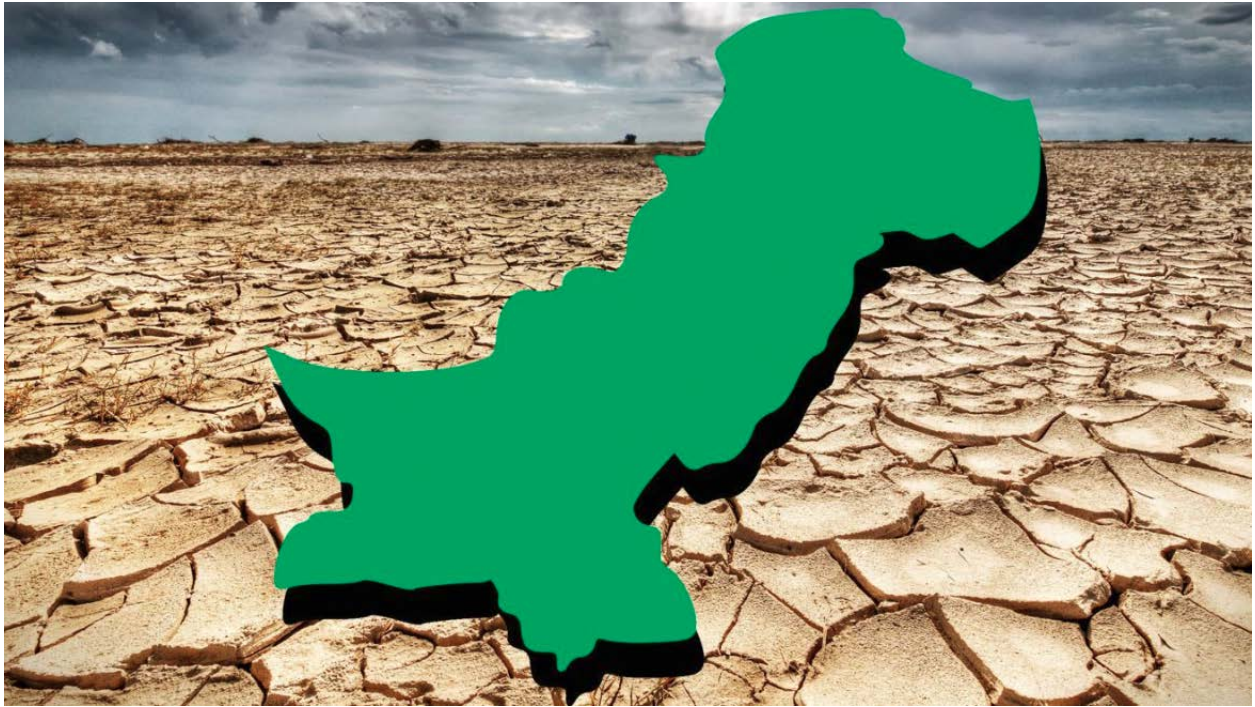


NEWSCLIPPINGS

JULY TO DECEMBER 2025

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT



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Terrifying fault lines that lie beneath Karachiites' feet

While the recent seismic activity affecting parts of the city seems to have settled down to an extent, indicating what some experts describe as an "increasing stability" of the reactivated fault line after release of built-up energy, a sense of unease still exists in the people, who repeatedly experienced low-intensity tremors for over three weeks in June, it has emerged.

Speaking to *Dawn*, the residents of Quaidabad, Landhi and Malir — the localities most affected by a series of low-intensity tremors starting from June 1 and ending on June 22 — say that that the fear of being hit by a potentially a high intensity earthquake constantly grips their hearts.

"We no longer live a normal life. The very thought of being struck by a disaster wakes me several times at night. Last night, too, I felt slight shaking; first at 3am and then at 4.45am. But, there was no official confirmation. I think the tremors were too minor to be recorded," said Bashir Ahmed Mirjat, local journalist and resident of Umer Marvi Goth, Quaidabad.

According to him, the situation has been extremely disturbing over the last month. On every seismic event, people used to come out on streets, praying for their safety, and then returning to their chores.

"It was a continued state of absolute helplessness. Every day, seemed like the end of life. I can say with certainty that I felt more than 40 tremors — including the first one of 3.6 magnitude — in 22 days. Their high frequency badly affected people's mental health."

Like Mirjat, who moved to the locality in Karachi three years back, many villagers have had their lives' first encounter with persistent seismic events. Shocked and panicked, some of them returned to their hometowns.

Faiza Shahzaib, teacher and resident of Landhi, heard a loud and intense sound followed by a tremor just two weeks ago. "It forced all of us to come out on the street. It was the second time that people had to leave their homes out of fear following an earthquake last month. Still, we are too scared."

Residents believe that their fears stem from the missing role of the state as well as the absence of provision of information by official sources.

Shazia Nadeem, Shahzaib's colleague residing in the Muslimabad area of Malir City for over five decades, says, "People rely on whatever is being presented on the social media these days, which at times constitute misinformation. Till today, there is no government initiative to inform, educate and train (in disaster preparedness) those living in the quake-vulnerable areas. Hence, most of us don't know what to do if God forbid, a disaster strikes."

The residents, from the information gathered from the social media, also link the prolonged seismic activity directly with the excessive withdrawal of groundwater in their localities, which has been facing an acute shortage of piped water for decades. The situation, they believe, is also causing their land to sink.

Sharing data of the city's low-intensity tremors, Chief Meteorologist Ameer Hyder Leghari, who has done a postgraduate diploma in seismology from Japan, said that the historical data showed that mild to moderate tremors had been recorded in Karachi from time to time since the 1960s.

Life amidst fault lines

Karachi, experts say, is surrounded by several active and dormant fault lines, and the recent seismic events — a total of 57 low-intensity tremors in 22 days in the month of June this year — are consistent with the region's natural tectonic movements.

"The Landhi, Quaidabad, Gadap and Malir areas are located near active fault lines, making them more to vulnerable to seismic events. Minor earthquakes may pre-empt high-intensity earthquakes by constantly releasing accumulated energy within the Landhi fault," explains Mr Asif Rana, former director of the Geological Survey of Pakistan.

According to him, the city's close proximity to several seismic faults, including the Allahbund fault, which runs parallel to Sindh's coast, and the junction of the Indian, Arabian and Eurasian plates, makes it susceptible to natural seismic activity.

"While the triple junction hasn't witnessed a major earthquake since 1945, geologists think that substantial seismic energy has been accumulating in the region, making the area increasingly vulnerable to a significant quake," he said, adding that if such an event occurs under the seabed near Sonmiani, which is only 50km away, it could potentially generate a tsunami that could hit Karachi, too.

Tsunami-generating earthquakes in the region, he says, have been reported as early as 1881. Two offshore earthquakes — one of 8-magnitude reported in 1945 and the other in 1947 of 7.3-magnitude — generated tsunamis, which hit Sindh and Makran coastal areas.

Karachi, Mr Rana points out, is located on the edge of a stable crust of the western rifted margin of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, which is creating continuous stress on its rifted western margin, resulting in re-activation of the dormant faults.

"The Landhi fault has become active recently after several decades and is currently going through a normalisation phase. Another nearby fault close to Thano Bulah Khan had also contributed to the last month's seismic events."

Asked about the possible link between the recent 5.5-magnitude quake in Musakhel, Balochistan, and Karachi's seismic events, he said there are no indication that these events are triggering each other as Karachi's seismic activity is considered localised.

"We must remember, though, that all these events are part of the same regional tectonic framework. This swarm is regarded as normal, not a precursor to a major quake. The region is prone to significant earthquakes, including the devastating 1935 Quetta earthquake of 7.7 magnitude, which killed over 35,000 people."

An analysis of the 57 low-intensity tremors shows the majority (33) were recorded in areas close to Malir. Other areas where tremors were felt were: Quaidabad, Landhi, Gadap, DHA City and DHA Karachi and Korangi. There were 10 tremors on June 2 followed by a dozen the next day.

The last six tremors — four of them had above three-magnitude — were recorded on June 22. "But, what is unusual this time was their high frequency in a single month. Having said that, the city has never seen a major earthquake," he said.

Both experts endorse the possibility of the city seeing more low-intensity tremors, given the fact that the region is seismically active.

They also call for equipping people in the vulnerable areas with the life-saving knowledge tools required to face a potentially high intensity earthquake as well as ensuring the strict enforcement of building codes.

"It's time that the authorities take the situation seriously. The haphazard way Karachi has grown over the years is a recipe for disaster as even a moderate intensity tremor (between 4 and 5.5 magnitude) can cause havoc in densely populated areas," Mr Rana says.

Highlighting the need for continuous monitoring of the fault lines, already known, and mapped, Mr Moin Raza Khan, former head of Pakistan Petroleum Limited, says that tectonic movements definitely disturb the skin of the earth, causing damage to the infrastructure under and above the ground.

"When the earth moves, it readjusts itself and then stays calm. This is called re-equilibration. We need to monitor our fault lines and take steps to keep our infrastructure in and above the ground secured, ensuring the safety of human life and investment," he says.

'Sinking' city

On the link between the extraction of underground water and tremors, senior marine geologist Dr Asif Inam, also the former head of the National Institute of Oceanography, explained that Karachi, like many other coastal cities worldwide, relies heavily on groundwater for both domestic and industrial purposes.

Unregulated withdrawal, he points out, typically leads to the extraction of water beyond the aquifers' recharge capacity. This often results in the compaction and readjustment of subsurface soil, leading to the subsidence of adjacent land. This land subsidence, he says, can also facilitate faults running parallel to the Karachi's coastline.

"There is an urgent need to ban unauthorised water withdrawal in Karachi, as coastal areas are already at risk from rising sea levels. Any subsidence in these regions could exacerbate the situation, particularly since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has predicted a sea level rise of approximately 60 centimetres along Karachi's coast by the end of the century."

Dr Inam underscored the need for a comprehensive coastal zone management plan for Karachi to protect strategic infrastructure from the impacts of climate change and related coastal hazards.

"It is essential to continuously monitor changes using modern geodetic techniques, such as InSAR [Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar] and GPS [Global Positioning System] measurements, to detect even minor changes in ground elevation that could affect infrastructure or increase flood risk," he said.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 03/07/2025)

Water boring heightens seismic threat in Karachi

Amidst the city's never ending water crisis, underground water boring has emerged as a crucial mode of supplying the survival necessity. However, the popular practice has come under scrutiny as experts debate its correlation with an unprecedented surge in earthquakes hitting Karachi.

According to Chief Meteorologist Ameer Haider Laghari, since June 1st, areas in the eastern part of Karachi including Landhi, Malir, Korangi, and Quaidabad, have experienced 57 tremors with magnitudes ranging from 1.5 to 3.8 on the Richter scale. Although these tremors were minor, their frequency has caused significant fear and anxiety among residents.

In these areas, underground water extraction through boring has increased significantly over the years as a result of which the land in these areas has reportedly subsided. While there is no scientific evidence directly linking the recent earthquakes and land subsidence to boring and construction activity, it is a hypothesis requiring comprehensive study.

Dr Adnan Khan from the Geology Department at the University of Karachi explained that in many areas of Karachi, particularly Landhi, Korangi, and Malir, the lack of a regular water supply system had led residents, industries, and RO plants to rely heavily on underground water extraction. "Land in areas like Landhi, Korangi, Malir, Defence, and North Karachi has subsided by 15 centimeters and is sinking at an annual rate of 1.5 centimeters," revealed Dr Khan.

Dr Nauman Ahmed, Professor at the NED University, claimed that although earthquakes occurred on a large scale and could not be definitively linked to boring, excessive extraction of underground water was an unnatural process hence areas where boring is prevalent have likely developed weakened underground structures.

"As water is extracted from beneath the surface, a void is created, which makes the natural underground position vulnerable, weakening the foundations of houses. These factors increase the risk of structural damage in these areas during earthquakes or

otherwise," said Dr Ahmed, who urged the government to conduct a detailed survey of the affected areas, identifying the damage caused by boring, and taking steps to address the situation.

"Scientific research suggests that tectonic plate movement at local fault lines is causing land subsidence. However, it is under observation that excessive underground water extraction is occurring in areas like Landhi, Malir, and Korangi, where earthquakes are also being recorded, and the land is sinking. A detailed study is required to determine the exact cause," added Dr Khan.

Dr Masood Rafi, Chairman of the Earthquake Engineering Department at NED University, identified two major causes of land subsidence in Karachi: the construction of small and large buildings and the extensive use of underground water.

"Due to the water crisis in many areas, residents have resorted to alternative methods, such as boring, to extract underground water. Additionally, reverse osmosis (RO) plants have been established at many locations for drinking water, exacerbating the depletion of underground reserves and creating voids beneath the surface. The weight of newly constructed buildings further increases underground pressure, contributing to land subsidence. Therefore, it is imperative to halt underground water extraction to prevent further damage," opined Dr Rafi.

On the other hand, Dr Khan warned that although Karachi's local fault lines were not highly dangerous, the city was at risk from surrounding tectonic plates, especially those in India and Balochistan.

"Strong earthquakes in these regions could cause destruction across Karachi, which is part of the Indian tectonic plate. About 110 kilometers west of the city lies a point where three plates: the Indian, Eurasian, and Arabian intersect. The Arabian plate subducts beneath the other two from the south. If earthquakes occur in this region, their effects could also impact Karachi," warned Dr Khan.

(By Tufail Ahmed and Ashraf Ali The Express Tribune, 04, 03/07/2025)

Karachi Canal pollution persists

The discharge of toxic industrial effluent into the Karachi Canal continues unabated, posing a serious health hazard to the people of Karachi, Thatta, and Jamshoro despite multiple orders from the Sindh High Court and the Supreme Court's Water Commission. A team of the Sindh Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) collected samples from the canal near Kotri SITE area in Jamshoro district on Thursday.

The KB Feeder canal, aka Karachi canal, springs from Kotri barrage. It is the main source of water supply for the city and the ongoing K-IV project is also completely dependent on this canal.

In 2007 a lawyer from Kotri had filed a petition in the SHC, pleading for measures to stop the canal's pollution by the Industrial as well as from the municipal, commercial and hospital wastewater. The court had ordered the provincial govt to build a Combined Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) near the SITE area to stop that contamination of the fresh waterway.

The project's initial PC-I was approved in April 2010, at a cost of Rs667 million. However, due to delayed completion the cost later jacked up to around Rs one billion. The construction contract was given to M/S ARA Joint Venture Karachi in June, 2010. In September 2019, the Anti-Corruption Establishment lodged an FIR against the SITE officers who were part of the project. As per the ACE's investigation, the project was still incomplete and non-functional by that year besides lacking the treatment capacity.

Under an arrangement the deficient plant's management was handed over by SITE department to KATI. During in charge of SEPA Imran Abbassi's visit, the association's office bearers narrated that they stopped running the plant because the govt halted release of funds. The two sides had agreed to share 50% cost of the operations. They claimed the unpaid funds had accrued to Rs60 million when KATI decided to call it a day over two months ago.

The SEPA's officer also repeated instructions to the industries to install in house treatment plants, an order which the Water Commission had also passed for all the SITE areas back in 2018. Abbassi reiterated warning to the industries that SEPA will initiate action if they kept releasing untreated wastewater.

(By Z Ali, The Express Tribune, 05, 04/07/2025)

Are Karachi authorities prepared for next spell of monsoon rains?

Phrases and idioms in any language are coined primarily to relay a message that contains wisdom.

In the English language, the phrase 'a rainy day' means a probable time when money will be needed, unexpectedly. This may also suggest that while rain, in a certain way, has romantic and feel-good connotations, it can also bring with it a number of difficulties. The latter seems to be apt for Karachiites.

Every time — and it's been happening for years now — it rains heavily in the city, citizens are found complaining about at least a few things: nerve-jangling traffic jams, damaged roads, sudden appearance of potholes and puddles, stagnant rainwater on roads and streets, and power failure.

Power failure, surely, in turn makes the availability of water supply a huge problem because in most localities in the city, water is pumped into pipes through machines run by electricity. Don't the authorities concerned know that?

