular railway line with five under-construction Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines in the metropolis to ease the pressure of traffic on roads.

The plan was shared by Pakistan Railways officials while briefing members of the Senate Standing Committee on Railways, who visited the City station for a briefing on the progress of different projects of the PR.

The committee, led by its chairman Senator Muhammad Qasim, held a detailed meeting with senior PR officials, who briefed the legislators about the progress on the KCR, removal of encroachments on railway land in Karachi and progress to fill the vacant posts in the department.

"There is a plan to connect the KCR with the under-construction BRT lines' routes in the city, which would further enhance its effectiveness and utility," said a statement issued after the meeting.

Some 475,000 passengers to commute daily after the revival of circular railway project

"This idea would help release pressure of traffic on roads and bring benefits in multiple ways. Once the service is restored it would cater to some 475,000 passengers daily on its route and after 10 years with increased capacity, it would be serving 1.1 million people each day across Karachi," the standing committee was told.

'Karachi breeze'

Known as "Karachi Breeze" — the name officially given by the Sindh Mass Transit Authority for Karachi's Bus and Mass Rapid Transit system, some 112.9-kilometres-long roads under BRT projects are in place for Karachi through five dedicated lines.

However, so far only one line, Green Line, is set to start service by the next month.

As the wait for Karachiites for the Green Line service is about to over, which is about to be completed after facing several hiccups over the five years since its groundbreaking in 2016 and incurring almost double the original cost, there's no visible plan for the four other lines — Orange, Red, Blue and Yellow — as their fate is not known yet.

However, the federal government sounds ambitious for Karachi's transport system and the claims made by PR officials during the standing committee's briefing suggest that Islamabad is planning not only to revive the KCR, but also introducing some innovations.

"The total cost of the [KCR] project is Rs207 billion," said the statement quoting the PR officials briefing the senators. "The KCR will provide the quality travel facilities to people of Karachi. The Senate committee members during the meeting suggest that they will recommend linking KCR to airport so that domestic and foreign travellers could also avail this facility."

Apart from its chairman, the meeting was attended by Senator Muhammad Asad Ali Khan Junejo, Senator Rana Mahmood Al Hassan, Senator Saifullah Sarwar Khan Niazi, Senator Dost Mohammad Khan and senior officials of PR, including CEO Nisar Ahmed Memon, director general-property & land Amjad Iqbal, Irfanul Haq, divisional superintendent-Karachi Hanif Gul, DS-Sukkur Shoab Adil, Amir Muhammad Dawood Puta and others.

Encroachments

The PR officials briefed the standing committee on the issue of encroachments on railway land in Sindh, steps taken to retrieve the land, KCR and regularisation of 10 sub-engineers in Balochistan.

During the briefing, it was further informed that 152.8 acres of railway land in Karachi and Sukkur divisions was retrieved during the past three years.

The standing committee directed the officials to take steps to ensure prevention of encroachments on railways land in future.

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 13/10/2021)

Govt plans subsidy on petrol for bikes, rickshaws

Days after raising the petrol prices to a record level, the federal government has decided in principle to provide subsidised petrol to motorcycle and rickshaw owners.

The government also made up its mind to give another round of stipend to the less privileged people under the Ehsaas programme enabling them to get essential food items at comparatively reduced rates.

Both decisions were made at a meeting of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) core committee on Wednesday.

Presided over by Prime Minister Imran Khan, "the meeting decided to provide petrol to the owners of motorbikes and rickshaws at subsidised rates but it is yet to be decided how the plan will be implemented," said Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry while speaking to *Dawn*.

He said the prime minister would chair another meeting on "how to give relief to inflation-hit people" on Thursday (today) to finalise the plan for supplying subsidised petrol to motorcycles and rickshaws.

The government had made the unprecedented increase of Rs10.49 per litre in petrol price on Oct 16 after which the opposition kicked off its countrywide protest campaign against the government.

First of such demonstrations was staged in Rawalpindi on Wednesday.

'Relief within a week'

In a press talk after attending the PTI core committee meeting, Sindh Governor Imran Ismail told reporters outside the parliament house that relief in petroleum prices would be given to motorcyclists and rickshaw drivers within a week.

Federal Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar had earlier ruled out "immediate relief" in rising commodity prices and made it clear that it could take at least five months for the "abnormal increase" in prices to head towards normalcy. "We hope people get relief soon, but — according to experts — the relief may not be visible immediately and actual improvement may be seen from March," he had told a press conference on Monday.

About the core committee meeting, the governor said PM Khan had directed federal ministers to visit different cities to apprise people about reasons behind price hike and to assure them that relief would be provided to them soon.

The Sindh governor then told the media the province of Sindh had the highest prices of essential items in the country, because the provincial government had delayed release of wheat stocks to the mills. "Wheat flour is the costliest in Sindh. We have found its solution and that is the formation of next government by the PTI in Sindh," he added.

However, the information minister later told a presser that the prices of essential items such as pulses, vegetables, sugar and wheat were on the decline despite the surge in prices of petroleum products.

"While petrol prices have increased, the prices of pulses, vegetables, sugar and flour are on the downward trend. If the trend continues, public will get some relief. The entire government is working on tackling inflation and the premier will announce major programmes in this regard in coming days," he added.

In an online address, the information minister told the media party leaders from Sindh, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had participated in PTI's core committee meeting. He said Prime Minister Khan also presided over a meeting of the Ehsaas programme earlier.

During the meeting, he said, the premier directed the officials concerned to take immediate steps to alleviate the burden on the people by expanding the subsidy scheme under the Ehsaas programme.

"KP and Punjab are ready to become a part of the subsidy scheme. We want that Sindh and Balochistan also become a part of this scheme," he said, adding that Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir had also expressed their interest.

The minister said the real issue was delay in the release of wheat stocks by the Sindh government. "Because of this, a 20kg bag of flour is being sold for Rs400 more in Sindh as compared to Punjab and KP," he said, explaining that the federal government had been pressing the provincial government to increase the amount of wheat stocked being released to mills to allow prices to fall.

Wheat, cotton, sugar

"According to government estimates, we will have historic wheat crop this year and the cotton yield was 60 per cent more than the previous year. Sugar price is also coming down and will reduce further once the crushing season begins," he claimed.

He said the prime minister had directed party leaders to prepare a schedule of visits to districts in preparation for the local government elections. While discussing local government elections in Punjab, Mr Khan had directed the leadership to launch a public campaign, the information minister said.

"PM Imran said he is aware of the difficulties being faced by the poor due to inflation and therefore the scope of the Sehat Card, Kisan Card and Ehsaas programme is being expanded," he added.

Special Assistant to the PM on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection Dr Sania Nishtar briefed the meeting on the Ehsaas targeted subsidy programme and said: "Eligible families will receive discounts from grocery stores on specific items".

New Balakot City

At a separate meeting, the prime minister said the government would develop new tourist resorts in the hilly areas for the promotion of tourism. "For this purpose, reputed private investors in the field of tourism and hospitality are being attracted on Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode," Mr Khan said.

The prime minister expressed these views while chairing a meeting on the Rs19.5 billion worth New Balakot City development project. He directed the federal and provincial authorities concerned to take all necessary measures to facilitate investment in developing the area as a tourist hub.

Mr Khan also asked relevant officials to exclude irrigated land from the project in order to ensure food security in the region. He was earlier told that a feasibility study of the project had been completed.

The KP government already acquired land for the purpose, as the tourist resort is expected to have a youth hostel, a theme park, a three-star hotel and a camping ground.

(By Syed Irfan Raza Dawn, 01, 21/10/2021)

Green Line project ready for launch with arrival of remaining 40 buses

The second and final consignment of 40 buses for the Green Line project arrived in the city on Thursday, raising the number of buses to 80, rekindling Karachiites' hope that Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) in the metropolis is set to be launched. It is supposed to facilitate travel of approximately 300,000 passengers daily.

The cargo vessel 'MV IVY Ocean' was scheduled to anchor at the Karachi Port on Oct 14 but the unloading of the buses was delayed by a week due to unavailability of a berth for the giant vessel.

Federal Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar took to the social media to break the news about landing of the buses, expressing his confidence that the bus service would be launched in accordance with the schedule.

"With the arrival of second consignment, now all the 80 buses for the project have reached the city. The preparation for commercial operation of the project [Green Line] is onboard as per the set schedule," he tweeted.

PM likely to inaugurate the service in a couple of weeks

The first batch of 40 buses had arrived in the city on Sept 19 which the minister had referred to as a "ray of hope" and "milestone", calling it the beginning of modern public transport service for Karachiites after a long gap of 40 years following the tragic death of a girl in a road accident had drastically changed its political scene.

Mr Umar was apparently alluding to the 1985 incident in which Bushra Zaidi, a student, was killed, triggering ethnic violence that lasted over two decades and completely changed political conditions in Karachi.

Authorities hope that the bus project is now all set to begin its services after its formal launch by Prime Minister Imran Khan at a ceremony within the next few weeks.

"It's true the project faced some delays in completion but by the grace of Allah, it's now finished and we are trying our best to open it for public within a month," said Sindh Governor Imran Ismail while talking to reporters at Governor House at a ceremony for the distribution of electric bikes through a lucky draw among a dozen people.

After having suffered several hiccups since its groundbreaking some five years ago and having incurred double the cost, the Green Line bus project is at last ready for launch.

Envisaged and executed in February 2016 by then prime minister Nawaz Sharif, the Green Line project was originally scheduled to complete within a year at around Rs16.85 billion and was funded by the federal government. However, it took more than five years and cost Rs35bn to finish.

It was approved by the Executive Committee of National Economic Council and executed by the Sindh Infrastructure Development Company Limited.