By authorities concerned one means the bodies responsible for managing Karachi: the provincial government, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, the cantonment board, etc.

Every year, during monsoons, a blame game starts which ends without a positive or permanent resolution to the issue. On June 27 and 28, heavy rains disrupted life in Karachi in a painful way. Despite the fact that June 28 was a Saturday, when a majority of the offices were closed, the snarl-up at thoroughfares such as Sharea Faisal was agonising. If one was in District South heading towards the airport, it took at least two hours to move from the Hotel Metropole roundabout to Drigh Road Railway Station.

As if it was an understandable consequence of Nature's interference in Karachiites' daily lives, there were reports of a prolonged power breakdown on June 28.

De-silting of major drains is yet to be completed by KMC

In DHA Phase V, for example, electricity went kaput in the afternoon and was restored at 4am. Similarly, quite a few blocks in Gulistan-i-Jauhar, Federal B Area, North Nazimabad, suffered power shutdowns for up to 10 hours.

The worrisome thing is that the monsoon season has arrived early (as it usually begins in July). Have the authorities pre-empted the situation? One can't be sure.

What adds to the worry is that at some places — for example, from Jail Road to Nipa — construction work has been going on for many a month. If rains come down heavily in July, these projects might get affected. No one knows how much money has so far been invested in the making of these yet-to-be-completed underpasses, overhead bridges and new roads. Whatever the amount may be, they need to be protected from uncalled-for interventions. Also, one hopes that construction work completes as soon as possible because it's already a massive traffic issue.

It has to be said, though, that the one step that the KMC has taken, in terms of preparing in advance for the rains, is that a few days back the corporation had begun the process of cleaning the stormwater drains in the city.

Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab himself witnessed the process during which he had said: "In addition to the 46 major drains, smaller drains are also being cleaned. A joint strategy will be employed to ensure the drainage of rainwater across all towns. As soon as the rains begin, staff, machinery and pumps will be dispatched to major roads. We believe in working indiscriminately across all districts of Karachi and will respond to critics through our work."

It all sounds good. But, thus far, not all drains have been cleaned.

The clouds, as the month of July sets in, look ominous. There's likelihood that citizens will soon be faced with a wet season. And if preventive measures are not taken in totality, Karachiites are in for a toilsome time.

(By Peerzada Sumair Dawn, 13, 05/07/2025)

Climate change, women and water resilience

In Pakistan's dry plains and productive deltas, climate change is no longer a hypothetical threat; it is a lived reality. That reality is best observed where land meets water, where women farmers in Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan are reshaping resilience in the face of climate adversity.



While water scarcity deepens and weather becomes increasingly volatile, these women are developing irrigation schemes, re-scheduling crop cycles, and, finally, determining the course of smallholder agriculture.

Pakistan's agriculture sector, which consumes over 90% of its available freshwater, is suffering under enormous stress from dwindling rivers, declining groundwater, and erratic monsoons. Women, who account for approximately 45% of Pakistan's agricultural labor force, are disproportionately impacted by these stresses.

Owning a mere 2% of agricultural land though, these women farmers are emerging quietly as unheralded leaders in the area of water management.

Women have led raised-bed cultivation and drip irrigation in the Sindh's Badin and Thatta districts. Supported by the Sindh Water Sector Improvement Project and by local NGOs, these technologies have achieved up to 30% water savings over conventional flood irrigation, besides reducing soil salinity.

In Multan and Bahawalpur districts of Southern Punjab, women farmers are restoring old water-harvesting systems, including karez and ponding. These techniques entail capturing rainwater in small reservoirs to draw on later, which allows them to stagger the times of their irrigation and cope with the capricious patterns of drought and intense rain triggered by climate change.

Water shortage is also inducing a shift in the choice of crops and dates of planting. In Balochistan's desert areas like Nushki and Mastung, where the level of groundwater declined as much as 3 meters during the past decade, women are substituting water-guzzling crops like wheat and cotton with more drought-resistant crops like barley, millet and pulses.

In Punjab, where Sutlej and Ravi rivers have grown more seasonal, women farmers are adapting by shifting to shorter crop cycles. They rotate early-maturing rice varieties such as Super Basmati with legumes and oilseeds. This only saves water, but also helps improve soil health, embodying the principles of regenerative agriculture.

Perhaps most significant of all the ways in which women are redefining resilience is through the development of informal networks and community learning. Women farmer field schools are becoming central places for the exchange of tips on irrigation timing, organic pest control and seed saving in villages throughout Sindh and Balochistan.

According to FAO, from 2018 to 2022, more than 17,000 Pakistani women were trained in climate-smart agriculture. This kind of training empowers women as it equips them with the skills required to track soil moisture, compost and settle water-sharing conflicts effectively.

The national climate policies of Pakistan are finally acknowledging the critical role of women in enhancing water resilience. The draft of the 2021 National Adaptation Plan openly embraces gender-responsive approaches to water management.

Provincial governments, in their turn, are launching initiatives such as the Punjab Irrigated Agriculture Productivity Improvement Project, providing subsidies on water-saving technologies for small farmers, including women. But barriers like inadequate land titles, restricted credit access and under-representation in water users' associations continue to constrain women's scope and effectiveness.

Empowering women leaders is not simply an issue of equity but efficiency. UN Women estimates that if women farmers in developing economies had equal access to resources, the agricultural yield could rise 20-30%, greatly reducing hunger.

Along Pakistan's water-short borders, women farmers don't look like hapless victims of climate change, but innovative pioneers. From the salt-saturated fields of Sindh to the dry orchards of Balochistan, these remarkable women are discovering local solutions to a global issue.

Their ingenuity highlights a vital truth: gender-sensitive climate adaptation is not only a good idea, but a necessity for ensuring the future of Pakistan's agriculture.

(By Fiza Farhan The Express Tribune, 14, 05/07/2025)

Plastic pushback

One month has passed since the Sindh government imposed a ban on the manufacturing, sale and use of plastic bags across the province but adherence to the ban can barely be seen. Although the government is claiming that teams from district administration, police and Sindh Environmental Protection Agency have been deployed to effectuate what is a 'zero-tolerance' policy, as stated by Environment Secretary Agha Shah Nawaz Khan, the strategy appears to be more focused on rhetoric than practical implementation.

The plastic ban, effective from June 15, 2025, calls for a complete cessation of all types, sizes and weights of both non-degradable and oxo-degradable single-use plastic bags. This decision comes in a bid to address one of the most critical ecological emergencies worldwide as single-use plastic, whether non-degradable or oxy-degradable, causes irreparable damage to land, water and air by persisting in the environment for centuries. Ongoing production of single-use plastic ensures the accumulation of irremovable pollutants.

As of yet, local authorities are still 'monitoring the situation' and handing out warnings to traders and shopkeepers, alerting them about serious consequences such as fines, arrests and factory closures. But in light of Sindh's previous attempts at enforcing a plastic ban, beginning from 2006, these admonitions will do little if not backed by punitive action.

Another key oversight of this ban is its lack of structure and strategy regarding introducing alternatives to plastic bags that are both cheap and accessible. To ensure sustained progress, prohibition must be accompanied with practical solutions. However, the government has failed to initiate any awareness campaigns, production of biodegradable alternatives or even recycling efforts aimed at curbing existing pollutants.

The plastic pollution crisis is in dire need of holistic measures that tackle waste management, improved circularity and reduced production. Only then can some substantial progress be witnessed.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 14/07/2025)

With prosthetic leg, mutilated camel stands for first time in over a year

A camel that lost its leg to mutilation in Sanghar district last year stood up for the first time on Tuesday with the help of a prosthetic leg, Dawn.com reported.

The camel, now named Cammie, had her front leg allegedly chopped off by a landlord in June 2024, as a punishment for foraging in his field for fodder, for which six suspects were remanded.

The camel was taken in by the Comprehensive Disaster Response Services (CDRS) Benji Project for Animal Welfare in Karachi, where she has spent over a year.

On Tuesday, the shelter provided an update that Cammie had stood up for the first time since her mutilation, along with a video showing her getting used to walking with her new prosthetic leg. "It's been a year of tears, setbacks, rehab, pain, and quiet

perseverance. A year where we were told to give up, to move on, to stop delaying the inevitable. But we chose to stand by her. And today, she stood for us all.”

In June 2024, a landlord chopped off the camel’s leg as a punishment for venturing into his field for fodder

The shelter thanked its team and supporters, as well as PPP MNA Shazia Marri, her sister and PPP Senator Quratulain Marri and the Sindh government for their “unwavering support and trust in [the team’s] mission”. It also thanked the founder of Bionic Pets, Derrick Campana, who designed and created the custom prosthetic to fit Cammie.

“We still have a long road ahead as Cammie adjusts to her prosthetic, but today is for celebration, for hope, and for all the silent victories that happen when you refuse to give up,” the shelter said.

(By Dawn Reporter, 13, 16/07/2025)

Two more quakes jolt parts of Karachi

Two earthquakes occurred just over a minute apart in two different parts of the city on Wednesday, creating fear in the affected localities.

With the latest tremors, the total number of low-intensity earthquakes in Karachi since June 1 rose to 60.

According to details available with the seismic centre of the Pakistan Meteorological Department, the first earthquake of 3.4 magnitude originated at a depth of 20km at 5:52pm. Its epicentre was located 14km northwest of Malir.

It was followed by a 2.7-magnitude tremor originated at a depth of 10km at 5:53pm. Its epicentre was located 10km east of DHA City on Superhighway.

The department’s data shows that the city has so far experienced 60 low-intensity tremors since June 1, with most of them near Malir and areas near Quaidabad, Gadap, DHA City, DHA and Korangi.

According to experts, the fault lines passing through the areas of Korangi and Malir have become active after several decades and causing minor earthquakes in areas close to them.

(By Newspaper’s Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 17/07/2025)

SHC restrains civic bodies from cutting trees along Karachi’s Sharea Faisal

The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Friday restrained the authorities concerned from cutting trees along Sharea Faisal and directed the director general of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) and others to submit a comprehensive report.

The direction came from a two-judge bench, comprising Justice Zulfiqar Ali Sangi and Justice Nisar Ahmed Bhanbhro, on a petition filed by a citizen, Abdul Hamid Ahmed Dagia, who accused the authorities concerned of violating environmental laws and judicial directives.

After the hearing, the division bench issued notices to the respondents, including the Sindh government, administrator of the local government, secretary of the forest and wildlife department, DG of Sepa, director general of the forest department, law officer and others for Aug 12.

The court also directed the Sepa DG and the chief conservator of forests to submit a comprehensive report in response to the petition. Meanwhile, it restrained the respondents from cutting trees along Sharea Faisal till the next hearing.

The counsel for the petitioner, Muhammad Ahmer, submitted before the court that the applicant is a businessman who has been campaigning to raise awareness about environmental issues since 2015.

Bench issues notices to Sepa chief, forest and wildlife secretary and local govt dept concerned

He claimed that a large-scale deforestation is currently underway along Sharea Faisal, where the respondents, either directly or through their contractors, have commenced extensive cutting of fully-grown trees in violation of environmental laws and judicial pronouncements.

Based on personal observation, the petitioner alleged that hundreds of mature trees — some decades old — lining both sides of Sharea Faisal are being felled “without any disclosure of lawful authorisation, requisite environmental clearances, or compliance with the applicable regulatory framework”.

“No environmental impact assessment (EIA), as mandated under the Sindh Environmental Protection Act, 2014, appears to have been undertaken or approved for the said activity. Nor has any order of the competent authority or judicial sanction been made public to justify this arbitrary and irreversible action,” the petitioner stated.

The counsel also referred to a direction passed by the SHC in 2024 in a case, which stated that no tree shall be removed without the express permission of the competent authority and the sessions judge concerned throughout Sindh. The order also directed that priority be accorded to the relocation rather than destruction of trees.

(By Sumair Abdullah Dawn, 13, 19/07/2025)

Govt urged to ensure protection of mangrove forests

A mangrove plantation campaign was organised in the coastal areas through a collaboration between the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) and the Mangrove Biodiversity Park on Sunday in which dozens of young people from Rehri Goth and Ibrahim Hyderi actively participated with great enthusiasm and highlighted the message of environmental conservation.

The young participants also provided a detailed presentation, explaining how mangrove forests play a crucial role in sustaining the marine ecosystem, preserving biodiversity and ensuring the economic stability of fishing communities. They elaborated that mangrove trees act as a natural shield against ocean waves and storms, provide shelter to marine life and help maintain ecological balance.

The youth emphasised that due to climate change and human activities, mangrove forests are facing severe threats that must be addressed through immediate action. The participants strongly urged the Sindh government to ensure effective protection of existing mangrove forests and to launch large-scale plantation campaigns to safeguard coastal areas from increasing environmental risks.

On the occasion, PFF Chairman Mehran Ali Shah said: "Mangrove forests are the backbone of our coastal life, vital not only for the survival of marine biodiversity but also for the economic future of local fishing communities. We appreciate the efforts of these young people and urge the Sindh government to take practical steps for the protection of these forests and large-scale plantations."

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 22/07/2025)

Mangrove plantation in full swing

A mangrove plantation campaign was organised in coastal areas in collaboration with the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) and the Mangrove Biodiversity Park. Dozens of youth from Rehri Goth and Ibrahim Haideri participated in the campaign with great enthusiasm and highlighted the message of environmental protection.

During the event, the young men who participated in the campaign delivered a detailed presentation, emphasising the critical role mangrove forests play in preserving marine ecosystems, protecting biodiversity, and ensuring the economic stability of fishing communities. They explained that mangrove trees act as a natural shield against sea waves and storms, provide shelter to marine life, and help maintain ecological balance.

The youth stressed that mangrove forests are facing serious threats due to climate change and human activities, and that urgent action is required to protect them. The participants strongly demanded that the Sindh government ensure effective protection of existing mangrove forests and initiate large-scale new plantation campaigns to safeguard coastal areas from growing environmental threats.

Chairman of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, Mehran Ali Shah, said on the occasion that mangrove forests are the backbone of coastal life, indispensable not only for the survival of marine ecosystems but also for the economic future of local fishing communities. He appreciated the efforts of the youth and urged the Sindh government to take practical steps for the protection of these forests and to support large-scale plantation initiatives.

He further added that the PFF, in collaboration with its partner organisations, will continue such initiatives to raise environmental awareness among youth and to preserve coastal ecosystems.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 22/07/2025)

Climate outcores play

THE alarm bells are getting louder. Even the country's biggest sporting product is facing the impact of climate change. Findings from Hit for Six: The Danger Zone, a report compiled by climate experts, show that the Pakistan Super League — the financial driver for the Pakistan Cricket Board — will have to adapt for its future editions. The last edition, pushed to almost the end of May due to the inability to find a suitable window, as Pakistan hosted the Champions Trophy earlier this year and then the cross-border skirmishes with India, saw half its matches played in conditions detrimental to players' health, according to the Heat Index. Although PSL matches did not fall into the 'danger' category of the index, according to the report, rising global heat will make conditions riskier for players and spectators alike if the country's glitzy T20 extravaganza is held at the same time of the year in the future. Next year's edition of the PSL is likely to run in the same summer months as the league grapples to find a suitable window in a packed calendar. Citing the March 2022 heatwave, the report also warns that returning to the February-March window would become challenging. Not only are temperatures a cause for concern, the changing climate patterns mean winter rains arrive late. Pakistan witnessed several matches of the Champions Trophy — which ended the country's 29-year wait to host an international cricket tournament — washed out. Add to this picture the winter smog that engulfs much of the country's central regions, and there is a narrow window for PSL to work with.

While cricket is the sport most affected by climate change due to the health risks associated with being under the sun for long hours, other sports will be affected too. Rising heat will make high-intensity sports such as hockey and football almost unplayable. At the other end, ice hockey, which has a great following in the northern reaches of the country, is suffering on account of the

thinning ice cover on the frozen lakes that it is played on. Other indigenous sports that are played outdoors will suffer as well. It is time to act quickly because climate change is real. The impact of climate change on sports should be a pressing concern for the government and the sports authorities. Efforts should be made to mitigate its effects, and it is imperative these are made soon.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 23/07/2025)

Climate and poverty

CLIMATE change can no longer be viewed merely as an environmental problem; it is now driving up poverty, a new World Bank report says. It warns that if emissions continue unabated, an additional 43m people could be pushed into extreme poverty by 2050. That figure may even rise to 150m if income inequality also deepens. It is abundantly clear that the world's poorest and least prepared countries will suffer the most. The report discusses two high-emission scenarios. The first — called SSP5 — imagines rapid global economic growth powered by fossil fuels, but with no serious effort to cut emissions. The second, SSP5-RCP8.5, adds the full economic effects of climate change: falling farm yields, lost labour productivity, and slower GDP growth. The difference between the two shows how many more people will fall below the poverty line simply because of climate-induced income losses. Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to carry the heaviest burden. But South Asia, too, will struggle. By 2030, climate change could leave nearly 49m people in the region in extreme poverty — 10m more than under a no-climate-damage scenario. By 2050, South Asia could potentially eliminate extreme poverty. But under the high-emissions scenario, 3.4m people would still be left behind.

Pakistan, with its large rural population, weak safety nets and high exposure to heatwaves, floods and crop failures, is among the most at risk. Already struggling to lift its poorest citizens above the poverty line, it could be pushed further off course unless it adapts fast. This summer, heavy rains have claimed several lives, destroyed homes, displaced families and cut off entire communities. Another intense spell of monsoon rain is now forecast to begin on July 29 — a reminder that the climate crisis continues to unfold. The report also highlights the danger of inequality. Even a modest rise in income inequality could sharply increase poverty rates. In countries like Pakistan, where inequality is already entrenched, the risks are even higher. What can be done? Pakistan must rethink its development planning to prioritise climate resilience. This means better infrastructure, drought-resistant farming, and stronger social protection. If the country fails to act, it may find itself stuck — not just in poverty, but in a vicious cycle where climate change makes people poorer, and poverty makes them more vulnerable to climate shocks. Time is running out.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 28/07/2025)

The plastic problem

PLASTIC waste, produced in large quantities, causes substantial damage to people and the ecosystem. The inauguration of the first Polyethylene Plastic Recycling Plant, in collaboration with a waste management company, at the Garbage Transfer Station of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board in Hyderabad, is a step in the right direction to treat the city's plastic garbage. A part of the World Bank-funded PLEASE project (Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia), the public sector venture will produce manhole covers — frequently stolen by drug addicts — from recycled plastic. The company, with SSWMB, is also searching for a landfill site where, over the next two years, it can establish a plant to generate power from garbage for electricity needs. It aims to create awareness about reducing waste and identifying recyclable items. Currently, as per the project head, out of the 1,100 tonnes of municipal solid waste collection, eight tonnes is polyethylene plastic; 3pc of the latter is being used to manufacture 100 manhole covers for civic bodies.

It is well known that plastic waste poisons entire water bodies, resulting in devastating effects on marine life. The Hyderabad initiative's success should, therefore, be ensured and replicated across the country, particularly in Karachi. The latter has turned into a vast garbage landfill. An earlier endeavour in Punjab of a plastic-infused road was a success. In 2023, Sindh announced the same ambition but it came to naught. As for packaging, utilising reusable plastic, instead of single-use plastic, can conserve resources and reduce waste. While the world searches for a permanent sustainable option, paper, glass and metal are suitable replacements for now. The impact of any material on the environment needs to be monitored to ensure that it does more good than harm. Administrative resolve to tackle socioeconomic and environmental losses must be visible and aggressive.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 04/08/2025)

Pakistan's changing climate

THE ongoing floods paint a stark picture: the traditional monsoon system that has sustained the region for millennia is undergoing dramatic changes. Pakistan is at the epicentre of a climate transformation that is fundamentally altering the nature of monsoon rains and flood patterns across the country. No longer do the monsoons follow predictable patterns, locations, calendar and intensity.

How are the climatic changes redefining Pakistan's flood landscape? To begin with, research reveals that while the intensity of rainfall has increased exponentially, the number of rainy days during the monsoons has decreased. The changing climate is leading to the geographic redistribution of rain. Monsoons have primarily affected the northern mountainous regions. But recent years show a shift, with greater concentration of intense, heavy rainfall events now occurring in the southern provinces.

This trend marks a departure from the norm where the northern areas received the bulk of the monsoon rains. The southward shift alters the level of flood risks and challenges the existing infrastructure, signalling a transformation in how we experience the weather. It threatens the relevance of some of our flood management institutions, policies and approaches.

Researchers have observed that since 2010, temperatures in Pakistan's monsoon belt have increased at the rate of 0.18 degrees Celsius annually. This warming has profound implications, as warmer air can hold significantly more moisture: for every 1°C of temperature increase, the atmosphere's water-holding capacity grows by seven per cent. During the April 2025 heatwave, with temperatures up to 8°C above normal in some places, it translates to a dramatically increased atmospheric moisture capacity, setting the stage for devastating downpours. The intensifying sequence of stronger heatwaves followed by heavy rainfalls has become almost predictable and urgently requires an integrated policy approach.

Climatic changes are redefining the country's flood landscape.

Let's review five major trends in recent years:

Non-riverine flooding: The country faces increasing vulnerability to non-riverine flooding. These floods, caused by intense localised rainfall, strike with little warning and overwhelm encroached waterbodies and drainage systems. Recent examples highlight this threat. In 2020, Karachi experienced its worst flooding [enter link description here](#) in almost a century when 223.5 millimetres of rain fell in a single day. The 2025 monsoon brought similar devastation as Punjab's [Chakwal district](#) received 400mm in just 10 hours. Urban centres like Lahore and Rawalpindi have seen entire streets turn into rivers.

Addressing non-riverine floods needs a multifaceted approach: enhancing [early warning systems](#), upgrading urban drainage infrastructure and bolstering community disaster readiness. Crucially, the National Flood Protection Plan IV (2015-2025) requires comprehensive revisions to fully integrate cutting-edge climate science, including advanced modelling for the increasing intensity and frequency of precipitation events, to effectively manage these emerging non-riverine flood sources.

Cloudbursts: Sudden, intense rainfall over small areas has become frequent. These extreme events, where rain greater than or equal to 100mm falls hourly, can devastate communities within minutes. [Azad Kashmir, KP](#) and [Gilgit-Baltistan](#) have seen a rise in flash floods and landslides, triggered by heatwaves in the upper Indus Basin, as seen in the [Babusar](#) cloudburst this month. However, some officials, rather than addressing the problem of inadequate infrastructure or limited response capacity, erroneously label all heavy rainfall as cloudbursts, as seen in the case of Chakwal and Islamabad's [Saidpur village](#). This mischaracterisation undermines credibility and may impede efforts to introduce risk insurance and risk transfer mechanisms.

Koh-i-Sulaiman: This mountain range, separating parts of Balochistan from KP, Punjab and Sindh, has emerged as a deadly source of flash floods. Intense rainfall generates powerful torrents that race into populated valleys, affecting south Punjab's D.G. Khan and Rajanpur districts. This has led to submerged villages, burst dams and mass displacement, affecting some 700,000 people and inundating over 300,000 acres in D.G. Khan and Rajanpur respectively in 2022. The [2024 torrents](#) recorded flows exceeding 70,000 cusecs. Ironically, these districts offer ideal options to harness floodwaters for nature-based solutions.

Salt Range and barani areas: These areas have seen a notable increase in extreme weather events, including severe floods from intense monsoon rains, frequent heatwaves, hailstorms and occasional higher-elevation snowfall. Together, they underscore growing climate volatility, resulting in greater risks of flash floods, crop losses and community disruptions. While the authorities have responded with emergency measures, local flooding is made worse by the loss of topsoil and the bursting of unregulated private check dams, which damages the ecology.

Urban flooding: Pakistan's haphazardly growing urban sprawl has become particularly vulnerable to new rainfall patterns. Urban flooding has transformed from occasional inconvenience to regular catastrophe. Cities like Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad face severe flooding as drainage systems prove inadequate. The urban heat island effect intensifies rainfall, while rapid urbanisation reduces natural drainage and overwhelms aging infrastructure, often disrupting economic activity.

In all, the changing rainfall patterns alter how water interacts with the landscape. Heat-induced soil hardening reduces infiltration capacity by 40-60pc, meaning intense rains run off the surface rather than being absorbed. This creates a situation where extreme heat events set the stage for more devastating floods. Heavy rainfall also saturates soil, preventing absorption during subsequent storms and compounding flooding during back-to-back rainfall events.

Preparing for the new normal: Pakistan faces a double jeopardy from floods, amplified by heatwaves. Pre-monsoon heatwaves now trigger calamitous non-riverine floods as a first wave, swiftly followed by traditional monsoon riverine floods swollen by upstream heatwaves in India. This paradigm shift creates stark vulnerabilities across all provinces and regions, where some districts face only non-riverine floods while others endure both.

Historically focused on riverine floods, planning must become climate-smart. Non-riverine floods necessitate new strategies: enabling district disaster management authorities to respond promptly, deploying provincial rapid response battalions for cloudburst-triggered flash floods and implementing local, nature-based solutions in places like Koh-i-Sulaiman, the Salt Range and barani areas. The provinces must invest heavily in urban surface run-off and drainage systems. This demands integrating updated climate projections and prioritising multiple flood risks alongside enhancing conventional river flood defences.

(By Ali Tauqeer Sheikh Dawn, 07, 31/07/2025)

Govt 'unprepared' to deal with severe earthquake in Karachi

Sharing concern over the city's [high vulnerability](#) to a major earthquake, which is supported by historical data, experts at a seminar held at Karachi University (KU) on Wednesday regretted that there are no government measures in place to protect Karachi, the country's economic and business hub feeding over 20 million people, from the grave seismic threat.

The cost of this persistent official apathy, they warned, could be very high in terms of both human and property loss. Therefore, they called for strict enforcement of building codes, creating public awareness of the seismic hazard and making emergency drills part of all institutional frameworks.

The event, titled “Recent Earthquakes in Karachi: Causes, Impacts and Mitigations”, was jointly organised by KU’s geology department and the Society of Economic Geologists and Mineral Technologists (SEGMITE) at the university’s auditorium.

According to speakers, the city of Karachi requires immediate special attention, given its close proximity to several seismic fault lines, the junction of three tectonic plates, the Makran subduction zone, the large size of its population and massive unregulated urbanisation.

“Given the historical evidence, including the 8.1 magnitude tsunami of 1945 (that also hit Karachi), resulting in over 4,000 deaths, there is a high vulnerability for a major earthquake,” said Chief Meteorologist Ameer Hyder Leghari, in response to a question.

He also emphasised the need for inter-provincial coordination, considering the fact that a significant part of the country is exposed to high to moderate seismic threat.

“Unfortunately, the role of disaster management is missing. We need to create awareness of seismic hazards as well as carry out emergency drills to prepare the public for natural disasters,” he said.

Giving his presentation on Karachi’s seismic hazard, Moin Raza Khan, former chief executive officer of Pakistan Petroleum Limited, said that the recent 60-plus low-intensity tremors of 1.5 to 3.8 magnitude, caused by fault creep and groundwater-linked stress, were concentrated in the eastern and southeastern areas of the city.

“While they were a blessing in disguise (as they helped release tectonic stress without causing human and property loss), they should serve as a wake-up call,” he said, adding that the Landhi-Korangi fault’s reactivation led to the seismic activity.

The interaction of the Arabian, Eurasian, and Indian plates, he said, originated high-intensity earthquakes. Some of them were very destructive, including the earthquakes which occurred in 1935 (Quetta), 1945 (Makran coast), 2005 (Balakot) and 2013 (Awaran).

According to him, land subsidence in the city, caused by over-extraction of groundwater, deltaic compaction, unregulated mining and high urban load on soft marine sediment, is also inducing seismic activity.

“The total value of the city’s infrastructure at risk of seismic hazard is estimated to be \$50bn. Karachi must prepare for a local rupture of magnitude 5 on the Landhi fault and Makran megathrust of magnitude 8. All scenarios demand strong early warning systems and measures for retrofitting,” he said, adding that Karachi is tectonically active, geotechnically fragile and unregulated in key domains.

Geotechnical engineer Hasan S. Akhtar talked about enhanced structural resistance against seismic forces. He suggested the use of cost-efficient polypropylene fibre, stating that it enhanced seismic resilience in buildings and bridges by improving crack resistance, energy absorption, and structural integrity during earthquakes.

The experts stressed the need to learn from countries like Japan that have successfully minimised building damage during earthquakes, with the help of using the latest technology in construction practices as well as strictly enforcing its building codes.

On this occasion, KU Vice Chancellor Prof Khalid Mahmood Iraqi emphasised that identifying problems alone was not enough as practical steps and policies grounded in local realities were essential.

Senior geophysicist Riaz Hussain Rajpar and Prof Viqar Hussain also spoke.
(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 07/08/2025)

Karachi needs vertical farming for fresh food production, moot told

Former federal minister and prominent scientist Prof Dr Atta-ur-Rahman has emphasised the urgent need to address food insecurity in Pakistan and across the globe.

He asserted that vertical farming and controlled environment agriculture (CEA) offer a feasible and efficient solution for producing fresh food in densely populated cities like Karachi.

“Fresh food production in urban areas such as Karachi, even in limited spaces, is possible through vertical farming and CEA,” he said while speaking at a symposium — Sustainable Agriculture for Food and Nutritional Security under the Climate Change Scenario — held at the L.E.J. National Science Information Center, University of Karachi.

The event was organised by the KU’s International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), in collaboration with the Sindh Innovation, Research, and Education Network (SIREN).

Prof Atta underscored the need for urban food production strategies and highlighted the importance of drought-resistant and climate-resilient crops as essential in combating the global food crisis exacerbated by climate change.

He noted that the global market for drought-resistant and climate-resilient crops is projected to reach \$52 billion by 2032, emphasising their vital role in sustainable agriculture initiatives.

He explained that such crops are often genetically modified to withstand extreme climatic conditions and ensure consistent food production despite environmental stresses.

“Karachi faces water scarcity, heatwaves and erratic weather patterns. Vertical farming presents a powerful and largely untapped opportunity for the city. Rooftops can be effectively used for this kind of agriculture,” he added.

Other notable speakers at the symposium included ICCBS Director Prof Muhammad Raza Shah; Prof Salim Al-Babili, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, Saudi Arabia; Dr Shahid Mansoor, Senior Adviser, ICCBS; and Dr Farooq Ahmed Khan.

Prof Raza Shah thanked the foreign delegates for their participation and expressed hope that the symposium would enhance understanding of how sustainable agriculture can help achieve food and nutritional security in the face of climate change.

He also shared a presentation on the history and development of the ICCBS, noting that the centre has expanded from a single building to 17 facilities, reflecting its growing importance.

Prof Salim Al-Babili gave an insightful lecture on converting plant metabolism research into agricultural solutions. He highlighted the Striga weed problem in Sub-Saharan Africa, which severely affects cereal crops, and discussed emerging solutions to combat it.

He praised the ICCBS for its state-of-the-art research infrastructure and the successful organization of the symposium. Dr Mansoor emphasised that hunger remains one of the deadliest global challenges, surpassing AIDS, Malaria, and Tuberculosis in death toll.

(By Dawn Rerpoter, 16, 08/08/2025)

Climate's human toll

IN Danyor, Gilgit-Baltistan, seven young men were crushed to death under a landslide in the early hours of Monday. They were not engineers or state rescue workers, but local volunteers trying to restore the town's only water supply after floods had destroyed it.

Ordinary citizens were forced to shoulder the burden the government should have carried, ultimately losing their lives. Their sacrifice reminds us of both the human toll of climate change and the cost of official inaction. GB is on the front line of Pakistan's climate emergency. Melting glaciers, unpredictable rains and increasingly destructive flash floods are remaking the region's geography. Since late June, heavy downpours — followed by floods on July 21 in Babusar and the next day in Danyor — have swept away bridges, roads, crops and irrigation systems, cutting off entire valleys and leaving thousands without drinking or irrigation water.