Starting from KESC Powerhouse Chowrangi in Surjani Town, the bus service is to terminate at Merewether Tower via Nagan Chowrangi, North Nazimabad, Nazimabad and Gurumandir, with 21 stations along its route.

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 22/10/2021)

Orange Line BRT still far from reality

After years of back and forth and brimming anticipation, it appears that Karachi's long-held dream of having an efficient mass-transit system will have to wait at least another year before fulfilment. The November deadline for the Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, issued earlier in 2021, much like previous deadlines, might be hard to meet at the current pace.

The project, which has taken the form of a white elephant, was first started in 2016 under the supervision of the Sindh Mass Transit Authority (SMTA), and was supposed to be completed within a year. Half-a-decade and several ultimatums later, parts of the 3.9 kilometre project are still left hanging in mid-air, including electrical work on four of its stations and the installation of elevators and escalators.

According to a provincial government official, speaking on condition of anonymity, the hurdles in the Orange Line BRT system's tracks have been deliberately planted by the Sindh government, which appears to be the least interested in procuring buses for the project. "This is reflected in the fact that although the Sindh government should have procured buses for the Orange Line itself, it instead handed over the responsibility to the federal government," the official claimed.

A year ago, the provincial government had requested the federal government's Sindh Infrastructure Development Company Limited, to import buses for Orange Line along with the import of buses for the centre's Green Line project. In addition to that, the company was also requested to run the imported buses on the Orange Line track for at least three years, for which the Sindh government was to pay.

The Green Line BRT on the other hand, which is a project of the federal government and also subject to several bureaucratic and operational delays, finally managed to import its first batch of 40 buses from neighbouring China, last month. This week, the second fleet of 40 buses also reached Karachi port, and all the buses are expected to start to operating from December.

A concerned officer of Sindh Infrastructure Development Company (SIDCL), said that the work on Sindh government's Orange Line project has been very slow. Sindh government has just awarded a contract for construction of PSD door. "It would be a miracle if construction work of the Orange Line project is completed by November," he commented.

However, if all somehow goes as planned, the citizens of Karachi could be looking at efficient transportation from at least Surjani Town to Nomaish Chowrangi, with the inauguration of the much touted Orange Line.

Per an official of the provincial government privy to the case, over 20 buses were to be imported from China for the Orange Line project, which was paid for towards the end of August. After which, the federal government ordered the Chinese company to manufacture the buses. "The Buses will take four to five months to manufacture and 15 days to ship and are expected to arrive in January or February next year. This will be followed by training of drivers and staff, after which the Orange Line will be made operational sometime in March of next year," the official asserted.

In contrast, Sindh Transport Department Secretary Shariq Ahmed, claimed that the Orange Line bus project is slated for completion by end of this month, while the buses are expected to arrive in December. He however acknowledged that there had been some delays in paying for the buses. "It is the federal government that is tasked with kick-starting the Orange Line, and they have demanded from the Sindh government to also include generators, fuel tanks, washing areas and other technical parts in the project. This surged the cost and we had to get the revised PC-I approved, which halted the works," the secretary told.

Speaking further, Shariq went on to imply that part of the delays were owed to the attitude of the federal government, towards the provincial government's operations. Considering that the Sindh government had already guaranteed payment, he believes that the federal government should have ordered purchase of the buses instead of waiting for the funds to be paid off in full. "I however do not want to indulge in blame-gaming. The centre is cooperating so far, we have mutual understanding, and everything is going smoothly.

Karachi is on the track to soon experience efficient public transport, like rest of the country," he told The Express Tribune.

(By Syed Ashraf Ali The Express Tribune, 04, 23/10/2021)

3.8km-long Orange Line still incomplete even after five years

Despite having shortest route in all five bus rapid transport systems (BRTS), the Orange Line is yet to get completed even after five years since its groundbreaking while many are sceptical about the launch of the Sindh government project as the federal government-funded public transport scheme Green Line is set to open its service for Karachiites next month.

The development work on the Orange Line — which has been renamed after Abdul Sattar Edhi as the Abdul Sattar Edhi Line — has gathered some pace lately.

The project has showed activity when local authorities confirmed that China was supplying 20 buses, which might arrive by the end of this month before the buses go into testing mode for mechanical and safety issues.

Green Line's next month launch rekindles hopes for early completion of the project

The confirmation from the Chinese authorities for the Orange Line bus service is coincided with the arrival of second and last consignment of [Green Line buses](#) from the neighbouring country rekindling Karachiites' hope that the federal government-funded public transport service in the metropolis is set to be launched.

Work at snail's pace

"The civil and mechanical works of the project have almost been done," said a senior official connected with the Orange Line.

"The electrical work and related instalment is in its final phase. We hope that it will be done within a week or two. The major development which came recently is that the prototype fleet of 20 buses is almost ready and the Chinese authorities would soon give us a nod for its shipment after testing its mechanical and safety aspects."

He said that the 3.8-kilometre-long public transport service with five stations would connect Orangi Town's main road of Shahra-i-Orangi with Shershah Suri Road in North Nazimabad.

It was planned that the Orange Line would launch its operation with the starting of the Green Line bus service that was almost ready for take-off after arrival of second and final consignment of 40 buses last week raising the total number of buses to 80.

Although the provincial government sounded confident to complete the remaining work on the project at the earliest, many Karachiites are sceptical about the launch of the bus service anytime soon considering their past experiences, the current pace of work on the tracks and its several revised deadlines.

Known as Karachi Breeze, some 112.9-kilometre long BRT projects are in place for Karachi through five dedicated lines. However, so far only one out of five lines — Green Line — is set to start service next month.

As the wait for Karachiites for the Green Line is likely to over, which is about to complete after more than five years since its groundbreaking in 2016, the Sindh government's Orange Line is seen second in the line to offer its services.

Other BRTS lines lagging far behind

However, there's no visible plan for the other three lines — Red, Blue and Yellow — and their fate is not known yet.

The groundbreaking of the Orange Line project was performed by the then Sindh chief minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah in June 2016 four months after the groundbreaking of the Green Line performed by the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

Responding to a question about the possibility of launch of the Orange Line service with the Green Line, the official said the Sindh transport department was closely coordinating with the Sindh Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (SIDCL) — a federal government organisation executing the Green Line project — to complete the work at the earliest and synchronise both the public-transport services at the same time.

"If you look over the tracks [of the Orange Line], there are several works going on at the same time," he added. "For a layman it may look like a lot of scattered or unplanned exercise, but the fact is that there are several contractors and people engaged with different tasks. The electrical work and other major tasks are almost done. A few jobs of small nature will be completed within the next few weeks."

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 25/10/2021)

Sindh govt bringing 50 buses for Karachi by Jan 2022

The decades-old public transport problem of Karachi may inch forward towards some sort of mitigation by next year as the Sindh government on Wednesday announced that it was bringing a fleet of 250 buses on Karachi roads from February 2022.

The announcement comes as the federal government-funded Green Line project is likely to be launched next month and another bus rapid transport system (BRTS) — Orange Line — being built by the provincial government has entered the final phase of completion. Sindh Transport Minister Syed Awais Qadir Shah said that the fresh supply of public transport vehicles would come from the national defence organisation — National Radio and Telecommunication Corporation (NRTC) — which would make first shipment of 50 buses by the end of January 2022.

"So by February 2022, we are very much hopeful that Karachi would be having this public transport service under the Sindh Mass Transit Authority (SMTA)," he said while talking to reporters after witnessing a signing ceremony between his ministry and the NRTC.

Contract signed with a national defence organisation for supply of buses, operations and construction of stations

Under the contract awarded by the Sindh transport ministry to the NRTC, the defence ministry organisation would be responsible for supply, operations and maintenance of buses and construction, operations and maintenance of bus depots and stations for the Sindh intra district peoples bus service project.

Six major cities transport system

"The Sindh government is solely focused upon providing safe, efficient and comfortable urban transportation system in major cities of the province," said Mr Shah.

"In regard with the present situation of the intra-city public transport, SMTA has planned an integrated bus operations system as a solution to cater for the public transport demand in six major cities of the province namely Karachi, Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, Sukkur, Larkana and Shaheed Benazirabad."

The signing ceremony was attended by dignitaries from the Sindh government, ministry of defence production, Consul General of People's Republic of China and Consul General of Republic of Turkey.

The participants in the ceremony were told that in the first phase of the project, 50 buses would operate in the city of Karachi.

These buses will initially operate on 29.5-kilometre route from Model Colony to Tower and on 33-kilometre from Nagan Chowrangi to Singer Chowrangi.

A bus depot would be set up near UP Mor over 6.7-acre area and in the second phase 200 buses would run on six different routes of Karachi and one in Larkana covering area of 10.3-kilometre.

The Sindh government in the budget 2021-22 has approved Rs6.4 billion for the procurement of 250 diesel hybrid electric buses under Sindh Intra-district Peoples Bus Service Project for six major cities.

3,000 jobs

In September 2021, the provincial cabinet had approved to award the project to the NRTC for procurement of buses, development of infrastructure, establishment of depots, bus stops and operation of the public transport service.

"Not only this, but under a rough estimate we believe that the project would create some 3,000 jobs," said Sindh transport minister Shah.

"The project faced some delay in the launch only because of situation which had emerged due to Covid-19 outbreak. But it's better late than never. We also hope that this project will also generate revenue for the provincial government in terms of service tax. Once the project gathers pace, we would develop and expand bus depots and number of buses that would become a kind of fixed assets of the provincial government."

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 12, 28/10/2021)

Sindh to launch 250 hybrid buses in Jan

Sindh government has planned to launch 250 dielectric hybrid buses on six different routes in the city from January 2022. It has also planned to further facilitate the citizens of Larkana with improved public transport system by providing buses with the latest technology.