Scientists have long warned that such events will become more frequent and intense. Yet the state's response remains reactive and shallow, defined more by condolence statements than preventive planning. In Danyor, repeated appeals for the restoration of the damaged water channel were met with assurances, not action. When a temporary fix made by locals was washed away, the government still did nothing. Faced with shortages, residents took the risk themselves, working in dangerous conditions — until the earth gave way. The administration arrived only after lives had been lost, with compensation cheques and promises of medical care.

This pattern cannot continue. The government must invest in climate-resilient infrastructure, building effective early-warning systems, and deploying trained disaster-response teams in GB. In the immediate term, it must restore the water supply and repair damaged links before more people are exposed to danger. The people of Danyor stepped forward because the state stepped back. Their courage should not become another statistic in a long list of preventable disasters.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 12/08/2025)

Plastic credit proposal

Pakistan's bold call for a global plastics credit market at the UN plastic treaty negotiations in Geneva merits serious attention from the world. The proposal is modeled on carbon credits — countries get a certain number of credits, and companies must essentially buy these credits if they pollute more than a certain level, with low polluters allowed to sell their excess credits to pay for climate adaptation and other projects.

It is worth noting that wealthy nations consume plastics at rates 20 times higher than developing countries like Pakistan. The per capita plastic consumption in Western Europe is about 150 kg per year, compared to just seven in Pakistan, according to Climate Change Minister Dr Musadik Malik. And even though many plastics are not reliably recyclable, several countries also fool their populations with feel-good recycling programmes which are actually just literal garbage export operations, sending millions of tonnes of plastics and other trash to landfills across the developing world.

A credits system would reward action, not just penalise failure. Countries like Pakistan, India, Nigeria and other low plastic consumers would earn credits for verified progress in recycling, waste collection or prevention. Heavy polluters would not only fund climate adaptation, but also support the development budgets of the worst-affected countries, which could help fill gaps left by the impact of natural disasters.

Many local governments in developed countries that are discouraging the use of consumer plastics, such as shopping bags, by heavily taxing them, are not redirecting these revenues to climate-related policies and are simply diverting them to fill local budget

gaps — an approach that could amount to a form of 'greenwashing', as it is only slightly discouraging plastic use while doing nothing to address the damage already done. A global policy would also make such local plastic taxes more purposeful, as part of the tax revenue would invariably be diverted to pay for credit purchases and, in turn, climate adaptation.
(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 18/08/2025)

Plastic deadlock

AFTER days of negotiations, UN-brokered efforts for agreement on a new plastics treaty collapsed on Friday. The failure of what was meant to be the most important environmental treaty since the Paris Agreement is sad and terrifying, adversely affecting all people and our planet. At the very least, this dismal outcome should spark fresh conversations about plastic production and pollution, including in Pakistan.

The world is now producing 460 million tons of plastic each year (of which only nine per cent is recycled), and the OECD predicts that plastic use will triple by 2060. Calls to cap plastic production were rejected by oil-producing countries that hope to feed the global hunger for plastics (99pc of which are derived from fossil fuels) and reap profits in a world otherwise turning towards renewables and EVs. Other controversial topics included implementation finance for developing countries and more restrictions on the use of chemicals in plastic production.

Pakistan's climate minister reportedly called for developed economies to stop treating countries like Pakistan as "junkyards" for plastic waste, demanding more green financing for emerging economies and proposing plastic credits.

Pakistan must remain a strong voice at international fora focused on environmental issues and climate change. On the same day the plastics treaty hit an impasse, more than 220 people were killed in flash flooding in KP and Gilgit-Baltistan, the latest climate change-related tragedy in our extremely climate-vulnerable country. Lest the link between a flash flood and the collapse of the plastics treaty remain unclear: fossil fuel consumption in the production of plastics exacerbates global climate change, and the resulting frequency and intensity of climate-related natural disasters.

Pakistan is among the 10 largest producers of plastic waste.

But the climate minister's indignation masked the reality of the plastic skeletons in the national closet. Pakistan is among the 10 largest producers of plastic waste, generating 2.6m tons of plastic waste each year. As of 2020, we were using 55 billion single-use plastic bags each year. Pakistan also imports up to 80,000 tons of hazardous waste annually.

According to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-Pakistan), 86pc of our plastic waste is mismanaged (think landfill leaching toxins into groundwater, burning plastic sullyng urban air, beaches littered with plastic bottles, the Indus rushing macro-plastics into the Arabian Sea). Less than 10pc is recycled.

There is also a social cost. Almost half of the waste dumped in the country's landfills is meant to be sorted by informal waste pickers, who are poorly compensated, exposed to hazardous materials and who often include women and children. Their plight sits alongside the broader societal challenges linked to widespread plastic pollution, including severe health implications (disrupted hormonal and reproductive systems, lung disease, cancer, etc) and disruptions to food systems.

Despite all this and our robust participation in the talks, Pakistan is unlikely to give up plastics any time soon, especially considering the economics. In 2020, there were more than 11,000 plastic processing and manufacturing companies in the country, contributing 15pc to GDP as well as 15pc of national tax revenues that year. More than 500,000 workers are directly employed in the plastics manufacturing sector. And with national plastic demand growing by 15pc each year, one can assume these numbers are increasing.

Rather than posture in the hope of attracting green finance, Pakistan needs to seriously rethink its relationship with plastic. On paper, we are headed in the right direction — we joined the World Economic Forum's Global Plastic Action Partnership in 2022 and launched a National Action Roadmap to Reduce Plastic Pollution this year, which commits to reducing mismanaged waste by over 75pc by 2040.

But in the case of plastic pollution, intentions must be judged by actions. For example, repeated efforts to ban single-use plastic bags have faltered due to weak enforce-

ment, a lack of public awareness on the harms of plastic pollution, the fragmentation of plastic policies and legal frameworks at federal and provincial levels, and the paucity of affordable, practical alternatives (admittedly, more recent bans, such as the one in Islamabad, have met with greater success).

Pakistan should go back to basics, ready for a sustainable approach to plastics. To start, we need an approach to waste collection that is consistently applied across the country, including an expansion of collection services and facilities for sorting and treating waste. Then come plans for recycling, disposal, upcycling, zero waste. Our road to less plastic pollution is long, and sadly strewn with PET packaging, plastic bags and bottles.

(By Huma Yusuf Dawn, 07, 18/08/2025)

Floods and failures

The devastation unleashed by flash floods in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa has reached staggering proportions. At least 325 lives have been lost, over 150 remain missing and hundreds more lie injured as the province battles one of the most destructive monsoons

in recent memory. Nationwide, the death toll has climbed to 657 since late June, including 171 children and 94 women - a grim reminder of the sheer human cost of our collective unpreparedness.

The K-P government has announced Rs800 million in relief funds for affected districts and an additional Rs500 million for Buner, one of the worst-hit regions. While such allocations offer some respite, they remain little more than a stopgap move against the magnitude of suffering on the ground. Relief trucks and helicopters have been mobilised, yet vast swathes of the province remain cut off, with communities stranded and vulnerable to further deluges. With two to three more waves of heavy rain forecast in September, the dangers are far from over. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed his cabinet members to personally supervise relief operations, but this belated move highlights a deeper malaise. Year after year, Pakistan finds itself trapped in the same cycle of disaster and damage control. Yet lessons from the catastrophic 2022 floods appear to have been quickly forgotten.

The response must now shift from ad hoc measures to systemic resilience. Emergency funds cannot substitute for disaster-proof infrastructure, nor can helicopters replace the need for climate adaptation strategies in vulnerable regions. K-P, with its mountainous terrain and fragile riverbanks, will continue to suffer unless the state invests in robust early warning systems and better urban planning. Unless disaster preparedness is embedded into policy, the toll of lives and livelihoods will continue to mount each year.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 19/08/2025)

Urdu translation of The Climate of History in a Planetary Age launched

Indian historian Prof Dipesh Chakrabarty on Monday said that climate change was not an important agenda of discussions even at the turn of the century though steps to counter it had been taken a decade earlier.

He was speaking online from Chicago at a session about the Urdu translation of his book, The Climate of History in a Planetary Age.

The event was held at the National Academy of Performing Arts, where Climate Action Center's Imagining Life initiative was launched on Monday.

Prof Chakrabarty mentioned a Harvard professor who wrote about the 20th century but did not mention climate crisis at all in his book.

"It was in 2003 that scientists were thinking that human technological advancement was similar to a meteor that had hit the earth wiping out the entire dinosaur population," he said.

He mentioned the times of his growing up in India where industrialisation was the buzz word and every parent wanted their children to study engineering. He too studied physics, and later did his masters in management sciences. This did not allow him to study history in India for his PhD.

"It was only in Australia that I was allowed to enrol for a PhD program in my subject of interest, history," he said.

This change in his perspective, he said, was because in India, though capitalism was booming, the education system still relied on Marxism to teach history.

He said in 1900, the world population was about 1.5 billion. In 2000, it had grown to roughly six billion, while now it stands at approximately eight billion. The increase in population, he said, meant more demand for everything and that had changed the way food, for example, was acquired using industrial means of production. That, he pointed out, had created a major climate crisis.

Humans, he said, should realise that they were a minority in the world while the microbes were the majority. This minority should not destroy the earth for everybody.

He said the middle-class lifestyle worldwide was responsible for the destruction of global climate.

About the Urdu translation of his book, he said: "It is a great privilege for me to see this book translated into Urdu, the first full translation in a South Asian language spoken across India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. For me, this gesture is more valuable than a big prize, because it represents an act of friendship beyond the boundaries of nation-states."

Later, at a panel discussion, a message from the translator of the book, Ali Siddiqui, was read out, while the reviewer of the book, Tariq bin Azad, read from the translation.

(By Dawn Reporter, 14, 19/08/2025)

A metropolis under water

Heavy rains, described as "unprecedented" by the Met Office, paralysed life in Karachi on Tuesday and submerged many areas mainly due to clogged drains that could not handle the rainwater flow.

The rain also exposed the ill-maintained transmission and distribution system of K-Electric that collapsed with the first drop in the morning, causing hours-long power breakdowns across the city.

The intensity of the rain could be gauged from the fact that the city administration had to close down many underpasses and major thoroughfares for vehicular traffic as cars abandoned by their owners after breaking down were seen floating on the roads.

Almost every city road experienced prolonged traffic jams. Office-goers and students, particularly schoolchildren, were among those who suffered the most, having to wade through waist-deep flooded roads and streets to reach home.

Also, the provincial government has announced a public holiday in Karachi on Wednesday (today).

According to the Met Office, intermittent rains / thunderstorms are expected in Karachi over the next two days (Wednesday and Thursday) under the influence of strong monsoon currents penetrating from the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal.

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah advised citizens to keep a safe distance from electric poles and fragile infrastructure to ensure their safety.

Six die in rain-related incidents

Six people, including three children, were killed in rain-related accidents in different parts of the city on Tuesday, officials said.

Five of them died in house and wall collapse incidents, while the sixth person died from electrocution.

According to rescue services officials, four people of a family, including two children, died and one was injured when a house collapsed due to heavy rains, which had weakened the structure in Gulistan-i-Jauhar on Tuesday afternoon.



Rescue 1122 spokesperson Hassaan Ul Haseeb Khan told Dawn that the walls of a house in Block-12 collapsed due to heavy rainfall, trapping five family members under the debris. He said the Rescue's Urban Search and Rescue Team, along with an ambulance and a rescue vehicle, arrived at the scene and retrieved all five individuals. Unfortunately, three died on the spot while the fourth succumbed to injuries during treatment. The fifth victim, a child, was admitted to a hospital for treatment.

All the victims belonged to the same family. They were identified as Maryam Afzal, 4; Hamza Afzal, 3; Sumia Mubeen, 24; and an unidentified 28-year-old woman. The injured child is around 10 years old.

In another incident, an eight-year-old child died when a wall of a house collapsed due to heavy rains in Orangi Town. The official said the house wall fell near Khalil Market. The Rescue 1122 team rushed to the scene and recovered the body of the boy, identified as Abdullah Abbas. He was shifted to the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital (ASH).

In North Karachi, a man was electrocuted. The official said the victim died after receiving an electric shock. His body was shifted to the ASH for medico-legal formalities.

Rain data

According to the Met department's data, the maximum rainfall was recorded in Gulshan-i-Hadeed, 170mm, or 6.69 inches, followed by Airport old area 158.5mm, Jinnah Terminal 153mm, Nazimabad 150mm, Surjani Town 145.2mm, North Karachi 144mm, Keamari and Saadi Town 140mm each, DHA Phase VII 134mm, Met Office University Road 133mm, Korangi 132.2mm, PAF Faisal Base 128mm, Gulshan-i-Maymar 98mm, PAF Masroor Base 87mm and Orangi Town 66.2mm.

It warned of urban flooding in low-lying areas of Karachi and other parts of the province.

"Public, travellers and tourists are advised to avoid unnecessary exposure to vulnerable areas to prevent any untoward situation and remain updated with the latest weather conditions," it added.

The domestic and international flight operations at Karachi airport was also affected badly.

The Pakistan Aviation Authority (PAA) confirmed that several flights were either delayed, cancelled or diverted to alternative airport due to inclement weather.

Power outages add to rain woes

The widespread power outages added to the woes of Karachiites, who struggled to cope with heavy rainfall and urban flooding.

The power disruption also severely affected the water supply for citizens who rely on suction pumps due to the very low water pressure.

According to a K-Electric statement, around 800 feeders, out of over 2,100, faced outage during the peak of the rain spell. "However, KE teams remained deployed, prioritising restoration work as soon as conditions permitted. Key infrastructure, including power plants and grid stations, continued to function normally," the statement added.

It said that restoration efforts continued undeterred despite significant waterlogging and congestion. Areas with high levels of stagnant water, particularly in low-lying zones, were particularly affected due to restricted access and safety risks for residents and field teams.

Karachi returns to normalcy, claims KMC

A Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) statement said that although heavy rainfall resulted in a situation of urban flooding, Karachi returned to normalcy following the timely measures and directives issued by Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab.

Under the mayor's instructions, the Municipal Services Department remained vigilant with its drain cleaning operations across the city.

"As a result, major roads, including Sharea Faisal, Submarine Underpass, KPT Underpass, Mehran Underpass, Schon Circle Underpass, Clifton Underpass, and Drigh Road Underpass, were swiftly cleared and reopened for smooth traffic flow," it added.

Throughout the day, the mayor personally visited various parts of the city and inspected major storm water drains and monitored the drainage operations to ensure uninterrupted flow and proper disposal of rainwater. At a chocking point on Sharea Faisal, the mayor himself supervised the cleaning work for over three hours, it added.

Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah also paid a visit to different areas of the metropolis to inspect the drainage work.

He advised the citizens to stay home and said that he announced a holiday in view of their safety.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 20/08/2025)

Karachi goes underwater

Southern parts of the country, including Karachi, that had until now dodged the worst of the monsoon downpours were on Tuesday battered by heavy rains that played havoc with the provincial metropolis, killing at least eight people, flooding all key roads, submerging underpasses and paralysing all segments of life.

The rain, which began in the first half of the day, continued, with only a short lull, until after sunset.

As the traffic system collapsed, drainage lines buckled and power supply snapped under the strain, Karachi's rickety infrastructure seemed to come apart at the seams.

At least eight people lost their lives in rain-related incidents, including electrocution and the collapse of concrete structures. As Karachi's ageing pipes and sewerage system fought a losing battle against the deluge, rush hour commuters were left stranded in rising waters and several neighbourhoods were plunged into darkness.

The rain was expected to continue until Saturday, and "another spell is to start by the end of the month", said NDMA Chairman Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik.

According to the Met Office, as of 8pm, Saadi Town recorded the highest rainfall at 176 millimetres, followed by Gulshan-i-Hadeed at 173mm, Airport Old Area 158.7mm, Jinnah Terminal 152.8mm, Nazimabad 149.6mm, Surjani Town 145.2mm, Keamari 140mm, Defence Housing Authority Phase VII 134mm, University Road 133mm, PAF Base Faisal 128mm, North Karachi 108.4mm, Korangi 132.2mm, Gulshan-i-Maymar 98mm, PAF Masroor Base 87mm, Orangi Town 66.2mm and Bahria Town 4.8mm.

Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah announced a public holiday for all provincial government, semi-government, autonomous and private institutions in the province on Wednesday (today). Schools will also remain closed, he added. However, he noted that all essential services and civic institutions would remain open.

The situation also prompted telephonic contact between the Sindh chief minister and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who discussed the aftermath of the rains and reviewed relief measures.

Balochistan

Meanwhile, it has also been raining in 15 districts of Balochistan, and the main highway connecting the province with Sindh has been blocked for heavy vehicles, said provincial disaster official Muhammad Younis.

Between 40 and 50 houses have been damaged in two districts, he added.

Forecast

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast torrential rains in Sindh and parts of Balochistan over the coming days, warning of potential urban flooding, flash floods and damage to infrastructure.

According to the Met Office, strong monsoon currents from the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal are continuously penetrating the country, particularly affecting southern regions.

In Sindh, widespread rain, wind and thundershowers with heavy to very heavy falls are expected in Mithi, Tharparkar, Umerkot, Mirpurkhas, Hyderabad, Shaheed Benazirabad, Karachi, Thatta, Badin, Sajawal, Tando Allahyar, Tando Muhammad Khan, Sanghar and Jamshoro. Rainfall is also likely at scattered places in Sukkur, Larkana, Khairpur and Jacobabad from August 19 to 22 with occasional breaks.

In Balochistan, rain, wind and thundershowers with scattered heavy falls are likely in Barkhan, Musakhel, Loralai, Sibbi, Zhob, Qilla Saifullah, Khuzdar, Lasbela, Awaran, Kech, Gwadar and Panjgur during the same period.

Meanwhile, subdued rain and thundershowers are expected in parts of Islamabad, Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, northern Punjab (including Rawalpindi, Murree, Gujranwala, Sialkot and Lahore), southern Punjab (including Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan and Rajanpur), and various districts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa from August 19 to 22.

The PMD has cautioned that torrential rains may cause urban flooding in low-lying areas of Sindh, including Karachi, Hyderabad, Badin, Sajawal and adjoining districts. In Balochistan, heavy downpours could trigger flash floods in northern and southeastern regions.

Strong winds, heavy rainfall and lightning may damage weak structures, including rooftops of vulnerable mud-brick house, electric poles, billboards, vehicles and solar panels. The department advised the public, travellers and tourists to remain cautious, avoid unnecessary exposure to vulnerable areas and stay updated with the latest weather alerts.

Authorities concerned have been urged to stay on high alert and take precautionary measures to prevent any untoward situation. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 01, 20/08/2025)

Monsoon paralysis

Despite repeated forecasts and advance warnings of heavy rainfall, it took only a single day of heavy showers to bring Karachi to its knees. And almost immediately after the skies opened on Tuesday, much of the city went without electricity, reminding the citizens of Karachi that rain in their long-ignored abode is a terrifying curse rather than a gracious blessing.

The relief of cool weather after weeks of scorching heat was swiftly overshadowed by crippling disruptions. Pothole-ridden roads, already symbols of neglect, turned into water-filled traps, halting traffic and stranding citizens for hours. The Karachi Traffic Police, in issuing routine advisories about slowing down and maintaining safe distance, did little to address the larger reality: the city simply does not have the infrastructure to withstand moderate to heavy rainfall, let alone the urban flooding predicted in the coming days. This paralysis is not for lack of forewarning.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department had cautioned against intense monsoon currents, urban flooding and risks to life well in advance. The city administration too, under Mayor Murtaza Wahab, declared a rain emergency and mobilised staff from essential departments. Yet, the scenes on the ground revealed a familiar story of unpreparedness and fragile resilience. Karachi is no stranger to monsoon chaos. Each year, the same cycle repeats. Yet basic systems remain woefully inadequate.

It is unacceptable that a city of over 20 million people and the country's financial and industrial hub should crumble under the weight of a few hours of rain. The lessons have been there for years, but the will to implement sustainable solutions — from overhauling the drainage system to strengthening power infrastructure — has been missing. Karachi deserves more than knee-jerk responses that are resorted to every monsoon. (By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 20/08/2025)

Floods and politics

THERE is no room left now to turn rain-related catastrophes into a political whipping spectacle.

This summer, three provinces controlled by the three major political parties have borne the brunt of a major rain-related emergency, and none is in a position to accuse the other of not having done enough to prepare their province for the calamity.

The clear fact is that Pakistan is facing accelerating climate change impacts and needs to think outside of conventional frameworks in order to build resilience and preparedness. The monsoon is intensifying, glaciers are melting, near catastrophic heatwaves are becoming more and more frequent. This is not political theatre. It is a dire and urgent new reality opening up before us with rising ferocity. The first thing to shed is the reflex to politicise these catastrophes, because that literally does nothing to help.

The three governments — in KP, Punjab and Sindh — have just faced unusually strong rain events. But notice how turning these calamities into opportunities for political point-scoring has backfired spectacularly. When Punjab was inundated in July, for instance, the PTI lawmakers in the provincial assembly held what they called a 'people's assembly' outside the building in protest against the suspension of their colleagues. So far so good. Politics and theatre are cousins after all.

But some among them took the opportunity to skewer the provincial government for the rain-related devastation in the province. Three among them were named in a report carried by this newspaper, and their criticism of the government of Maryam Nawaz took aim at the floods caused by the rains. Crops and farmland were destroyed, they shouted, homes caved in, and "development projects" showcased by the Punjab government were "washed away". Yet the government "remains indifferent", according to the report.

There is much that each provincial government needs to do to increase preparedness for the natural disasters hitting the country.

The need and desire of the opposition to protest stridently in Punjab is understandable, given the suspensions that their colleagues have been served. Those that kept the focus on the politics of suppression their party is facing had a clear message. But those that veered and tried to use a natural calamity for political point-scoring were in for a nasty surprise only a few days later when the province run by their own party — KP — was hit by an even larger rain-related calamity.

All the criticism they had levelled at the Punjab government was now washed away as the devastation in KP was larger by order of magnitude to what Punjab had seen. If we keep only a political lens when viewing these disasters, who do we blame for the devastation in KP?

Pretty soon, officials from both provinces were bickering over the meaning of the word 'cloudburst'. Both provinces had ascribed their devastation to a 'cloudburst'. In Punjab, they pointed to Chakwal, and in KP, they said Buner had seen a 'cloudburst'. Then the Met Office weighed in, reminding both that the word 'cloudburst' refers to a very specific event and no such event had been seen in Chakwal or Buner, and urged them both to refrain from using this word to describe the cause of their respective devastation.

Why this insistence on 'cloudburst'? Because cloudbursts are nearly impossible to forecast, and attributing rain disaster to them gets officialdom off the hook for having been unprepared. This is why it is now almost routine for provincial governments to use this word when explaining rain-related calamities in their province.

At the time of writing, Karachi is bracing for a second round of intense rain; the first left the city flooded on Tuesday, following more than 200mm of rain in a 12-hour period. The flooding was bad, but the drainage was better. I'm old enough to remember when smaller rain events in 1991 or 2006 left the city flooded for days on end. This time, as in 2020 or 2022, they cleared it within hours. So far, so good.

But the question remains: what prevents faster real-time drainage to keep flooding from become as dire as it does in the first place? The foremost expert on the disaster that is Karachi's urban planning, Arif Hasan, has a good interview with that intrepid podcaster Shehzad Ghias in which he explains how overdevelopment on three main drainage channels is a major contributor to the flooding.

There is much that each provincial government needs to do to increase preparedness for these disasters that are hitting the country with growing intensity and frequency. And it all begins with superior weather forecasting capabilities. Without this, we are flying blind into a storm.

A former chief meteorologist of the country has an important contribution here. In a report in this paper, he is quoted as saying that Pakistan has 85 automatic weather stations around the country to cover more than 700,000 square kilometres of its land mass.

According to the World Meteorological Organisation guidelines, there should be one for every 100 square kilometres of flat terrain, and 50 sq km of hilly terrain. This means we are short by factors of thousands in terms of our ability to monitor threats emanating from the weather.

With this critical weakness we will forever fumble in the dark as the weather turns increasingly hostile. And the resultant calamities will forever be sublimated only through political blaming and point-scoring, getting us nowhere.

A warning sign came around a decade ago when Pakistan experienced five massive floods in five years. Once more, nature is warning that politics alone will not save us.

Three floods in one summer in three provinces controlled by each major political party is a clear enough sign that scoring political points in the middle of natural calamities is the lowest form of politics in the country today. Those who engage in this behaviour are the same as those who in years past tried to score political points via fuel price hikes or exchange rate adjustments. It is time to grow up.

(By Khurram Husain Dawn, 06, 21/08/2025)

Death toll from rain-related rises to 13

At least 13 people, including women and children, lost their lives in various rain-related incidents across Karachi on Tuesday and Wednesday as the city was battered by heavy downpours. The fatalities occurred in wall collapses, electrocution, and drowning incidents reported in different neighborhoods.

Two children drowned on Wednesday in the nullah near Al-Asif Square near Sohrab Goth and in the C-1 Area drain of Liaquatabad.

Edhi Maritime Services teams launched rescue operations at both sites but were forced to suspend efforts at nightfall. According to Edhi officials, the search for the missing children will resume Thursday morning.

Body of an unidentified 65-year-old man was recovered from a ditch filled with rainwater near New Sabzi Mandi on the Super Highway. The elderly person had apparently slipped into water in the dark.

Moreover, body of a 15-year-old boy was found in a water-filled depression near Northern Bypass, Gulshan-e-Maymar. Police are searching for his heirs.

Body of a man, who had drowned in an open drain near Guru Mandir on Tuesday night, was retrieved by the rescue volunteers on Wednesday. The body was shifted to the Civil Hospital where the deceased was identified as 50-year-old Muhammad Abbas, son of Muhammad Mohsin.

Abbas, his son and another man, were walking home during the heavy rain along the roadside in knee-deep water at around 10pm on Tuesday, when suddenly they fell into an uncovered drain. People nearby managed to pull two of them out immediately, but Abbas went missing.

Rescue teams continued the search and recovered the body late in the night. The deceased was a resident of Soldier Bazaar. Police completed legal formalities and handed over the body to the family.

Wall collapse

A private school's wall collapsed onto jhuggis in Gulistan-e-Jauhar Block 13, killing two women and two children on the spot and injuring several others. Later, a three-year-old girl succumbed to her injuries during treatment, raising the death toll in the incident to five. Among the victims were a mother and her two children.

According to Shahrea Faisal SHO Iftikhar Arain, the deceased included 25-year-old Kausar Afzal and her children three-year-old Hamza and four-year-old Maryam and 28-year-old Samina Mubeen. On Wednesday, the death toll rose to five after a critically injured three-year-old girl, Samira, succumbed to her injuries during treatment. In another incident, an eight-year-old boy, Abdullah, was killed when a house wall collapsed in Orangi Town's Sector 11½.

Electrocution

Cases of electrocution also claimed lives in multiple areas: a 24-year-old youth was electrocuted during Tuesday's rain in DHA phase VI. The victim remains unidentified, said Darakhshan police station SHO Shahid Taj.

Another 24-year-old man identified as Saad Ali suffered fatal electric shock near PAF Base Shahrea Faisal. Separately, 65-year-old Muhammad Ishaq died of electric shock at his home in North Karachi. Additionally, 18-year-old Yasir died near the Defence Gizri Bridge where a live wire had fallen onto the road. Yasir, was walking along the road when the snapped wire lying under water gave him a fatal shock. He died on the spot. His body was shifted to Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Hospital. Police, after completing legal formalities, handed over the body to the family.
(By Munawar Khan The Express Tribune, 04, 21/08/2025)

City wakes up to 'new normal' after the storm

Numb, aching and wet, Malik Zafar, was among hundreds of people who greeted Wednesday's dawn stranded in their cars on Sharea Faisal waiting to be rescued after Tuesday's downpour.

Continuous rainfall in the city left roads inundated, vehicles stranded, and communication systems disrupted, turning the situation into a harrowing ordeal for citizens. Many residents spent the night on Sharea Faisal and other major roads. The government authorities failed to provide any help to the citizens and only announced that the situation was under control across the metropolis, affected commuters told The Express Tribune during a survey on Wednesday.

Working women were among the hardest hit, with hundreds forced to walk for hours to reach their homes.

Talking to The Express Tribune, Malik Zafar, a resident of Nazimabad employed at a private firm in Shireen Jinnah Colony, said he left early due to rain but his car broke down on Sharea Faisal after water entered the engine. "I was in my car trapped in rain water for hours. Hundreds of other vehicles around me were also stuck in the rainwater for engine failures. Communication was disrupted and there was no way to inform the family about where me and other stranded people were. Many people abandoned their vehicles and walked home, but I spent the entire night on Sharea Faisal until cranes and mechanics came to clear the road," he recalled. He suggested, if the government cannot implement practical emergency measures, it should at least announce holidays in advance of bad weather.

Javed Qureshi, who works at a private office on II Chundrigar Road, said he was unable to find transport to go home in Malir. "I walked up to the Metropole roundabout, and then went back to my office where me and many others spent the night without food and drinking water."

Tanam Naz, a Punjab Colony resident works in an office in Saddar, said she attempted to walk home but was forced to stay at her sister's residence in Golimar after several hours of struggling through waterlogged streets. "The city's infrastructure has collapsed; how can working women be expected to commute under such conditions?" she questioned.

Sultana Kosar, an employee of a Korangi-based company, said that eight women travelling together in a private van were stranded when their vehicle broke down near the National Stadium. "We had no food, no water, and no help from the local administration. It was a frightening experience to walk in groups for hours through flooded streets," she recalled.

Highlighting the plight of working women, Zahra Khan, Secretary General of the Home-Based Workers Welfare Federation, said, Karachi's population exceeds 30 million, with an estimated 500,000 women employed across various sectors, with 70 per cent of them being labourers. "Hundreds of women had to walk home late at night, while others stayed with relatives. Employers must provide transport and shelter facilities for women workers during harsh weather conditions," she stressed.
(By Amir Khan, The Express Tribune, 04, 21/08/2025)

CM orders restoration of 150-year-old tree uprooted during rains

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has directed the restoration of a 150-year-old banyan tree at Qasr-i-Naz, which collapsed due to heavy rains and strong winds.



premises of the Sindh High Court.

The chief minister has instructed the secretary of the forest department to immediately begin restoration work. Chief Conservator Javed Mahar, along with his team, will oversee the revival of the tree, said a press release issued here on Saturday.

CM Shah said centuries-old trees are not only cultural heritage but also vital for protecting the environment.

"In the era of climate change, every plant has immense importance," he said, adding that the banyan tree is also known as the 'Tree of Life'.

He recalled that the forest department had earlier restored another historic tree in 2021, which had fallen during heavy rains on the

The CM reaffirmed that the provincial government was committed to preserving and reviving ancient trees as part of its efforts to safeguard the environment and promote sustainability.

(By Dawn Reporter, 13, 24/08/2025)

From celebration to fear: How monsoons now haunt Tharparkar

The desert region of Tharparkar, where rainfall was once celebrated as a blessing, has in recent years turned into a land of fear and tragedy. For generations, the monsoon was welcomed with folk songs, dances, children playing on sand dunes and peacocks spreading their feathers. But now, whenever clouds gather over the arid land, villagers rush indoors, farmers abandon their fields, and whispered prayers ask that the lightning may spare them.

According to official data from the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), more than 350 people have lost their lives in lightning strikes across Tharparkar since 2018, while thousands have been injured. The desert has also seen the death of thousands of livestock, including goats, sheep, cows, buffalo and camels.

Between 2023 and 2025 alone, 60 people were killed, over 50 injured and more than 1,600 animals perished. Officials concede that the actual figures are likely to be much higher, as many incidents in remote pastures and forests are never reported.