In this regard, as many as five depots will be set up in both the cities. With the name of 'Sindh Intra-district Peoples Bus Service' project, 50 buses will operate in the provincial capital in the first phase while remaining 200 buses will be brought in the second phase for Karachi and Larkana.

"We plan to bring more such transport facilities to other urban areas of Sindh," said Sindh Mass Transit Authority (SMTA) Managing Director, Imran Bhatti. Speaking to The Express Tribune after signing ceremony of the project between SMTA and National Radio and Telecommunication Corporation at a local hotel on Wednesday, Bhatti said, "it is the first intra-city project of his department, which is fully-funded by the Sindh government," Bhatti claimed.

He said, keeping in view the rising demand for public transport in the port city, as many as 240 out of 250 buses will be plying in the city. The transport experts have designated six routes in the city.

Route 1 will cover a distance of 29.5km from Model Colony to Merewether Tower via Malir Halt, Colony Gate, Natha Khan Bridge, Drigh Road Station, PAF Base Faisal, Laal Kothi, Karsaz, Nursery, FTC, Regent Plaza, Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, Cantt Station, Metropole, Regal Chowk and Aram Bagh.

Route 2 will cover a distance of 32.9 km from North Karachi to Indus Hospital via Nagan Chowrangi, Shafiq Morr, Sohrab Goth, Gulshan Chowrangi, NIPA, Johar Morr, COD, Drigh Road Station, Colony Gate, Shah Faisal Colony, Singer Chowrangi and Landhi.

Route 3 will cover a distance of 33 km from Nagan Chowrangi to Singer Chowrangi via Anda Morr, North Nazimabad Town, KDA Chowrangi, Nazimabad Town, Liaquatabad 10, Essa Nagri, Civic Centre, National Stadium, Karsaz, Nursery, FTC, Korangi Road, KPT Interchange and Shan Chowrangi. New buses will operate on Route 4 from Mosamiyat to Dock Yard, passing through Gulzare-e-Hijri, Motorway M-9, Al-Asif Square, Ayesha Manzil, Federal B Area, Liaquatabad No 10, Lalu Khait, Guru Mandir, Society Chowrangi, Empress Market, Sindh High Court, Arts Council, I.I. Chundrigar Road and Merewether Tower.

The proposed Route 5 will start from Surjani Town to Masroor, covering New Karachi, Shafiq Morr, KMDC, Ziauddin Chowrangi, KDA Chowrangi, Musa Colony, Mangophr, SITE Area and Gulbai.

The Route 6 is from Gulshan-e-Bihar, Orangi Town to Singer Chowrangi, via Banaras, Paposh Nagar, SITE Area, Golimar, Garden, PIB Colony, Jail Chowrangi, Bahadurabad, Baloch Colony, Mehmoodabad, Manzoor Colony, DHA Phase-1, KPT Interchange and Shan Chowrangi. Buses in Larkana will cover stops from Larkana Bus Terminal to Larkana Junction, covering areas like Indus Highway, 7 Naka Bridge, Gharib Nagar, Naudero Chowk, Shahi Bazaar, Ansari Mohalla and Station Road.

Meanwhile, speaking to The Express Tribune, Sindh Transport Minister, Awais Shah said, "It is the first kind of project in the country not only in the province."

He said, each bus will transport at least 600 passengers daily in Karachi. "Fares have been fixed as Rs25 minimum and Rs50 maximum depending on the travel distance," he mentioned. Shah disclosed that this project was supposed to be launched in 2020, but it is delayed due to Covid-19 pandemic.

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

Work on Rs78bn ADB-funded Red Line project to begin next month

The city administration on Tuesday asked the gas, power, water and other utilities to expedite the shifting of their respective pipelines and other infrastructure on the way of Red Line bus rapid transit (BRT) project so that its construction could begin in December.

Informed sources told *Dawn* that a high-level meeting, presided over by Commissioner Muhammad Iqbal Memon, reviewed the work of shifting of infrastructure of the Sui Southern Gas Company Ltd, K Electric, Karachi Water and Sewerage Board and Pakistan Telecommunication Limited (PTCL).

They said that the representative of the utilities were also asked to extend all support for the shifting of pipelines so as to timely start the construction work on the corridor of the Red Line BRT, the first transport system of the country using biomethane produced from animal waste as the fuel resource.

Red Line, renamed as the Karachi Breeze Red Line Project, is approximately a 29-km-long corridor, extending from Model Colony in Malir to the Mazar-i-Quaid and Jinnah Avenue where it will intersect at Numaish with the Green Line corridor.

Utility services are told to expedite shifting of pipelines on the way of BRT project

The route of the Red Line project will pass through 13 major intersections and a total of 24 bus stops will be located along it where entry and exit points will be provided. Ten overhead bridges and seven underpasses have also been included in the BRT's plan.

The process of tendering has been completed for the start of construction of work on the corridor in the month of December this year. Trans Karachi, a registered company looking after over Rs78 billion project, had signed an agreement with a construction firm in August this year. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is the chief financier of the project, which will provide funds along with the Sindh government, UN Green Climate Fund (GCF), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and Agence Française de Développement (AFD). The GCF has issued a grant of \$11 million for the project.

The operational design is being drafted by the Exponent Engineering Pvt Ltd and the detail design is being devised by the Mott MacDonald Pakistan (MMP), while the institutional development and capacity building has been undertaken by the National Engineering Services Pakistan (Nespak) and the Integrated Transport Planning Limited.

As many as 300,000 people are expected to use the corridor daily once it is completed.
(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 03/11/2021)

Women workers fuelling up vehicles a rare sight in Karachi's Clifton

They wear the same red and black filling station uniforms, but stand out due to their gender. Not many have seen women filling fuel in vehicles at filling stations in this country. The four women doing this at the Total Parco filling station near Teen Talwar in Clifton are a rare sight indeed.



In fact, you can find them only at this particular filling station.

Forecourt manager Mohammad Raza told *Dawn* that their station is the only one with women working next to men as it is their company-operated station.

"They are the first women hired and trained by our company for fuelling vehicles so they are also starting with our company-operated station. But as the idea grows so shall their numbers," he smiled.

The women — Chand Bibi, Shakila Bano, Shabana K. Fayyaz and Mehrunissa — arrived at the station some seven months ago.

'Each morning we have our uniforms ready, pressed like our children's school uniforms and we all start a new day, crisp and fresh'

Raza says that Chand Bibi was the first among the four to start working there. He said that even though the station remains open 24 hours they have three eight-hour shifts.

"We have them in the first, morning or opening shift only. They report for work at 8am every day except Sundays and get off by 4pm," he informed.

"We do realise that being female they may face commuting issues in the evenings or at night, therefore the decision to relieve them by late afternoon," he added.

Chand Bibi, the senior most among the four, told *Dawn* she likes it when the others look up to her.

"The others joined after seeing me. I joined on July 1 and I helped Shabana get hired too. And that's how the other two also followed. It feels good to be a trendsetter, to inspire others," she said.

She adds that her own family has no issues with her working at a fuel station.

"My husband works as a security guard. Both of us wear uniforms for work. Each morning we have our uniforms ready and pressed like our children's school uniforms and we all start a new day, crisp and fresh," she laughed.

When asked what she does if any of the drivers coming to the station for refuelling says something offensive or teases her, she shook her head. "It has not happened thus far. But this might also be due to the fact that we are surrounded by our male colleagues. We are perfectly capable of taking care of ourselves. But our male colleagues also make sure that nothing of the sort happens. So no one dare misbehave with us," she points out.

"On the contrary, we have been approached with compliments, especially from ladies. People do appreciate us, which feels good," she beamed.
(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 07/11/2021)

Lea Market bus terminal moved out

One of the oldest bus terminal located near historical Lea Market has 'forcibly' been evacuated by the City Wardens of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC).

The owners, drivers, conductors and the area residents have been staging protest against the forced evacuation for last two months. "This is city's oldest bus terminal," claimed Dawood Adam, a resident of Lea Market. "The [city] government wants to construct flats and shops for encroachers of Light House," he blamed.

This was not the first time that the terminal was moved out by the city administration. According to terminal staff, three years ago same situation was created when Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-Pakistan) city mayor, Wasim Akhtar was in power.

"This is time our own Pakistan Peoples Party has kicked us out without giving us any notice," alleged Sindh-Balochistan Bus Owners Association's President Zafar Ali Qureshi. The terminal functions about 20 hours in a day, starting from 4am. Passengers heading to, or coming from Thatta, Sujawal, Badin, Umerkot, and Tharparkar regularly use bus services at the Lea Market terminus. The local communities living in Gaddap, Kathore, Hawke's Bay also prefer to commute from the same terminal.

"This is not just a passenger terminal," Adam pointed out. "This terminal facilitates business communities of Khajoor Bazaar and main wholesale market of Karachi," he added.

Zulekha, a local resident of Lyari, the stronghold of PPP, said that she regularly commutes to Thatta to visit her daughter and other family members. "I have been travelling through these buses since my childhood," she smiled. "Our family members regularly go to Thatta and Sujawal's shrine and this is the only terminal that fit us economically and socially," she added.

A bus driver Naseer Ahmed told The Express Tribune that people living in city's suburbs were directly connected to Lyari and old city areas through these buses. "These are not only the buses but connect people culturally, socially and economically," he explained.

The drivers said that apart from regular passengers and shopkeepers people use these buses as ambulances for their sick relatives. "All major hospitals of the city are very near to Lea Market," Adam said.

The terminal staff informed that the law enforcement agencies arrived at the site and started moving all standing buses to other side of the road and blocked the whole area. Over a dozen of City Wardens have been deployed to keep the buses away while large cemented blocks have been placed at the site.