The tragedies have been numerous and devastating. Two years ago, six young Hindu devotees walking to the annual Dada Parbrahm fair near Mithi were struck by lightning and died. Last year, an entire family in the village of Akro near Nagarparkar was wiped out in a single strike. And just last week, four more people were killed in Kloi, Modasio and nearby villages, while days earlier a motorcyclist lost his life after being hit on the road in Nagarparkar.

'Coal projects destabilise Thar's climate'

Local journalists and activists say such incidents were rare in the past but have risen sharply since 2018–19.

Senior journalist and activist Khatuo Jani told *Dawn* that the expansion of coal projects has disturbed Thar's fragile environment.

"The open-pit mining in Blocks I and II, the heavy chimneys of coal-fired power plants run by Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company, and the gases they release have polluted the air and destabilised the climate. Lightning incidents were once rare in villages, now they are frequent and deadly. Once rain was joy, now it is pain, fear and even death," he said.

He added that although the Climate Hit Act of 1958 provides for compensation of Rs200,000 to Rs500,000 for victims, no families in Thar have received support for their losses. He further pointed out that a team from Mehran University had visited the area but avoided examining the mining and power plant sites.

"Both Block I and Block II projects generate billions, yet their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives have failed to address this crisis. Coal royalties and CSR budgets exist, but they are not being spent on protecting communities," Mr Jani said.

According to him, the Thar Foundation should be using CSR allocations for installing earthing systems, early-warning mechanisms, awareness campaigns and community-level rescue training, but nothing meaningful has been done. "Billions flow into Thar in the name of coal, but the poor remain unprotected while human lives and livestock are lost every monsoon," he added.

Civil society groups have also raised an alarm. Comrade Nand Lal Malhi, chairman of the Thar Action Forum, said that during the current monsoon alone lightning has struck more than 10 places, killing three people and hundreds of animals. He recalled that in 2023 a conference held in Mithi had urged the Sindh government and environmental authorities to install lightning arresters across Thar's 2,500 villages.

"Two years have passed and no action has been taken. If such measures had been implemented, we would not be facing losses on this scale today," he said, urging the provincial government to use coal royalties and CSR funds if budgetary resources were insufficient.

Aijaz Bajir, media coordinator of the Thar Citizen Forum, said that most incidents are occurring around Coal Block II, where mining and power projects release large volumes of gases into the atmosphere.

“The District Council had even written to Mehran University’s vice chancellor requesting research, but no meaningful study has been carried out. Companies working here are earning billions yet have not bothered to investigate this growing disaster,” he said.

Expert calls for installation of earthing rods

Experts, too, believe climate change is a major factor. Dr Riaz Din, associate professor of Electrical Engineering at NED University, explained that lightning is a common global phenomenon but has intensified in recent years.

“In the United States, some 250 million lightning strikes occur annually, causing around \$2 billion in damage. But in Thar, an open desert with little awareness or protection, the consequences are devastating,” he said, stressing that installing earthing rods could greatly reduce casualties and protect livestock.

Civil society organisations have attempted small interventions. Ali Akbar Rahimoon, CEO of Aware Organisation, said his organisation had installed simple earthing rods in ten villages near Chachro.

“Since then, no major damage has occurred in those villages. The current from strikes is diverted safely into the ground. But in areas without such rods, people live in constant fear, farmers abandon their fields and rush home as soon as thunder begins,” he said and urged the Sindh government, PDMA and DDMA to extend the initiative across the desert and introduce modern early-warning systems.

Residents, meanwhile, accuse their lawmakers and local government of indifference. Billions are spent on Annual Development Programme (ADP) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) budgets, but nothing is done to protect them from lightning,” said villagers in Nagarparkar.

They demanded that upcoming budgets allocate resources for lightning arresters in every town and village, so that no more human lives and livestock are lost.

‘No scientific link between coal mining and lightning strikes’

When contacted, Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) and Thar Foundation said in a statement that the meteorological department had conducted research and concluded that there was no scientific link between coal mining in Thar and the rising number of lightning strikes in the desert.

It said officials underscored this position during Sindh Energy Minister Nasir Hussain Shah’s recent visit to Tharparkar, where concerns had been raised by local groups about possible connections between mining activity and extreme weather events.

International studies, including research from China, also suggest that while climate change is intensifying lightning incidents worldwide, no direct correlation has been established with coal mining operations.

“The Thar coal projects contribute to Sindh’s economy through royalty payments made to the provincial government. In addition, the Thar Foundation — established to support the desert region — channels its own CSR funds into programmes aimed at uplifting local communities.

These initiatives include healthcare, education, livelihood generation, women’s empowerment, and other development projects,” the statement concluded.

(By Imtiaz Dharani Dawn, 13, 24/08/2025)

Climate-hit cotton crop

The nation’s cotton output has shown a worrying decline over the past year, and that is without even accounting for the impact of recent floods. Recent data from the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) indicates a precipitous 17% decline in cotton arrivals, and even Punjab, which had been slightly outpacing its performance year-on-year, is now showing a decline of 6%.

Erratic weather patterns have devastated crops in some areas. This season’s cotton crops have been assailed by a vicious combination of extreme heatwaves and torrential monsoon rains. Prolonged high temperatures scorched cotton buds and hindered plant growth, while intense rainfall led to waterlogged fields, leaching the soil of nutrients and creating conditions ripe for several pests. These conditions decimated both the quantity and quality of the yield, according to industry experts.

But beyond the onslaught of bad weather, policy failures have also been factored into the poor performance. Industry experts have said climate volatility was exacerbated by policy missteps, including new taxes on ginning and inadequate subsidies for seeds, which slowed down ginning and discouraged farmers. While the taxes have since been rolled back, it will take several weeks for the impact of the decision to be felt.

It is also worth noting that there is a wide gap between the figures released by PCGA and those by the official Punjab Crop Reporting Service, which claims cotton production in Punjab reached 809,000 bales by August 14 — more than twice of what the industry group recorded. While small variance is understandable due to differences in data collection methods, a gap as large as this raises eyebrows over the quality of data being used by the government and industry to formulate policies that affect the entire country, lest we forget that cotton and textiles account for over 60% of exports.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 25/08/2025)

150-year-old banyan tree restored at Qasr-e-Naz in Karachi



A 150-year-old banyan tree at Qasr-e-Naz on Club Road, which had collapsed during the recent monsoon rains and strong winds, has been successfully restored and replanted through a joint effort of the Sindh Forest Department and Sindh Wildlife officials. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah hailed the restoration as “a vital step in environmental protection” and “a living symbol connecting past and present.”

The rescue and rehabilitation process lasted nearly 10 hours over two days, involving heavy machinery, cranes, and the use of special biological treatments. According to Chief Conservator Javed Mahar, the tree's roots had been damaged due to water scarcity, fungus, and termite attacks. Instead of cutting it down, experts decided to carefully replant and revive the historic tree at a nearby suitable location.



During the operation, surrounding neem and kachnar trees were also relocated to safer spots. Deputy Conservator Sindh Wildlife, Mumtaz Soomro, said the banyan was not merely a tree but an “ecological heritage.” He noted that while fallen trees are often cut and discarded, their preservation can play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance.

The chief minister praised the efforts of the forest and wildlife teams, stating that the initiative was not only about saving a tree but about protecting history, biodiversity, and ensuring a greener, healthier future for the coming generations. He urged youth to recognize the importance of historic trees as “living symbols of heritage and environmental resilience.”

Qasr-e-Naz is a government-owned guest lodge situated in the Civil Lines area of Karachi. It primarily serves as accommodation for federal and provincial government officers and parliamentarians during official visits.

The facility spans approximately 2.6 acres, with about 0.92 acres of built-up area comprising 64 single rooms and 37 family suites, and the rest serving as open land.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 26/08/2025)

Climate priorities

THE monsoons came earlier this year. But they were not unexpected.

The very people who had been warning us of a terrible summer with its punishing heat had also cautioned that the rains would come early and would come down hard. And yet, the country continued to be distracted by the usual business of politics.

It is no wonder then that the ferocity of the rains took most of us by surprise in the mountains, in the plains and in the cities — both those we claim are well run and those where the governance crisis is so severe that we discuss it ad infinitum.

Partisan views aside, there is little evidence anywhere of any of the governments — provincial or federal — being prepared to deal with the rage of climate change. In fact, in most places, when nature spins out of control, it is helped in its destruction by the mistakes of governance.

The mistakes have not been addressed even though it has been three years since the super floods of 2022. The havoc that the deluge caused should have convinced us to change our errant ways. But it seems that it has not.

The rains, their pattern, the rising temperatures, even the pollution in winters — how often has everyone been warning about them and about what some of these factors mean for our mountains and glaciers? But governments are said to have encouraged or turned a blind eye to those wielding the axe. According to those who keep an eye on the issue, the rate of deforestation has a direct link with the damage caused in the northern parts of the country.

The mistakes have not been addressed even three years after the super floods of 2022.

Even after the devastation, there is not much discussion of what needs to change. Judging from the actions of those in power to most of the reporting on the issue, there is little effort to understand what has happened. Had it not been for the footage on social media, I doubt most of us would even know about the level of destruction.

Indeed, our reporting and the ensuing discussion are about some missing technology — the early warning system — which got stuck in bureaucratic red tape. That is a story which appeals to us far more than the cutting down of trees in the north.

But I would be wrong to say that this is the only preferred topic. Encroachments are another favourite subject. The encroachments on riverbeds have been a recurring theme since the 2010 floods but neither the people, who have to pay to reconstruct the ‘encroachments’ again and again, or the government, which has to help the people pick up the pieces, makes any difference to the policies or administrations that allow this. Come the next floods, and the hotels by the river will still be there.

Sadly, despite this scenario, prime ministers and chief ministers will only talk about this. Shehbaz Sharif, who mentioned it during [his trip](#) to the affected areas up north recently, is no different.

If I make a guess, then encroachments and their removal tend to be a comfortable subject for most of our ruling elite, regardless of party or province. It is somehow linked with their idea of good governance — for instance, bigger, wider roads for cars or the space to build automobiles, as well as their discomfort perhaps with shabby buildings or carts owned by the poor. And because it is easy to implement their words in the case of poor segments, it's a comforting promise to make.

The idea or notion of encroachments is complex and can also refer to the overreach of the rich, which is easily ignored. Rarely do we refer to the upmarket housing societies built on prime agricultural land as encroachments, or even to expensive homes whose construction involves covering water channels or altering the level of the riverbed.

Indeed, nearly every year, [Islamabad](#) is witness to chaos as rainwater makes its way through land where its path has been blocked or narrowed. And yet, the conversation about encroachments for us begins and ends with images of a shoddy hotel falling into a river in the north of the country. Or the cart of the poor person or the shantytowns where migrants live. But be it the environment or security, only some of these 'encroachments' are tackled.

All of this happens because none of us want to accept that a large part of this environmental disaster is caused by our development model — be it in the cities or the mountains.

A development model which thinks construction is progress — be it the hotels in the north or big interchanges, wide roads in the middle of cities or sprawling housing societies on their outskirts. Indeed, other than Karachi, no city in Pakistan is trying to [encourage vertical growth](#); it's far easier to allow property developers to cut down trees, take over agricultural land and build housing societies on it.

Of course, all of this is connected to Pakistan's [population explosion](#). And this is a topic that we just can't be bothered to discuss — ever.

All of this *ronadhona* (and it is little else than lamenting) might sound familiar to regular readers (if there are any) of this space. But it is hard to avoid this as the environmental crisis grows with every passing season and every passing year. In the meantime, it appears hopeful that unlike three years ago, the entire focus of our ruling elite is not to speak of climate justice and ask the world for money to fix this.

Though only time will tell if this relative silence means they are ready to take some responsibility or not — responsibility which moves beyond announcing compensation and then providing it to some extent.

(By Arifa Noor Dawn, 06, 26/08/2025)

Rivers in the sky

MANY monsoons back, in a small remote village there was an old widow who had tied a small cloth pouch to the crook of her walking stick. Inside the pouch were her house keys, a pair of reading glasses, and a tiny whistle. "In an earthquake, the ground dances and everything hides from you," she would say.

With the pouch on her stick, she knew she could stumble outside, unlock a gate, or call for help. Her mud house was built well away from the path of the frequently overflowing stream. Her monsoon preparedness included placing the most precious items — her pension book, ID card and a handful of old black-and-white photos inside a battered steel trunk that rested on bricks many feet above the ground. She survived numerous storms and earthquakes — for she knew that prevention was better than cure.

Pakistan ignored the 'preventive' wisdom of this one-person disaster management authority. Instead, it created a gigantic organisation with 250 employees, an annual running cost of Rs362 million, and an additional Rs8 billion earmarked for procurement of equipment. Despite all this, we lost over 670 lives, hundreds of cattle, thousands of homes and millions in properties in the recent monsoon deluge.

The first priority of all authorities, bureaus and commissions is to protect their own selves and not the public at large. Hence, they focus on enhancing the size of their own budgets, number of employees, seminars conducted, visits made to foreign countries, annual reports and presentations given before VIPs.

The rivers in the sky obey only the laws of physics. Their course is not altered by our finger-pointing at incompetent leaders or blaming distant global carbon emissions. On the contrary, the rivers are enraged when they encounter crumbling embankments or dwellings that obstruct their natural flow. They love to balance the scales of justice by destroying the illegally constructed encroachments of the rich and powerful — built in connivance with the greasy palms of numerous government officials. They are also equally happy to demolish the deforested mountains whose timber has been recklessly stolen by mafias and whose core has been sucked out by illegal mining.

Disaster management is not about waiting for disasters.

Why must citizens bear the burden of our ceremonial 'disaster management organisations' whose role seems limited to issuing warnings and alerts? Is it not their job to enforce zoning laws to prevent settlements on riverbeds, nullahs and steep mountain slopes prone to flash floods? Are they not paid to ensure that vulnerable embankments at riverbanks are reinforced? Whose job is it to ensure that storm drains are built in every city and choked nullahs are cleared of heaps of plastic bags and bottles? Who must push for rainwater harvesting by building reservoirs, tanks, lakes, wells, ponds, dams and water retention basins? Who is

responsible for exercising the force of the law to check the cutting down of forests or destabilisation of mountains by digging illegal mines?

While all these tasks fall within the routine responsibilities of several government departments, it is the disaster management authority's crucial duty to demand their implementation and effectiveness. Disaster management is not about waiting for disasters. It is about proactive actions to build resilience in all that we do with nature and our surroundings. They need to be implemented as an ongoing measure of policy and much before the rivers in the sky decide to follow the laws of physics.

Disaster management involves knowing facts, co-nducting 'hazard identification and risk assessment' and applying controls to prevent or minimise losses. One does not see any of this on the websites of the disaster management organisations. We have little idea of all the places where trees are being cut, where illegal dwellings have cropped up, where embankments need to be reinforced, where nullahs are permanently clogged or where unauthorised mines are being constantly excavated.

Could we not learn of preventive actions from Sweden that only a few days back, moved the 113-year-old Kiruna Church weighing 672 tons, five kilometres to the left, to save it from being swallowed by a giant underground iron ore mine? Back home, it would have resulted in a familiar media statement — 'Old church falls down. Forty worshippers killed, 78 injured. PM expresses condolence and a compensation of Rs1m for the dead and half million for the injured'. Our only way forward is to reject foreign-funded 'pseudo climate resilience' loans, rebuild our disaster management institutions, and trust our own capacity to act.

(By Naeem Sadiq Dawn, 07, 27/08/2025)

Climate disaster lessons

THE timing of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's lament that Pakistan has not drawn any lessons from previous climate-triggered disasters coincides with the launch of the 11th National Finance Commission on the distribution of resources between the federal and provincial governments.

Both exercises will need to converge on the local sources of Pakistan's climate vulnerability and financing. The seesawing between the federation and provinces over the distribution of finances has cast a dark shadow over national climate and economic vulnerabilities. With the cost of reconstruction, development, debt and defence increasing, the resource trickle is dwindling further. Are there any lessons in the NFC awards to help respond to the PM's lament?