Terminal staff has also placed banners at different points, demanding Sindh government to allow their buses smoothly continue their operation. "Roughly 5,000 families will directly suffer from the current shifting of the terminal," Adam said.

The staff not sure enough alleged that the city government was planning to construct flats and shops for encroachers of Light House. "Encroachers are being given our land," Qureshi alleged. "This is unfair. We will not allow government to allocate our land to encroachers," he said, adding that the area residents and business community was also unhappy with government's policies.

Commenting over government's claim of illegal occupation over the terminal's plot, Adam said that over 100 shopkeepers have already occupied historical market - Lea Market - for last over 20 years. "Why the government is reluctant to kick encroachers out from the market," he questioned. Replying to a question, Qureshi said that the staff and owners of the buses were not ready to go to an alternate place. "We will march towards Chief Minister Houses in case not given our terminal back," he warned.

Illegal occupation

Karachi Administrator Murtaza Wahab said that the plot where the bus terminal was set up was the commercial property of the KMC. "It's a declared commercial property," he said. "The terminal is illegal," he added.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, Wahab said that the KMC planned to construct shops on the plot where the bus terminal was operating. He said that on the orders of Supreme Court the shopkeepers displaced from other parts of the city, including Light House, will be accommodated. "KMC will not give ownership rights of the shops to the relocated shopkeepers, they will remain tenants of the corporation" he clarified but, he added, KMC will sign tenancy with the shopkeepers.

(By Sameer Mandhro 04, 09/11/2021)

Lack of security at charged parking spaces angers SHC

The Sindh High Court on Tuesday expressed anger at the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) for charging money for parking of cars and motorcycles in different areas without providing any security and other facilities.

A two-judge bench headed by Justice Zafar Ahmed Rajput took exception to the failure of the director-charged parking of the District Municipal Corporation-South in filing comments despite earlier court directives.

It directed him to be in attendance on Dec 1 and file parawise comments on the next hearing without fail.

The bench remarked that despite receiving parking fee there was no facility or protection for the vehicles, which were being stolen from such parking spaces.

The bench points out people's vehicles are being stolen despite paying parking fee

A petition was filed against provincial, traffic and local authorities seeking directives for them to remove illegal and unlawful parking spots and ensure the smooth flow of traffic on the roads of the provincial metropolis.

The petitioner also sought a restraining order for the respondents from charging heavy and excess fees for parking of vehicles.

He submitted that "double parking" was being illegally allowed on various thoroughfares of the city causing massive traffic jams.

Citing the Sindh chief secretary, Karachi commissioner, DIG-traffic police, KMC, director-charged parking, DMC-South and others as respondents, the petitioner further submitted that there were many illegal parking lots being run by private parties in collusion with the respondents without any auction or legal way.

Only last month, another bench of the SHC while hearing a different petition filed against charged parking had directed the DIG-traffic and all DMCs to file comments on Nov 29 and also assist the court whether there was any structure available to regulate charged parking in the Karachi.

The bench had also asked the authorities under which law the parking fee was being charged from citizens and who had authorised parking of vehicles on roads as in several areas both sides of the thoroughfares were being used for parking disturbing the flow of traffic.

A citizen filed a petition stating that the Supreme Court had clearly restrained the authorities concerned from charging fee on the pretext of parking, but the respondents were still charging such a fee in different parts of the city by using public spaces in violation of the apex court order. (By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 10/11/2021)

Notices issued over Lyari Expressway resettlement

The Sindh High Court (SHC) issued notices to the Lyari Expressway Resettlement project director over a contempt of court petition against the failure to provide land to people affected by the construction.

The petitioner's counsel stated it had been nine months since the plea was filed, but there was still no response. "We were provided alternative space in the Lyari Express Resettlement Project, but found out that the [designated] land was already occupied," the counsel argued.

The case was adjourned till December 9.

SSGC ordered to pay up

The Sindh High Court ordered the Sui Southern Gas Company and its managing director, Imran Maniar, to deposit Rs57.8 million to the court nazir over the failure to pay a former legal counsel of the gas company.

Justice Zulfiqar Ahmed Khan heard a contempt of court petition against Sui Southern Gas Company and its chief Imran Maniar. The petition was filed by Advocate Asim Iqbal. He claimed to have provided 27 years of legal assistance to the gas utility. "The company has always delayed payment of compensation," he alleged.

"The court ruled in my favor, but Sui Southern Gas has not paid [my dues] yet." The court ordered Sui Southern Gas Company to deposit Rs57.8 million with the nazir and adjourned hearings till December 1.

Building demolition

The SHC also ordered the demolition of an illegal part of a building located in Ranchhor Line behind Dr Ruth KM Pfau Civil Hospital.

The dual bench of justices Zafar Ahmed Rajput and Muhammad Faisal Kamal Alam heard a petition against the illegal construction of the mentioned construction. The petitioner's counsel argued that contempt of court action should be taken against the Sindh Building Control Authority director general and another senior official.

The SHC also expressed its anger for not complying with court orders after 13 years. The SBCA's counsel stated that action was carried out against the illegal third floor construction in 2012. "Is this how action is taken? Just take the hammer and knock out four blocks." remarked Justice Rajput after reviewing the photos. "This mock and show operation will not work."

Justice Alam remarked that the case had been pending since 2008. The case was adjourned for three weeks. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 05, 13/11/2021)

Dilapidated roads cause huge traffic jams in city

The dilapidated roads in District Central have become a nightmare for the motorists as well as for the residents. The citizens have to bear the brunt of the incompetence, indifference and criminal negligence of the concerned departments on a daily basis in case of the worst traffic jams.

Citizens say that part of the road from Tahir Villa to Ayesha Manzil roundabout is in a very bad condition due to deep potholes and uneven roads and people commuting to work in the morning face the worst traffic jams.

Long queues of vehicles can be seen on the said road even during the time the school classes are over whereas residents of the nearby houses also face severe difficulties in getting vehicles to and from their homes.

Citizens say that repair of the said road is the responsibility of DMC Central or KMC has nothing to do with them. "We demand the minister for local government and Karachi administrator to determine this and repair work on the dilapidated roads in District Central should be started immediately."

Also, road in North Nazimabad from People's Chowrangi to Gulberg Chowk and from there to Water Pump Chowrangi are in similar condition whereas the road near People's Chowrangi has piles of rubbish on both sides and making it difficult for the citizens to pass through. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 17/11/2021)

Female bikers becoming a common sight

For a city as big and bustling as Karachi, the lack of an efficient mass transit system has meant graver mobility restrictions for women and gender minorities. Whether it be limited seats in a junky wagon, safety concerns in dark alleys or the skyrocketing fares of private cabs and rickshaws, daily commuting still proves to be an uphill battle for 50 per cent of the city's population.

In these troubling times, a number of women found riding two-wheelers to be the most affordable yet manageable means of commuting.

"Bikes, unlike big, clunky buses, zip through the shahrah e faisal traffic," said 23-year old liberal arts student Nida, who has recently switched to using the private motorcycle-hailing service called Bykea to navigate the city.

Though the student recalls, there have been times that her motorcycle drivers have been startled to see her and some have even denied service to her for being a woman, “but the good thing about Bykea is that, no matter what time of the day, you can easily find another ride in a jiffy, anywhere in the city.”

According to the student, she often catches wayward glances from friends, colleagues and onlookers, but she plans to invest in her own scooter soon. “Despite all the eyes on me, it’s quite liberating to be able to navigate the city on my own terms, at quarter the price of a four-wheeled cab,” she told.

Where Nida dreams of having her own scooter one day, Zubaida Naz, a young girl from the Liaqatabad area, has already made the leap of faith after being let down by the city’s dilapidated public transport system. “The buses would always be packed to the brim and using rickshaws or taxis daily wasn’t cost-effective,” said Naz, who works as an administration person at a private firm. “I also tried hiring a private Suzuki with a few other girls. We all worked at different organisations and would get home really late everyday, which bothered my parents a lot,” she added.

Eventually, Naz brought the issue up in a conversation with her father one day, who suggested getting a scooter and learning to ride it. “I was a little hesitant at first, but eventually got the hang of it, upon encouragement from my parents. It took me about a month to learn to ride it, but now I can finally go about the city at my own will and even take my mother wherever she wants,” she told with a hint of pride and a fleeting smile.

Although women on motorcycles, is fast becoming a common sight in the metropolitan city, it is still rare enough to make heads turn and invite second glances.

For Rani Begum, a Christian woman who works as a housemaid in the city’s Federal B Area, this has meant donning an abaya while riding her two-wheeler. “Our society is not one where women can ride motorcycles freely as yet, but we still have to do our job and make a living, and for that we are constantly finding ways and workarounds,” she commented.

Similarly, Nighat Begum, who is a housewife and a mother of two, said that she had to pull out her husband’s dusty, old motorcycle from the garage when it became too difficult for him to manage the household alone. “I drop my children to school everyday on my motorcycle, and also run all the errands on my way. It’s so much more convenient, but some mothers still stare at me in some kind of amazement,” she told. “I get questions like how do you ride a motorbike? Are you not afraid? Motorcycles are for men! However, I am not afraid of these questions of women but I convince them that they too can ride motorcycles. I have convinced one or two women and they will soon learn to ride a motorcycle too!” shared the housewife.

Speaking in the regard, social leader and activist Syeda Ahmed said riding your own motorbike is a cost-effective commute option in many metropolitan cities, especially for middle income individuals and youngsters who cannot afford to invest in cars and cabs. “The federal and Sindh governments should start a scheme to provide easy access to motorcycles for women and girls so that they can commute easily, while services of an institute should be provided to train them to ride the two-wheelers,” she told The Express Tribune.

(By Aamir Khan The Express Tribune, 04, 17/11/2021)

CNG prices

Currently petrol price is Rs145.82 a litre and prices of CNG have also registered a steep rise in various provinces; now the gas price in Sindh stands at Rs200 a kg. In April, petrol was selling for Rs108 a litre and CNG price in Sindh was Rs123 a kg in quarter one of this year. CNG prices in different provinces are still lower than the petrol price, so people prefer gas to petrol because of the resulting savings. Since CNG price is not uniform in the country, there is the likelihood that those living in border areas of one province might prefer to buy the relatively cheaper gas in the neighbouring province. This would reduce sales of gas in the province where the commodity is dearer leading to problems for gas sellers. The persistent increase in fuel prices is resulting in continual rise in prices. Recently, the government has given some tax relaxation on petrol but has increased sales tax on CNG. The price of CNG has been increased within short intervals, and the recent hike is being attributed to the purchase of costly RLNG.

The increasing fuel cost will further burden the ordinary people and affect the national economy too. Increase in fuel prices affects most sectors of the economy. It pushes up transportation cost, increases the cost of production in the agricultural and industrial sectors. There is a cascading effect on the overall economy. The rise in transportation and production costs of food items and of industrial raw materials will further erode the already shrinking purchasing power of people with limited means. The relentless price rise and the resulting inflation will make life more difficult for the common people — their income and savings will go on diminishing. The dynamics of the rising prices in all likelihood will reduce demand. All this points to cost-push inflation. The government will have to focus on measures to tame inflation and price rise. One way to do so is to limit imports to bare essentials. Now the outlook is chronic sacrifices and price rise.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 20/11/2021)

Murad says work on Yellow Line to begin next month

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that the groundbreaking ceremony of the Yellow Line Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) would be performed in December.

In his meeting with World Bank official Gailius Braugelis on Friday, he emphasised on the need of enhancing the scope of the Sindh Barrage Improvement Project so that a feasibility study for the new Sukkur Barrage, including identifying the site, could be undertaken. They discussed all the WB-funded schemes particularly Rs2 billion Sindh Barrages Improvement Project, Modernisation of Urban Property Tax, Karachi Mobility Project under which BRT Yellow Line and its connectivity with southern suburbs are to be made.

The Sindh barrage project has been launched for Rs16.6bn in June 2018 and is likely to be completed in June 2030. It includes rehabilitation, effective operation, and management of the Sukkur Barrage.

The CM said the provincial government was planning to construct a new barrage to replace the old Sukkur Barrage — the biggest barrage in the country. He urged the World Bank to support the provincial government to prepare feasibility of the new barrage, including its exact location or site.

The WB official assured the CM that he would involve the technical team of the bank to help the provincial government to undertake the new task.

The CM said that to improve the reliability and safety of Guddu Barrage, a Rs2bn project was launched in August 2015, which was scheduled to be completed in Dec 2021.

He urged the WB representative to provide four years extension to Dec 2026 in closing of project.

The CM told said that he had already decided to hand over collection of property tax to the local governments in the city, adding that a fresh survey would be conducted by the excise & taxation department and the local government taxation units would be provided appropriate training so that they could collect on their own.

About the Karachi Mobility Project, the WB representative was informed that the detailed design and procurement consultant had issued draft inspection reports on which the Sindh Mass Transit Authority would submit a response soon.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 14, 20/11/2021)

This is no city for cyclists

The recent surge in petroleum prices, ballooning of taxes in the automotive sector and the record depletion of air quality, should ideally make non-carbon-emitting transport options like bicycles the vehicle of choice for a great majority of port-city residents.

It seems like the perfect option for a metropolis like Karachi, which struggles with a decent mass transit system and is home to more than seven million young people between the ages of 15 and 29 years of age. A lot many of whom cannot afford to independently own or sustain a motor vehicle, but need to constantly navigate the sprawling megacity for work or education.

Yet however, unlike most urban metropolises around the world, bicycling still remains a rather unpopular mode of transport for the residents of Karachi. To them, at its very best, cycling is a fitness activity or a hobby for the weekends. "Every so often, one could spot a heard of cyclists actively paddling along the city's grubby shoreline at wee hours of the morning; a pickup truck or two in tow and a dozen guards on either sides," says Sameena, who lives close to the upscale Clifton beach area. "This is not a safe city for cyclists, especially if they are women. So the guards and pickup trucks make sense. The group paddles a few miles, feels the wind on their face, and then the bikes are loaded back on their pickup trucks and they drive home...it's a rich people thing," she added.

According to Adeel Islam, a bicycle dealer in the Lighthouse market, there has been a slight increase in bicycle sales owing to the surge in petroleum prices and rising public transport fares. As it gets more difficult to afford fuel and fare for the lower socio-economic classes, Islam believes that some motorcyclists and bus-riders are now adopting bicycling as a mode of transport. "The trend of choosing bicycles as a regular mode of commute rather than a short-term fitness activity, is more commonly seen among the city's daily-wage earners who don't live too far from their places of work and can no longer justify travel fares; like hotel workers, janitors and people who work as housekeepers and mosque staffers," the dealer added.

Haji Baba, an elderly man who works at a local mosque, said that he had to pull out his old bicycle when he could no longer afford the bus fares. "It helps me keep fit and is a much cheaper alternative to motorcycles and buses, but the only problem is that the roads here are very bad. Tires get punctured every other day and getting it fixed costs Rs40 per puncture," said Baba.

According to Islam however, currently there are three categories of bicycles available in the market. These include Pakistan-made bicycles, the Chinese ones and the more expensive BMX options imported from the west. "The most commonly sold are the Pakistani variety and the slightly pricier Chinese bikes. Middle and low income groups who intend to use bicycles for transportation prefer to buy Pakistani brands, that range from Rs14,000 to Rs20,000. While the more expensive Chinese options are preferred by the upper-class hobbyists, as they also offer a range of options for women and girls," he told.

Shahbano, a college student who took up cycling during the Coronavirus lockdowns to remain fit, said that although she would like to cycle to her university and turn her hobby into a lifestyle, "the streets here are just not designed for it. Where are the bike-lanes? What even are the laws for cyclist protection? Even if I cycle in my neighbourhood, I constantly have to remain alert for approaching traffic, since no one is used to of seeing cyclists on the streets here," the student told The Express Tribune, urging for more cyclist-friendly traffic laws.
(By Aamir Khan dt 04, 24/11/2021)

Fat fines fail to fix the city's traffic conditions

Tickets issued for various traffic violations in the past eight months have generated the provincial capital, at the very minimum, Rs1 billion in revenue. Yet however, despite the huge monetary collection, the traffic department has remained unable to bring any betterment to Karachi's crumbling traffic system.

According to official figures compiled by office of Karachi's Traffic DIG, the traffic police has imposed penalties on more than 3.2 million people in the city from January 01 to August 11 this year.

The varying penalties were imposed for different violations of traffic rules. Those include wrong-way driving, riding motor cycles without helmet, wrong turns, over-speeding, vehicles exceeding prescribed weight and etc.

Per official rate list of fines the traffic police charges anywhere between Rs150 to Rs2000 for standard violations, among which helmet-less bikers and wrong-way drivers remain the most common offenders.

The penalty charged for their violations are Rs150 and Rs500 respectively. In addition to that, the traffic police charges Rs400 each, for speeding and for violation of traffic signals, while Rs1,000 for reckless driving and Rs2,000 for repeating same violation.

Former Karachi Traffic Police DIG Iqbal Dara had recently told the media that traffic police had collected Rs452 million through 1.9 million penalties in the city.

Adding to which, a statement from the DIG's spokesperson revealed that the traffic police had collected Rs23 million during a month in a drive against under-age drivers launched in last September; suggesting that the department has cumulatively collected over Rs one billion in fines.

Citizens however claim that despite the rampant fining, Karachi's traffic situation has only worsened in the course of the last year.

Whereas, the number of road accidents is also surging at a yearly rate. For instance, some 178 road accidents were recorded during 2020, whereas the number of road accidents was 215 during first nine months of this year. Most of the road accidents were caused by heavy vehicles running in the city, including trailers, trucks, dumpers, water tankers, buses and coaches.

In 2020, at least 109 accidents were caused by heavy vehicles, leaving 97 dead. Similarly, 140 road accidents in Karachi occurred due to heavy vehicles during first nine months of 2021.

Whereas, at least 115 people died in accidents caused by heavy vehicles out of a total of 183 collisions during the same period this year. According to the data over one million fines were imposed against bikers and motorists for driving on the wrong way. Similarly, some 0.7 million people were fined for riding motorcycles without safety helmet.

In this regard, citizens believe that the city's traffic system cannot be improved as long as the traffic police's focus remains at only imposing fines and generating revenue.

Per Akhtar Hussain, a resident of Baldia Town, motorists and bikers are easy targets for traffic police and therefore remain the most frequently fined segment of drivers. Responding to public allegations, a traffic warden speaking on conditions of anonymity revealed that they are compelled to make more challans of violators as their performance is linked to it.

According to him traffic wardens are served show-cause notices in case of less fines issued. On the other hand however, Traffic Police District West Superintendent (SP) Noorul Haq Rind dispelled the impression that traffic police officers are given particular targets of penalties.

"But yes, it's true that their performance is considered good in case they make more fines on traffic violations. As for bikers, they are found to be involved in most traffic rules violations and therefore they are fined in majority. The area police also register FIRs against drivers of heavy vehicles in case they are found involved in fatal road accidents," he maintained.

Adding to that, Traffic Police District East SP, Ghulam Sarwar said traffic police's focus remains on management of traffic. "Imposing fines for violations of traffic rules is also part of traffic management. Lack of awareness about traffic rules is also a reason for traffic violations. For this, the traffic police organises multiple awareness sessions in the city," he told The Express Tribune.