Climate vulnerability at the district level has three basic drivers:

Population growth: In what constitutes Pakistan today, the population has exploded from 33.7 million in 1951 to 242.7m in 2025, and is projected to reach 380-403m by 2050, making it the world's third most populous nation. This demographic explosion, coupled with economic stagnation and declining per capita income, creates escalating climate vulnerability.

Currently, 108m people, or 42.3 per cent of the population, according to a recent World Bank study, live below the poverty line with limited adaptive capacity.

Under business-as-usual scenarios, 190-200m people could be in poverty by 2050 — nearly half the projected population. In brief, every other child born in Pakistan will now be born to families below the poverty line — leaving them unable to afford climate adaptation and disaster recovery. This vast population spread in the high-risk areas of 169 districts with about 1,200 tehsils represents Pakistan's most critical vulnerability driver.

Are there any lessons in the NFC awards to help respond to the PM's lament?

Disproportionate exposure: The second key driver is the disproportionate concentration of the poor in high-risk areas. Data shows that in recent years, 18-26 districts have faced droughts in Balochistan and Sindh, 18 faced glacial lake outburst floods in Gilgit-Baltistan and KP, six faced tropical storms in Sindh and Balochistan and 84 districts were hit by floods across the provinces, not to mention urban flooding, forest fires, landslides and cloudbursts. Each district is exposed to two or more types of climate disasters.

The vulnerable populations are clustered in regions that are most susceptible to climate shocks, including low-lying floodplains, marginalised farmland and unauthorised settlements on riverbeds and urban peripheries. This geographical alignment guarantees that in the event of a climate disaster, the poor are hit first and the hardest, as their settlements are the most exposed and least resilient.

Limited adaptive capacity: Finally, low per capita income severely limits the adaptive capacity of our population. With a 2024 GDP per capita of just \$1,485, and projections suggesting a decline to \$1,200-\$1,300 by 2050, the poor have virtually no financial buffer to absorb climate shocks.

The massive economic losses from climate events further drain resources, making it nearly impossible for individuals to invest in their assets: housing, livestock, standing crops, lives and microenterprises. This lack of financial capacity creates a vicious cycle of poverty and disaster.

Against this backdrop, what lessons can be drawn to respond to the PM's remarks?

Incremental changes: Some answers by policy managers can be inferred: more resources for infrastructure to fill the financial gaps for recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation from previous disasters; early warning systems; financing for the staggering 1,071 pending PC-1s; and upgradation of equipment or building new infrastructure. Other important elements include improved inter-agency cooperation, capacity-building, and access to international climate finance.

Many of these won't be new lessons, but it is still important for each agency to develop and share its lessons. While these needs are necessary for government efficiency, where are the transformative lessons?

Transformative changes: Several initiatives remain trapped in approval processes: promoting land-use planning to guide human settlements away from low-lying flood-prone regions to designated safer areas; adaptive social protection to invest precious resources in damage prevention rather than post-disaster recovery; creation of sub-national disaster risk financing facilities; adoption of resilient construction standards; mandatory insurance for public sector infrastructure in PC-1 proposals; risk transfer and insurance mechanisms to prevent governments from harvesting unspent funds from development projects; and earnest implementation of climate risk screening for public sector portfolios.

The delays in their operationalisation and absence of prioritisation erode the synergistic impact necessary for transformative change.

All of them, however, establish project-level, not policy-level, programmatic and strategic direction for our safe journey into the future.

Four transformative lessons: Pakistan's climate adaptation demands structural governance transformation. Top-down interventions have failed to generate ownership. Globally, bottom-up initiatives by elected local governments increase implementation and accountability systems. Four key lessons emerge from entrusting district-level decision-making.

First, local communities, and not distant bureaucrats, must manage land-use planning at the tehsil and district levels. Second, locally developed zoning laws must protect *shamilaat*, communal and state lands from vested interests and ban high-risk development. Third, reclamation of the encroached commons must be achieved through local-level resilience management action plans that restore the natural flood management capacity. Fourth, districts must develop asset inventories as revenue sources using credible valuation mechanisms for standardised property assessments.

Given this scale, it's the right time to establish a 'National Reclamation Commission' to develop a national framework and provincial guidelines for local actions.

Learning challenge: Learning is expensive. To learn from climate disasters, Pakistan must 'unlearn' destructive practices: ending floodplain encroachment and not treating communal lands as private profit centres. This process can be negotiated but requires decisive political pushback against powerful networks.

Despite decades of disasters, Pakistan repeats its mistakes: allowing encroachment, enabling elite capture, treating prevention as an expense rather than an investment. Lessons remain unlearned because learning requires confronting power, not merely studying flood patterns or providing relief assistance.

True climate adaptation demands political consensus and the courage to implement what we already know but refuse to do. Let the NFC award spearhead this transformation.
(By Ali Tauqeer Sheikh Dawn, 06, 28/08/2025)

Evacuation planned as Sindh braces for high flood in Indus River

As Punjab was severely hit by flooding after heavy rains and excess water released by India from its dams, the Sindh government on Wednesday braced for high flood risk and established ministerial committees comprising elected representatives to deal with the developing situation.

Official sources told *Dawn* that the Pakistan Peoples Party government mobilised its elected representatives in Sindh, appointing provincial ministers as focal persons to oversee the right and left banks of the Indus River within their respective jurisdictions.

Fearing mass evacuation, the government also instructed the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) to arrange necessary logistics such as boats, tents, ration bags, medicines and machinery, the officials said.

The health department has been asked to mobilise medical teams to counter potential outbreaks of waterborne diseases.

KMC asked to arrange safe shelters in Karachi; Guddu and Sukkur barrages face 'very high flood' threat from Sept 4 to 5

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah convened a meeting and directed all relevant authorities to remain alert and ensure full implementation of the Provincial Monsoon Contingency Plan 2025, the officials added.

The chief minister said that the warning of exceptionally high flood levels in the Indus could not be taken lightly. "Our first priority is saving lives and livelihoods, and we must remain in constant coordination with the NDMA and federal agencies," he added.

The CM also asked all MPAs from districts along the Indus River to remain in their constituencies over the next week and maintain close coordination with the designated focal persons.

The chief minister told the meeting participants that the Flood Forecasting Division of the Pakistan Meteorological Department, in its Weekly Significant Weather Outlook for Rivers' Catchments (28th Aug–3rd Sep 2025), had warned of very high to exceptionally high flood levels in eastern rivers due to heavy rainfall over the upper catchments and water releases from Indian dams.

He said that the Indus River at Guddu and Sukkur was expected to attain very high flood levels from Sept 4 to Sept 5, which could pose a significant threat to the province.

The chief minister instructed divisional commissioners, deputy commissioners, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), and relevant departments to remain on 24-hour alert and take immediate measures to protect embankments and vulnerable communities.

The health department has been instructed to immediately deploy medical teams and carry out preventive vaccination campaigns against waterborne diseases.

The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), local bodies, and rescue officials have been directed to ensure emergency evacuations, provide heavy machinery, and arrange safe shelters for those affected by the floodwaters.

The chief minister emphasised that all institutions must maintain full coordination with the National Disaster Management Authority and federal authorities.

Focal persons

The focal persons will be responsible for directly monitoring the situation, coordinating relief efforts, and ensuring the implementation of flood mitigation measures in their designated areas.

For the area from Guddu to Sukkur, Excise and Taxation Minister Mukesh Kumar Chawla has been appointed as the focal person for the right bank, while Agriculture, Sports and Youth Affairs Minister Sardar Muhammad Bakhsh Mehar will oversee the left bank.

For the area from Sukkur to Kotri, Industries and Commerce Minister Jam Ikramullah Khan Dharejo will oversee the right bank, while Energy and Planning Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah will oversee the left bank.

Below Kotri, Religious Affairs, Zakat and Ushr Minister Riaz Hussain Shah Shirazi has been appointed as the focal person for the right bank, while Livestock and Fisheries Minister Muhammad Ali Malkani will oversee the left bank.

Governor

Governor of Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori termed India's release of water into Pakistan's rivers as "water terrorism" against the country.

Speaking to the media at Governor House, Governor of Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori, accompanied by senior MQM Pakistan leader Anees Qaimkhani and others, said that India's "water terrorism" had caused flooding in the Chenab and Ravi Rivers, and its impact will soon be felt at Kotri Barrage in Sindh and other downstream areas.

He appealed to philanthropists and wealthy individuals to reach out to flood-hit areas and extend assistance to the affected families.

(By Imtiaz Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 28/08/2025)

Karachi floods

IT rained heavily in 2020. And now it is 2025. The rains have once again devastated Karachi. We have witnessed flooded streets, huge traffic jams, students, working-class employees, motorcyclists and other commuters unable to reach their homes in a paralysed city.

Karachi's people are willing to help marooned citizens in any way they can. Given the time that has elapsed between 2020 and 2025, the Karachi public is angry and is asking a relevant question: what have Karachi agencies done in the last five years to tackle flooding and related issues in the city? The answer is — nothing. The agencies respond that precipitation patterns have changed and because of that it is not possible to predict how the rain system for Karachi will evolve. They also point out that other South Asian cities, like Mumbai, face problems similar to those of Karachi.

Over the past few years, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and local agencies have tried to tackle Karachi's drainage problems. In 2021, a survey by NED University, tasked with conducting a study of Karachi's settlements, identified three Karachi nullahs that needed to be cleared of encroachments to facilitate the flow of water. Professionals, NGOs and 'experts' objected to the survey because they considered it to be one of 'properties' and not of people or households. As a result of the survey, about 7,500 families were removed from around the Orangi, Mehmoodabad and Gujjar nullahs so that Karachi would not flood. Their houses were bulldozed and they became homeless. The Supreme Court, while permitting the demolition, ordered the rehabilitation of those affected.

There has been much agitation by civil society against the 'cruelty' that the process has generated, and Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari promised that the affected population would be rehabilitated. Recently, the Sindh High Court ordered that, in compliance with Supreme Court directives, the evicted population be rehoused, with funds allocated by the Sindh government. However, not much work has been done to implement judicial orders.

As has been pointed out by my colleagues and myself several times, one of the major drainage problems that the city faces is that its outfalls to the sea are blocked for the most part, and even where they are not, the gates to the outfalls do not function. A detailed study of the Mehmoodabad nullah was carried out by the Technical Training Resource Centre (TTRC), an Orangi-based organisation. The study discovered that the majority of gates which feed the outfalls to the Gizri Creek were inoperable, thus

preventing more than 70 per cent of effluent from reaching the outfalls and leading to the flooding of large areas in DHA Phase IV and VII.

What have Karachi agencies done to tackle urban flooding.

The other interesting fact the study revealed was that the Mehmoodabad nullah was served by 34 smaller nullahs, which flowed into it in its journey to the Gizri Creek. These sub-nullahs are also blocked by garbage and debris and stop rainwater from flowing into the main nullah, causing floods in the settlements they pass through. Unless they are desilted and maintained, the Mehmoodabad nullah cannot function to its full capacity. There is, except for the TTRC study, no mapping of the 34 sub-nullahs or the Mehmoodabad outfall to the sea.

The desilting carried out by the NDMA and local government agencies did not even reduce flooding, let alone arrest it. The desilting and construction of the reinforced concrete retaining walls are incomplete to this day.

So one thing is clear: that removing low-income settlements alone will not solve Karachi's drainage problems. There are also middle-class and elite houses that are stopping the flow of floodwaters. Maybe, a study of removing should also be considered.

But there are other problems as well. This relates to the estate developers' greed for land and their control over the land market and the government agencies which help them operate it. For example, the Orangi nullah has roads on either side of it and these have been increased to nine metres in width, although only 3.5 metres are required. Given the location of the Orangi nullah from the Lyari Expressway to the RCD highway, this is an ideal place for real estate development, which will surely take place, creating further flooding across Karachi and increasing traffic problems.

If a solution to Karachi's drainage-related issues and problems is required then all the points discussed above will have to be taken into consideration. It has to be understood that without efficient institutional arrangements these issues cannot be resolved. (By Arif Hasan Dawn, 07, 30/08/2025)

NDMA issues urban flooding alert in Karachi; Met Dept says no rain

At a time when the country is struggling with an unprecedented rain and flood emergency, a lack of coordination between key departments came to the fore when two opposite state of weather situations were released by them, creating panic and confusion.

First, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) released a public alert on Friday, warning citizens of urban flooding in Karachi from Aug 30 till Sept 2. The forecast was broadcast and also widely shared on social media platforms.

While the alert caused widespread panic, especially against the backdrop of devastating floods in Punjab, the Pakistan Meteorological Department released its daily advisory, forecasting 'partly cloudy and humid weather for Karachi during the next two days' (Aug 30 and 31), but chose not to publicly contest the NDMA's claim. (By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 30/08/2025)

Flood may impact 1.65m in 14 Sindh districts

The rain-triggered flood cutting a swathe through Punjab may soon extend its devastation to Sindh, potentially affecting hundreds of thousands living in the province's riverine areas. Senior Sindh Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon cautioned on Saturday that 1.65 million people residing in 15 districts of Sindh might be impacted by the rising waters.

Speaking to the media in Karachi, Sharjeel detailed that 1,651 villages, spread across 167 Union Committees and Union Councils and home to approximately 273,000 families, face the threat of inundation. He further warned that around 102 points along thousands of kilometres of the Indus River embankments showed structural weaknesses during previous major floods in 2010 and 2015.

To keep residents informed, the provincial government's Rain and Flood Emergency Monitoring Cell has been activated. Accessible via four landline numbers, the cell will provide flood updates every three hours. Sharjeel urged the media to rely on this official source for accurate and timely information on the evolving situation.

Addressing concerns about the relocation of people living on the riverbed, Sharjeel said that most residents prefer to stay with relatives rather than moving to relief camps. "The inhabitants of the katcha areas are well aware of when to evacuate in the face of impending floods," he explained. Nonetheless, the provincial government is proactively establishing relief camps based on estimated numbers of displaced individuals in each district. Additionally, 300 camps for livestock are being set up across Sindh to safeguard animals during the crisis.

Sharjeel also emphasised that Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah are closely monitoring the situation and actively issuing directives to ensure a coordinated response.

Flood update

Irrigation authorities recorded 364,573 cusecs of water flow at Guddu barrage, 256,660 cusecs at Sukkur, and 265,328 cusecs at Kotri on Saturday. Currently, the flood status at all three barrages remains low. Guddu barrage can withstand up to 1.2 million cusecs, Sukkur up to 960,000 cusecs, and Kotri up to 870,000 cusecs.

During the devastating 2010 floods, Kotri barrage successfully passed between one million to 1.2 million cusecs of floodwater without structural damage or spillover from its levees. Meanwhile, the Indus River has begun reclaiming its land, locally known as katcha. Residents of hundreds of villages in the Larkana, Sukkur, and Hyderabad divisions started evacuating their homes for safety on Saturday.

The floodwaters also reached the Torhi embankment, a site whose breach in 2010 caused flooding that affected almost half of Sindh province after a 15-year gap. Separately, residents of Larkana have raised concerns about weak spots developing on the Moria loop bund, criticising irrigation authorities for failing to reinforce the dyke so far.

Locals claim 50 Jamshoro villages submerged

The people in Jamshoro claimed that over 50 villages have so far gone under water but the district administration put the figure of the villages which will be submerged at 28. Deputy Commissioner Jamshoro, Ghazanfar, told that relief camps are being established in 30 school buildings.

He added that eight relief camps, 12 medical camps and five veterinary camps will be set up in Hyderabad besides 10 mobile teams of Rescue 1122 will remain in the field for evacuation.

In Ghotki district, which borders Punjab, the provincial minister Muhammad Bux Mahar said if water level crossed 700,000 cusecs the services of Pak army and rangers will be sought to evacuate people from the katcha areas. The district administration in Kashmore-Kandhkot district, which is home to Guddu barrage, kept appealing to the dwellers of riverbed villages to relocate to safe areas. The authorities assured the people that they will be provided all required facilities in the relief camps if they opted to stay there.