(By Razzak Abro The Express Tribune, 04, 26/11/2021)

Commercial operation of Green Line to begin on Dec 25: Asad

After almost six years of its ground-breaking and having suffered many hiccups over the period incurring almost double the cost, the federal-funded Green Line Bus Rapid Transit Service (BRTS) is all set to offer its services to Karachiites from December 25.

An announcement regarding initiation of the Green Line's commercial operation was made by a key member of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, who also mentioned that the trial service of the bus would be launched within the next 10 days.

However, the key question about the fare and any subsidy for the people of Karachi on the first-ever federal-funded transport service in the city remained unanswered.

"I conducted a detailed review of the Karachi Green Line project yesterday," Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar said in a tweet. "This project will be ready for trial operation in the next 10 days. After that Prime Minister Imran Khan will visit Karachi for its launch. Insha Allah, the commercial operation will begin on December 25."

Cost of federal-funded project has reached Rs35bn

On Sunday, speaking at a party programme in district Central, Asad Umar said that only 10-12 days of work had been left in completion of Green Line following which PM Khan would inaugurate it.

Envisaged and executed in February 2016 by then prime minister Nawaz Sharif, the Green Line project was originally scheduled to complete within a year with an estimated cost of around Rs16.85 billion. However, it took almost six years to complete and the cost reached Rs35bn to finish the project.

It was approved by the Executive Committee of National Economic Council and executed by the Sindh Infrastructure Development Company Limited.

Starting from KESC Powerhouse Chowrangi in Surjani Town, the bus service is to terminate at Merewether Tower via Nagan Chowrangi, North Nazimabad, Nazimabad and Gurumandir, with 21 stations along its route.

A total of 80 buses for the Green Line project had arrived in the city in two consignments, removing the last hurdle in the first-ever Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) for Karachi.

"During the test, the limited number of buses would be plied on the route," said a source privy to the details of the project. "All 80 buses of the fleet would be tested with rotation. The test operation may last two weeks or so and then a fully fledged operation will be finally launched from December 25."

Sindh-govt's Orange Line

However, with the formal commercial launch scheduled for Dec 25, question remains about the effectiveness of the project which was originally supposed to be connected with the Sindh government-funded Orange Line BRTS.

Despite having the shortest route in all five BRTS, the Orange Line is yet to get completed even after five years to its ground-breaking. Many observers are sceptical about the launch of the Sindh government project as the federal-funded public transport scheme Green Line is set to open its service for Karachiites.

"The development work on the Orange Line — which has been renamed after Abdul Sattar Edhi as the Abdul Sattar Edhi Line — has gathered some pace lately, but I am not sure it would be ready by December 25," said a Sindh government official responding to a question about the possibility of its completion.

He said that one could only make any assessment about the launch of the Orange Line service once the shipment of 20 buses from China arrived in the city.

"The shipment is due in the next couple of weeks. And then other few minor jobs which need to be addressed. So I can't say whether it will be ready by December 25 or not," he added.

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 29/11/2021)

Civic agencies charge parking fee at 124 places in city, SHC told

The traffic police on Monday informed the Sindh High Court that the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, district municipal corporations and cantonment boards were running 124 charged parking spots in the metropolis and 88 of them were on main thoroughfares.

According to the comments filed in court on behalf of the DIG-traffic submitted that the traffic police had repeatedly conveyed its concerns to the Karachi commissioner and other authorities about allotment of charged parking sites on busy roads without consulting them, but to no avail.

The traffic police further submitted that it was always committed to take cognizance against traffic violations and during the current year i.e. from January to Nov 20, a total of 435 charged parking operators had been arrested in 349 FIRs lodged for undue road obstruction caused by double and triple parking.

Traffic police say over 85 of such sites are on main roads

When a two-judge SHC bench headed by Justice Naimatullah Phulpoto took up a petition for hearing against charged parking in the city, the KMC, DMC-South and Karachi traffic police filed comments and documents in compliance with the court's last order. The bench adjourned the hearing till Jan 17 as lawyers for some other respondents sought time to file replies/comments.

The traffic police in its comments stated that out of 124 parking lots set up on roads and markets of the city, 46 were being run by the KMC, 71 by the DMCs, six by cantonment boards and one parking site is being run by the Civil Aviation Authority on its premises.

Of the 71 sites being run by city's DMCs, 26 are operated by DMC-South, 25 by DMC-Keamari, 11 by DMC-Central, five by DMC-East and four charged parking sites are operated by DMC-Korangi, it added.

According to the traffic police, charged parking sites have also been set up along almost all the major roads of the city including Sharea Faisal, M. A. Jinnah Road, Rashid Minas Road, Tariq Road, University Road, Shahrah-i-Iraq, Shahra-i-Liaquat, Abdullah Haroon Road, Stadium Road, Saheed-i-Millat Road and Khalid Bin Walid Road.

The KMC in its comments maintained that it was authorised to charge parking fees on the roads it maintained under the Sindh Local Government Act (SLGA), 2013.

However, the documents attached with the comments of the KMC stated that the then administrator on the request of Karachi commissioner had granted permission in October 2000 to set up charged parking on 65 sites including main roads and markets of the city under the KMC by-laws of 1975.

The DMC-South in its reply also argued that it was empowered to collect the parking fees under the SLGA, by-laws and auction collection rights 2016.

On the last hearing, the SHC had directed the KMC, DIG-traffic, DMCs and other respondents to file comments and also assist it whether there was any structure available to regulate charged parking in the metropolis.

The bench had also asked the authorities concerned under which law parking fee was being charged from the citizens and who had authorised vehicles' parking on roads.

A citizen had filed a petition stating that the Supreme Court had clearly restrained the authorities concerned from charging fee on the pretext of parking, but the respondents were still charging such a fee in different parts of the city in violation of the apex court's order.

(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 30/11/2021)

Numaish Chowrangi underpass nears completion

After bypassing several hiccups in the process, the country's first double-storey underpass located at Numaish Chowrangi, is now a step closer to completion.

The project, carrying a hefty price tag of Rs3 billion, is slated to welcome Green Line Buses on its track next month. While three more Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines are also expected to begin operations in the coming months.

According to project details, Phase-I of the city's first mass transit system, Green Line BRT, has been constructed under the supervision of Sindh Infrastructure Development Company Limited, a federal government agency. The Numaish Chowrangi underpass, touted as the country's largest underpass, spanning over 1.2 kilometres, 20 metres in width and 12 metres in height, will offer all the facilities of a mass transit system.

The integration of BRTS lines from different routes will also take place here, for which four bus stations are being constructed.

In future, after the construction of remaining BRT projects including Red Line, Yellow Line and Blue Line, their buses will also pass through here.

It may be noted that Numaish Chowrangi is the busiest intersection of the city and traffic to CBD areas such as Saddar, Tower and II Chandragar Road surges through it.

Development work on the Numaish Chowrangi underpass started in 2018 and its roof work was completed in 2020. During this period, MA Jinnah Road and all the link roads around it were closed due to which the citizens faced severe commuting issues.

There are 10 interlink routes, including three major highways and two minor roads.

MA Jinnah Road, Gurmunder to Numaish and Capri Cinema to Numaish are the main highways while Shahra-e-Quaideen and Brito Road are also two-lane roads.

In addition, two minor roads from Parsi Colony Road and Nizami Road also meet at Numaish Chowrangi.

The number of vehicles passing through here has been recorded to be around 150 thousand, which were all forced to divert to alternative routes like Soldier Bazaar & Garden, Shahra-e-Faisal and other routes; causing severe traffic jams on these important highways and other roads.

According to the engineers of Sindh Infrastructure Development Company Limited (SIDCL), the construction work of the underpass at Numaish Chowrangi was delayed due to transfer of water and other utility lines.

Development work was halted for three months last year due to Covid-19. After the roof work was completed, it was opened to normal traffic in August 2020, and underpass work continued under the roof, which is now in the final stages of completion.

SIDCL Chief Engineer Nisar Sario, while talking to The Express Tribune, said that BRT buses will pass through the ground floor of the underpass while offices of private transport companies managing mass transit services will be set up on the mezzanine floor.

Highlighting the most important features of the underpass, Sario said that it includes four bus stations and a state-of-the-art waiting room, which is currently under construction. Other than that, he said that there are seven escalators, seven pedestrian bridges, 24 automatic opening and closing PSD gates and ramps for special persons that are being constructed. "A functional drainage system has been constructed for removal of rain water, and the underpass will consist of three lanes- two lanes for moving buses and one lane for bus parking," he added.

The entire project is expected to be made functional sometime in December 2021, as finishing touches to the project still remain. Sario mentioned that only BRT buses will pass through this route, while the underpass will remain off limits to normal traffic.

(By Syed Ashraf Ali The Express Tribune, 05, 01/12/2021)

Long CNG closure

It has not come as a surprise. The government has announced that the CNG pumps in Sindh and Balochistan will not be supplied gas for two and a half months. There is nothing new in the announcement about gas load management in the country in the winter season for gas is diverted to colder regions to enable people to keep themselves warm. Gas rationing in winter has been continuing for the past 8-9 years.

This time around only the CNG closure period is the longest. The gas thus saved will be supplied to domestic and commercial consumers. In order to ensure proper gas supply to domestic consumers, supply of the fuel to captive power plants of non-export industries too has been stopped. Seen in the backdrop of the long-persisting gas shortage in the country, the recent prophecy of the petroleum secretary that the days of piped gas are numbered seems to be coming true. People in some other countries also are reportedly switching to LPG cylinders for use as domestic fuel. However, in Pakistan, the price of LPG cylinders is far higher than that of the piped gas.

Considering the deteriorating availability of gas, sooner or later domestic and commercial consumers, including taxi and rickshaw drivers, will have to go for the relatively expensive LPG cylinders adding more to their family and business expenses. This will result in spiking the general price level and the inflationary spiral thereby further eroding the value of money and, with it, will decrease people's purchasing power and the demand for goods and services. People will have to make sacrifices for the greatest common good.

The difficult economic circumstances demand sacrifices from all segments of society. The new government had announced austerity measures soon after coming to power. We don't know to what extent these measures are being put into practice. Our affluent classes have long been used to living ostentatiously. They and we all should rise to the occasion by giving up the habit of show-off and reckless spending.

9By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 01/12/2021)

Incomplete work mars Green Line project

According to Federal Minister for Planning, Development, Reforms and Special Initiatives Asad Umar, the project will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Imran Khan on December 10, but the track of the modern transport project Green Line Rapid Transport System in Karachi is refuting the claims of the federal government.

The stairs to the track are still nonfunctional, it was observed during a survey of various stretches of the project by the Express team.

Piles of garbage around the stairs are obstructing the movement of the pedestrians. The elevators and automated ticketing system could not be installed at many stations.

In order to complete the project in a hurry, incomplete works are being completed on an emergency basis due to which there is severe difficulty in the movement of citizens through the upper passages.

After repeated deadlines, Federal Minister Asad Umar has now announced the inauguration of the project on December 10. However, work on the stations and overpasses on the Green Line track is still incomplete. The escalators along the upper corridors from Nagan Chowrangi to Surjani offer a view of a scrap yard.

Special chambers for elevators are empty. However, at some stations where elevators are installed, the wiring work is incomplete. Scanning tickets at most stations and installing automatic walk-throughs on bus routes could not be completed. There is a lot of encroachment around most of the stations.

Garbage piles have formed under the upper passages. Efforts are being made to complete the unfinished work in a hurry without any precautionary measures which endanger the lives of the citizens. Media access has been banned to cover up the shortcomings of the Green Line bus project.

While trying to show the plight of the station and the upper passage at Nagan Chowrangi and the distress and anxiety of the citizens, the private security guards attacked the team of *The Express Tribune*.

On this occasion, the citizens also complained about the behavior of the guards and said that due to the track of the green line, it is impossible to cross the road without using the overhead passage. Incomplete work is being done during busy hours of the day. Iron pipes and other barriers have been erected on the stairs and senior citizens, including women, have to wade through these iron pipes, welding machines and wires.

The condition of the roads and stairs leading from Nagan Chowrangi to UP turn is also bad. Encroachments make it difficult to get to the track and there are piles of rubbish.

(By Kashif Hussain The Express Tribune, 05, 06/12/2021)

Mass transit project

It is an irony that as the population of Karachi went on increasing, the availability of public transport in the city went on decreasing. Perhaps now the need has far surpassed the available means. This is a sad and undeniable reality. However, a new era of rapid mass transit is going to begin with the inauguration of the Green Line Rapid Transport System in the city. The Green Line project is to start functioning in a few days. Several deadlines had been given in the past but they failed to materialise. We hope this time around the deadline will be met, and the transportation problem in Karachi is eased. Initially, around 40 Chinese-made buses will ply the Green Line route from Municipal Park near Jama Cloth up to Surjani Town.

Federal Minister Asad Umar has announced that Green Line Rapid Transport buses will start running from December 10, but the improper state of bus stations and elevators leading to the bus routes have raised doubts about the start of the project. Press reports say encroachments, piles of garbage and un-cleared rubble of construction material close to the Green Line passage mar the project, and in the rush to meet the deadline things are being done in a hurried and haphazard way. There is still time to put things in order for the inauguration of the project.

At present, Karachi has a rundown system of public transportation consisting of rickety buses, mini-buses and Qingqi rickshaws. The last mentioned plying some routes. Public transport is highly inadequate in a city of more than 220 million. Buses are so overcrowded that people have to travel on the rooftops exposing themselves to serious dangers. The shortage of buses and rickshaws has forced many to buy motorcycles. This demonstrates that questions are old but answers are new. The number of motorcycles plying the city roads has become unmanageable. The large number of motorcycles has made it very difficult for the elderly to walk across roads. We expect that the tailpipes of the new buses don't emit hazardous fumes. (By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 07/12/2021)

Karachi's Green Line bus project finally inaugurated

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday finally inaugurated Karachi's much-delayed Green Line Bus Rapid Transport System (GLBRTS) project, which will help overcome the difficulties faced by commuters in the city's West and Central districts.

Speaking at a ceremony held to mark the occasion, the premier, who was accompanied by Sindh Governor Imran Ismail and Federal Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar, said the Green Line project was the first step towards modernisation of Karachi in terms of transport.

PM Imran also congratulated Umar and the Sindh Infrastructure Development Company Limited (SIDCL) for working on the project with "complete determination".

The Rs35.5 billion GLBRTS project, which includes 21 stations along with ticketing rooms, escalators and stairs, also has the facility of backup generators to ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity. It has the capacity to cater to the needs of 135,000 commuters.

"Any modern city cannot be successfully run without a modern transport system," the premier said while giving examples of hugely populated Chinese cities with effective public transport facilities.

"The Green Line project will help fulfill the modern-day transportation requirements of the residents of Karachi."

Describing Karachi as an "engine of growth" for Pakistan, he noted that the prosperity of the city was linked to that of the country.

The prime minister said every country having a modern city including UK's London, France's Paris and the US' New York contributed to its development and prosperity.

"The success of Karachi will also help Pakistan achieve progress and prosperity."

PM Imran said that the governments in the past had not focused on a modern transportation system for the city.

"I have been seeing Karachi for 50 years. We have seen its transformation into a cave because we did not focus on its administration."

The premier noted that despite sanctions on Iran, its capital Tehran had become a modern and prosperous city with all civic facilities because of a modern management system.

"Tehran, which does not receive any funds from a public sector development programme like in Pakistan, collects and generates around \$500 million [per annum] in local revenue as against Karachi, which might be collecting something around \$30 million," he observed.

The prime minister maintained that he was closely invested in the Greater Karachi Water Supply Scheme project, also called K-IV, through coordination with the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda), to resolve the city's water woes.

He added that work on the project would start from January 2022 and be completed in 14-15 months.

"The supply of water from Keenjhar Lake to Karachi will start by September 2023."

Speaking about health insurance, the premier said even certain developed countries did not have universal healthcare.

He elaborated that with the Sehat Card facility, everyone in Punjab would get free healthcare by March next year.

The prime minister urged the Sindh government to become a part of the federal government's health scheme for the sake of the poor.

Commenting on the proposed development plan of Bundal Island, PM Imran maintained that the initiative would help create more jobs in Sindh. "This will benefit Sindh most," he said, adding that it was vital to build "modern cities" to meet the growing needs of the country.

He also gave the example of Ravi City, saying such developments will curb pollution and other issues.

"I again urge the Sindh government to give the federal government an NOC [no-objection certificate] for the development of this island," he said, adding that the Centre would benefit from the foreign direct investments only.

"Our population is growing. We are building a modern city named Ravi City in Lahore and taking care of the environment there," PM Imran said.

"Pollution levels are also high in Karachi and it is necessary to have a modern city like the Bundal Island project. When we undertake projects, it is better if we do it collectively with coordination."

Earlier, Planning and Development Minister Umar maintained that the Sindh governor was supervising the project since the PTI came to power.

In December 2020, he added, the SIDCL became a part of the planning ministry and the government started working on the project.

Pointing out that although the project had been approved in 2016, the minister claimed that its infrastructure was not built during the PML-N's next 28 months in power.

He claimed that the order for the buses was also not placed and neither was the payment system designed.

"The operation and maintenance tender was also not placed. The PML-N only thought about building a track surrounded by grills with no other facilities available."

He noted that work on the Mehmoodabad nullah had been completed and it would be inaugurated in 10 days. The minister added that 50% of the work on the Gujjar and Orangi nullahs had been completed.

Umar further said the Frontier Works Organisation had been mobilised for the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project and work had begun on the ground. He added that international as well as local companies were showing interest in the project.

Later, while presiding over a meeting of PTI's regional presidents and general secretaries, PM Imran urged the Sindh government to fully participate in the federal government projects of socio-economic development including Kamyab Pakistan, Sehat Card, Ehsaas Card, Ehsaas Roshan Programme and Kisan Card.

He said the people of Sindh could not be kept deprived of the benefits of the federal government's projects because of "mere political reasons" as all of the initiatives were aimed at public welfare.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 01, 11/12/2021)

Green Line at last!

Two thickly-populated districts of Karachi now, at least, have a sigh of relief as the much awaited Green Line Buses have hit the streets. This launches one of the five big projects announced by the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan under the Rs1.1 trillion Karachi Transformation Plan. Though the initiative rested with the previous government, it couldn't materialise in real time owing to a cobweb of ill-will. This is how Karachi was neglected and stood devoid of a civic infrastructure. It is, perhaps, the only metropolitan in the world without a mass transit. The PM was candid as he confessed that Karachi is a victim of political bizarreness and has been wronged for decades.

The Rs35.5 billion Green Line bus project with 21 stations, and a profound infrastructure, could be termed the first step towards addressing Karachi's transportation hues. It will cater to around 135,000 commuters on a daily basis, and is a good beginning. But that is not enough for a city that is the hearthrob of the country and generates bulk of the revenue. Karachi is in need of a serious political and administrative correction, and that can only come through an effective and autonomous local government tier, empowered on its own finances. The PM has rightly mentioned the success stories of Tehran, Mumbai and Shanghai, who generate revenue indigenously and spend it on their own.

It was soothing to learn that the Greater Karachi Water Supply Scheme, called K-IV, is making progress and estimated to be completed in the next 15 months. It is a must as Karachiites starve for water and have been dependent on hydrants for decades. Likewise, the cleaning and capping of three major drainage arteries will save the city from flooding in monsoons. Last but not least, the proposed development of islands near the shores of Karachi will be a big-ticket wealth generation tag, and inevitably act as a bonanza of growth.

The PM, while inaugurating the rapid mass transit, was generous in his political connotation, and that was a welcome development. By extending a helping hand to the Sindh government, his underscoring of collectivity in development is laudable. Political polarisation has ruined Karachiites. Time to rebuild it with consensus.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 12/12/2021)

52pc of total road accidents caused by motorcyclists, moot told

The Civil Engineering and Architecture Department of Sir Syed University of Engineering and Technology (SSUET) took lead in linking road safety with Artificial Intelligence (AI) and organised a workshop on artificially Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) at the campus.

Addressing the workshop, SSUET Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Vali Uddin said according to the WHO data published in 2018, road traffic accidents deaths in Pakistan reached 30,046, or 2.42 per cent of the total deaths.

Pakistan stands 95 in the world in the ranking of road safety measures. The economically productive age groups (15-64 years) in Pakistan are involved in 75pc of road crash fatalities and injuries. As a result, 1,461 people got affected due to road crash injuries and suffer disabilities per 100,000 people.

He advised the road users to avoid reckless driving and also avoid using mobile phones and playing loud music during driving.

While speaking about the Karachi road safety scenario and efforts for reducing crash burden, neurology and trauma expert Prof Dr Rashid Juma said 90pc of traffic deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. A majority of road accidents are caused by careless and incautious driving, he said and advised pedestrians that they should also know the road rights and responsibilities of other road users as well.

He further highlighted the need for policy dialogue between all stakeholders affected by road crashes.

ITS expert from NED University Dr Afzal Ahmed said public transport is safer than private transport and 52pc of total road accidents are caused by motorbike riders. A good public transport system could reduce accidents, he added.

He shared the results of using drone technology in road safety research.

(By APP Dawn, 14, 18/12/2021)

Fencings disappear from city streets

In an economy as shaky as today's, everything is worth something. Even scrap metal that can easily fetch up to Rs25-30 per kilogramme in junk markets.

This realisation appears to have lured Karachi's criminals to start nabbing iron rods that line the city's various greenbelts, highways and overcrossings.

Missing fencings from the city's busiest areas like Shar-e-Quaideen, University Road, MA Jinnah Extension Road, New Parade Street, Shahra-e-Pakistan, Ibn Sina Road, Sher Shah Soori Road, Sarshah Sulaiman Road and Rashid Minhas Road, have created a public safety hazard for wayfarers.

The public fears that if left unaddressed, these missing fences on highways and footbridges could lead to tragic accidents. The coast city police however, have been rather inert about the whole situation while fences continue to disappear from right under their nose.

The most literal example of this is of the footbridge located adjacent to the Newtown Police Station, that has been completely stripped of iron rods once placed as railing along its steps. In the same area, a greenbelt has lost its entire iron fencing, leaving drivers to use it as a parking spot for their cars.

Similarly, the lack of barriers on the Hassan Square bridge, which goes across one of the city's busiest highways, presents a severe risk for anyone using the platform to cross streets and is one misplaced footstep away from a gory situation.

Most of these pedestrian bridges were constructed at the behest of the previous government, to introduce more signal-free corridors in the city, but were rarely used by passers-by.

In response to which, the former city government later installed iron bars on roads and green belts; forcing pedestrians to use footbridges.

Speaking in the regard, an official of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), said on condition of anonymity, that petty criminals have been involved in nicking iron fences and manhole covers for quite some time. "But these petty criminals, mostly drug addicts looking for easy money, never had the tools to cut such strong iron bars like bridge fencing. It would take them several days to stealthily dislocate rods like such, but now we suspect that the local mafia has started sinking its claws in the crime as well. With the connivance of the police and mafia-granted access to professional tools, they are able to act at a much faster rate. The same goes for deforestation in the city, these mafias people can clear entire forests in a matter of days," he told.

Similarly, KMC Director General Parks Department Junaid Khan also shared that iron theft from green belts and footpaths on major highways has increased in the past few years. "An organised group has been carrying out this operation in wee hours. To address this, the department has decided to plant hedges of bougainvillea and other types of plants along green belts and sidewalks, which will not be a theft threat like iron bars and will also stop traffic," he opined.

When probed about repairs and responsibility, Karachi Development Authority Traffic Engineering Bureau Centre Director Jamal Siddiqui said that it the duty of the local police to prevent thefts of public property. "However, our responsibility is to repair the unfenced pedestrian bridges, which have been on hold due to lack of funds. Efforts are being made to obtain funds and soon as they are made available, we will begin repairing the city's footbridges," he told The Express Tribune.

(By Syed Ashraf Ali The Express Tribune, 04, 23/12/2021)

Karachi's Green Line bus project set to start commercial operation tomorrow

After almost six years since its groundbreaking, the federal-funded Green Line Bus Rapid Transit Service (BRTS) is set to become operational with all 80 buses of its fleet ready to shuttle between Surjani Town and Numaish Chowrangi on Saturday.

The mega project suffered many hiccups over the period and the delay caused it to incur almost double the cost.

The fare table is likely to range from Rs15 to Rs55 depending on distance.

The confirmation came from a key member of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) at the Centre who said that the test run of the bus service appeared effective, smooth and up to the mark. It's set to start a fully-fledged commercial operation from Saturday, he said.

The key point of the fare and any subsidy for the people of Karachi on the first-ever federal-funded transport service in decades was partially defined.

"It's going to be operational Insha Allah as announced," Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar told Dawn in a brief response when he was referred to his two-week-old tweet disclosing the date for the commercial operation of the bus service as Dec 25.

"The fare is actually a subject of the provincial government. So whatever is decided by the Sindh government in line with its defined rules, it would be followed. It may be between Rs15 and Rs55 depending on the journey by a passenger," he said.

In a tweet on Nov 28, the federal minister had announced the completion of the project's first phase and expressed his confidence that it would be ready to operate from Dec 25.

"I conducted a detailed review of the Karachi Green Line project yesterday," Mr Umar said in the Nov 28 tweet. "This project will be ready for trial operation in the next 10 days. After that Prime Minister Imran Khan will visit Karachi for its launch. Insha Allah, the commercial operation will begin on December 25," his tweet read.

On Dec 10, the project was launched for its "soft and trial operation" by Prime Minister Imran Khan with a limited number of buses plying on the route to check and remove any flaw. The trial, an official said, met with success and no major problem was cited.

A few issues were noticed at different stations along the route while passengers boarded and got off the buses. These issues were addressed immediately, he added.

"Some 60 passengers can travel on seats and as many can avail the service by standing in the in the two-portion buses with no rush-like situation," he said.

"The buses can move at 50 kilometres per hour but in most cases slower speed is recommended. There are more than 20 stations after every few kilometres, so maintaining a high speed is not practically possible. Between Surjani and Numaish points, the passengers would stay one hour or a little over on board, I think, and the time includes brief stopovers at all 21 stations," he added.

Envisaged and executed in Feb 2016 by then prime minister Nawaz Sharif, the project was originally scheduled to be completed within a year with an estimated cost of around Rs16.85 billion.

However, it took almost six years to complete and the cost has shot up to Rs35bn by now. The project was approved by the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne) and executed by the Sindh Infrastructure Development Company Limited.

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 24/12/2021)

Green Line BRT makes 'soft' start

Trial run and limited scale services of Green Line bus will be available at 11 of the total 21 stops from today. Buses will only run from 8am to 12 pm. The number of buses has also been limited to 25.

According to the organisers, Green Line bus project will be fully operational from January 10.

Federal Minister Asad Omar had announced that the commercial operation of the Green Line bus project would start from December 25.

However, according to Sindh Infrastructure Development Company, the bus service will run on a limited scale for four hours on a trial basis, while the number of functional stations has also been halved.

The measure has been taken to assess the capacity of the project infrastructure and systems.

The foundation stone of the project was laid by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on February 27, 2016 at an estimated cost of Rs16 billion. After many years of delays and amendments, cost of the project has exceeded Rs35 billion. The project has not yet been completed.

The track of the project was limited to Naumaish Chowrangi instead of Jama Cloth Market.

A six-month target has been set for the construction of the remaining track.

On the other hand, at the launch of Green Line bus service, citizens expressed hope that the project would help in alleviating problems of commuters in Karachi.

Citizens also expressed concern over service not being fully operational from December 25. Citizens say that despite giving different dates by the federal government, the project could not be fully operational. The wait for the citizens of Karachi is getting longer and longer.

Children will be able to travel without ticket in the Green Line bus but a unique condition has been imposed for this too.

Children will be exempted from ticket based on their height and not their age. A scale for measuring height of children has been affixed on walls of ticket houses on upper corridors leading to stations. Children up to three feet tall will be exempt from the ticket.

There are two ways to get a Green Line ticket. Citizens will be able to get a printout of the ticket on paper with cash payment on which QR code will be printed which will give access to the stations. The ticket will be usable only one time for specific stations or distances.

In addition to this, the second method will be to get a ticket which can be used multiple time through rechargeable plastic cards. The cost of making a card for the first time will be Rs100 and the balance will be loaded in it.

The ticket for the entire track of Green Line bus service was fixed at Rs55. The minimum charges will be Rs15.

Initially Rs15 will be charged for traveling by card and after that Rs5 will be deducted from the balance of the card for every 2kms covered.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 25/12/2021)