(By Z Ali The Express Tribune, 05, 31/08/2025)

Revised assessment puts 1.65m at risk of displacement due to flood in Sindh

The Sindh government's updated assessment on Saturday revealed a stark rise in potential devastation from expected high floods at Guddu Barrage and torrential rains, with over 273,000 families — approximately 1.65 million people — on the right and left banks of the Indus River at risk of displacement.

A day earlier, the provincial government had anticipated the displacement of over 52,000 families due to high flows, but the number of people expected to be affected swelled owing to apprehensions of unexpected high floods that could submerge the entire katcha (riverine) area.

Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, at a press conference, disclosed that there was a risk of 273,000 families being impacted, with 1,651 villages and 167 union councils at risk, but asserted that the government was fully equipped to respond.

"There is neither a shortage of funds in the province nor an emergency situation at present. However, the government is fully prepared to face every challenge," he said confidently.

Sharjeel says 273,000 families, 1,651 villages, 167 UCs may be impacted; CM briefed on barrage water flows

Mr Memon said the provincial government was fully active in view of the flood situation, and all departments were working on an emergency basis.

The senior minister, who also visited the Provincial Rain and Flood Emergency Monitoring Cell established at the Sindh Secretariat to continuously monitor the situation, said that cabinet members, MPAs, district administrations and the entire machinery were present in the field.

"A Provincial Rain and Flood Emergency Monitoring Cell has been set up to oversee the flood situation, which will remain operational 24/7," he added.

"At present, 192 rescue boats and mobile health units have been made operational," he said.

According to the senior minister, the flood situation was being directly monitored by PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah.

"The district administration is in constant coordination, and people from potentially affected areas are being shifted to safe locations," he said.

He said that relief camps had been set up, though most people preferred to stay with relatives, adding that 300 camps had also been established for livestock.

He further said that the provincial government was providing updates on the situation every three hours, while the Punjab government was also extending cooperation by providing kits in response to the flood situation.

CM briefed

Meanwhile, the chief minister contacted the assigned ministers regarding the expected flood situation in the River Indus and instructed them to strictly monitor the embankments and irrigation systems on both the right and left banks of the river.

According to a statement issued from the CM House, Irrigation Minister Jam Khan Shoro briefed the chief minister on the river situation.

The briefing revealed that at 12 noon on Saturday, the upstream water flow at Guddu Barrage was recorded at 383,299 cusecs and the downstream at 350,943 cusecs. At Sukkur Barrage, the upstream flow was 313,000 cusecs and downstream 259,050 cusecs, while at Kotri Barrage, the upstream was 264,131 cusecs and downstream 233,216 cusecs.

Mr Shah was informed that the current status of the barrages was under control and that all safety measures had been completed.

The chief minister urged residents living along the riverbanks and in low-lying areas to fully cooperate with the administration to ensure their protection in case of any emergency.

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 31/08/2025)

Army, navy mobilised as Sindh prepares for ‘super flood’

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Sunday said the provincial government, with the support of the army, navy and Rangers, was fully prepared to deal with what he described as the looming “super flood” in the Indus river.

Talking to the media during his visit to the Sukkur and Guddu barrages, the CM said that the provincial government’s foremost priority is to protect human lives and livestock, followed by safeguarding the province’s three major barrages.

“We have devised a comprehensive strategy for a super flood [when inflows are recorded at 900,000 cusecs or more]. First, we will save people and cattle, then ensure the safety of Guddu, Sukkur, and Kotri barrages,” he said.

The chief minister explained that water levels in the Ravi was rising and were being closely monitored, as inflows from Trimmu would reach Sindh in about five days via Panjnad. “By tonight, Trimmu may touch its highest point, which will give us a clear estimate of how much water Sindh will receive,” he said.

The CM said mapping had already been completed to identify vulnerable villages. “We know exactly which areas will be affected at different water levels — 500,000 to 700,000 cusecs, 700,000 to 900,000, or even beyond. If inflows cross 900,000 cusecs, over 200,000 people may be impacted,” he warned.

He noted that Sindh’s terrain poses greater risks than Punjab’s. “In Punjab, designated breaches allow water to return quickly to the river. But Sindh lies below river level, so once water spreads, it does not recede easily,” he explained.

On the embankments, he highlighted six sensitive locations on the Right Bank of the Indus. “KK (Kashmore-Kandhkot) Bund is particularly vulnerable, while on the Left Bank, Shank Bund is structurally weak and may not withstand 800,000 to 900,000 cusecs. Still, our top priority is to protect it,” he stressed.

Recalling past floods, the chief minister said the inflows of 1.1 million cusecs had passed from Guddu Barrage in 2010. “This time, even 900,000 to one million cusecs would be extremely challenging. On Aug 24, 550,000 cusecs had already flowed through Guddu, which touched embankments and damaged crops in some areas. If inflows remain limited, losses will be manageable, but crops may still not survive,” he observed.

The CM was briefed by Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) and Minister Makhdoom Mahboobzaman on flood preparedness at Guddu and Sukkur barrages, where water flow may cross 900,000 cusecs.

According to the briefing, 15 districts, 167 UCs and 1,651 villages could be affected in case of a “super flood”, endangering over 1.63 million people (273,148 families).

The chief minister told the media that 948 relief camps have been set up, mobile health units are functional, and the PDMA has established medical camps with essential medicines, including anti-snakebite vaccines.

“Pakistan Navy, Army and Rangers are fully coordinating with us. Around 192 rescue boats are already deployed in katcha areas,” he added.

He assured that cooked food would be provided at relief camps and that houses destroyed in riverine areas would later be rebuilt on higher ground.

The CM said all ministers, MPAs and officials had been deployed on flood emergency duties, while security arrangements were being ensured with the help of the Corps Commander and DG Rangers.

He added that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari was in constant contact, President Asif Ali Zardari had been issuing directions, and provincial party president Nisar Khuhro had mobilised workers.

He was accompanied by provincial ministers Sharjeel Memon, Nasir Shah and Jam Khan Shoro, while Mukesh Chawla joined him at Guddu and Mohammad Bux Khan Mahar at Qadirpur-Ghotki.

Inspects water flows, embankment conditions

Earlier, the chief minister visited the Guddu and Sukkur barrages to review water flows, embankment conditions, and ongoing rehabilitation projects.

At Guddu Barrage, Minister for Irrigation Jam Khan Shoro and Secretary Irrigation Zareef Khro told the CM that the rehabilitation and modernisation project, launched in 2017, had achieved 72.6 per cent physical and 78.6pc financial progress. The project, being executed by China's New Era Development Group, is now expected to be completed by March 2026.

The chief minister directed that the project must be finished within the revised timeline without compromising on quality.

During his visit to Sukkur Barrage, the chief minister reviewed the Sindh Barrages Improvement Project (SBIP), funded jointly by the Sindh government and the World Bank.

The CM was told that work on the project was progressing as planned and is scheduled for completion by June 2027.

CM Murad termed the rehabilitation of barrages a "historic milestone" for Sindh's agriculture and economy, stressing that timely completion would ensure sustainable irrigation, better flood management, and protection of millions of families.

The chief minister also inspected the Kashmore-Kandhkot (KK) Bund to review measures for their protection against the River Indus.

At KK Bund, the secretary irrigation briefed the CM that the river had been attacking the structure since 1995. After the 2010 "super flood", studs and spurs were installed, with seven new structures completed in 2021 between miles 11 and 18. However, the river is now threatening the downstream side of mile 18. Emergency measures, including stone dumping, stockpiling, and 24/7 monitoring, are in place.

In Qadirpur, Ghotki, CM Murad inspected the Shank Bund, a sensitive structure protecting 5,000 acres of katcha land and the Qadirpur Loop Bund. The bund has remained vulnerable for decades, with a major breach recorded in 2022, when a thunderstorm widened it to 550 feet. Remote sensing maps prepared on the CM's instructions showed 739 acres out of 4,029 acres were flooded.

(By Waseem Shamsi Dawn, 13, 01/09/2025)

Mass ecocide

TWO recent, seemingly disparate incidents throw sharp light on Pakistan's relationship with residential real estate. The first was the purported legal (and political) troubles of Bahria Town, which culminated in a message from its founder stating that insolvency and operational breakdown in its residential schemes were fast approaching.

The second incident occurred during the recent flooding of the eastern rivers in Punjab. When water levels rose downstream from Jassar and Shahdara, a large number of residential streets in Park View City, a housing project built almost on the Ravi riverbed in south-western Lahore, were inundated and had to be evacuated.

The cause for both incidents is considerably different — palace intrigue and political machinations in the first, and nature colliding with human hubris and greed in the second. Yet they elicited similar types of discussion. In both incidents, the fate of residents was a subject of much hand-wringing and concern.

The key debate is on the extent of middle-class complicity in encouraging destructive patterns of real estate development in Pakistan. In both examples, some people consider insolvency and operational breakdown, or devastation at the hands of nature, as poetic justice.

The key debate is on the extent of middle-class complicity in encouraging destructive patterns of real estate development in Pakistan.

It is well documented, including through excellent reportage by this newspaper and a Supreme Court judgement, that land acquisition in Karachi and elsewhere has involved a variety of unsavoury tactics and interventions. This is true not just of the developer in question, but many others who operate at scale. Coercion, intimidation, familial and community pressure, ecological destruction, as well as the brute power of the state, are all deployed in acquiring land and building private housing schemes.

Given this backdrop, one view is that people who opt to reside in similar housing schemes are ultimately beneficiaries of the illegal and unsavoury behaviour of developers. That the coercion and violence deployed is eventually in service of their housing dreams and aspirations. That many choose to ignore how these housing dreams are actually delivered, and as in the case across the country, are directly in conflict with nature and delicate ecological conditions. So if their dream suddenly collapses (due to politics or flooding in many other examples), this is simply karma at play.

The opposing view to this is that the residents of such schemes are usually not the elite. These are aspiring upper-middle-income households between the fifth and the 15th percentile of the income distribution. They can't afford the better-functioning neighbourhoods closer to the city centre in the metropolitan areas of Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad. The neighbourhoods and towns they grew up in are plagued with service inefficiencies and insecurities of various forms. Given a chance to find a relatively cheaper option, they opt for it without much thought to how that option came into being, ie, whether it was built on land coerced from a villager, or developed by flattening a hillside, or by claiming land from a watercourse.

Depending on how charitable one feels, it's easy to side with either of these two positions. People should be mindful of what they're buying and the ethics of its production. Ignorance is hard to use as an excuse in a country with 24/7 news saturation. Even superficial use of one's eyes and common sense would be enough to show that a scheme built literally on the riverbed might face a flood in the future.

But from a more charitable view, while the aspiring home owner is one beneficiary (and thus has to shoulder some of the blame), they are the smallest fish in this contaminated pond. There are a series of bigger fish who have turned land into the socially and ecologically destructive force that it is today.

These include the savers who hold on to empty plots for years in the expectation of selling them for a profit but by doing so reduce the available supply of land for those who may actually want to live on it. It includes the investors who buy and sell multiple files and plots in quick succession, thus raising prices rapidly and locking out those in genuine need for housing. It includes the developers and their financiers who cut every corner imaginable to minimise their cost of development, including finding land that nature has deemed off-limits.

But most of all, it includes the state, without whose active participation and complicity none of this would be possible — whether it is through the military's appetite to reward its own officers via land, or the corruption or incompetence of local officials in development authorities like RUDA and LDA, or through the complicity and rent-seeking behaviour of politicians who are investors in land schemes or who protect the interests of their friends, families and financiers in real estate.

If one is looking to apportion blame, the bulk of it falls on the state. It has been the state's decision to become a willing partner in the illegality and ecocide that have brought us to a point where minor climatic changes wreak major destruction.

Some counter this by saying that state officials at the local level buckle under pressure from above, and that reform-minded politicians are helpless against the military, or that big developers get their way with every government.

However, these rationalisations are ultimately useless. People should not expect fairness or ethical behaviour from developers, who are occupationally tied to the pursuit of profit. They should also not look towards the military to change its behaviour, because there is no direct relationship of accountability there. What they should expect is their elected representatives to show some concern and consideration for the common interest. And right now, that interest is clear — socially and ecologically destructive uses of land, whether legally planned or illegally active, need to be stopped.
(By Umair Javed Dawn, 06, 01/09/2025)

City's first urban forest to breathe afresh with pruning and care

The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation has undertaken maintenance and restoration of the city's first urban forest in Clifton amid complaints that the man-made jungle has fallen prey to negligence.

For months now, entrepreneur Shahzad Qureshi's model Urban Forest Park in Clifton Block 5 has fallen prey to negligence.

Based on the Miyawaki method — a Japanese technique developed by botanist Dr Akira Miyawaki that creates dense, fast-growing forests using a variety of native plant species planted in a multi-layered structure, mimicking natural forest ecosystems — the Urban Forest was designed to give the concrete jungle that Karachi has become a breath of fresh air.

Mr Qureshi was officially allowed to adopt and convert into a park the piece of land used as a garbage dump adjacent to the infamous Nehr-i-Khayyam by the KMC in May of 2017.

He had been planning earlier to grow a sort of natural urban forest in the city, believing that neat, clean, and manicured gardens looked too artificial. He wanted a forest to help the ecosystem. He welcomed bugs, caterpillars, butterflies and frogs to his urban forest as he said that they all helped the environment.

"You'd rather have plastic plants and trees if you want greenery without insects," he once said, adding that he wanted to offer a "table" for the small creatures in the shape of his forest.

On one side of the forest, he had dug out a ditch for throwing in kitchen waste such as fruit and vegetable peels that would then turn into compost for the soil. On another side he had grown vegetables such as green chillies, brinjal and kale along with fruit trees.

There was also a little pond in one corner at the back surrounded by all kinds of trees, which invited all kinds of birds.

The Urban Forest was adopted for a period of five years. In between there was a hiccup when suddenly in 2019, the then mayor Wasim Akhtar cancelled the agreement with Mr Qureshi on the notion of violation of the contract.

But the misunderstanding between them was cleared soon enough but not before the KMC uprooted many plants and vegetables grown by Qureshi.

After completion of his rewarding journey of building a beautiful environment-friendly and people-friendly park as had been planned, Qureshi gave back the birthplace of the first Miyawaki Method in Pakistan, the Urban Forest Park, to the KMC in May of 2023.

Still, he was asked to carry on managing the Urban Forest Park, which his staff was doing until May of this year.

Qureshi himself has been abroad for around a year now, but he has been requesting the KMC to take good care of the park. Meanwhile People have also shared pictures of the park in a state of neglect.

On a recent visit, *Dawn* met Mohammad Ayub, the KMC guard posted there, who showed freshly grown banana trees and a mulberry bush which were doing quite well. On the left side of the entrance there was also a cotton plant. All the other trees

planted under Qureshi's supervision had grown quite big. Still, the wild growth had spread to the walking paths. The pond was no longer visible amid the thick forestation until the guard led you there. Many of the boards placed along the paths had fallen down giving the place quite an unkempt look.

When contacted, KMC's Parks and Horticulture Director General Arif Khokhar said that he had only taken over at the end of July and that he was passionate about building urban forests all over the city.

"The recent rains have also led to some wild growth at the Urban Forest Park. The trees and plants are badly in need of pruning," he said.

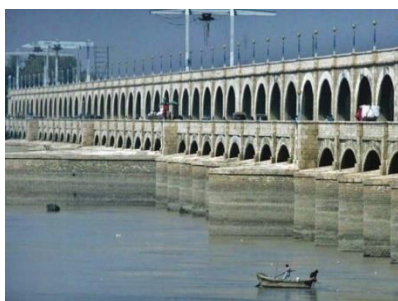
On Monday, he said, the KMC launched an exercise to improve the overall situation at the urban forest. "I am myself a forester and want to build an urban forest inside every big park of Karachi," Khokhar informed *Dawn*.

He said that he was involved with this first urban forest of Karachi right from the time Qureshi had adopted it.

"I gave many plants to Shahzad Qureshi in 2017. I had also tried explaining to him then that the Miyawaki Method, which he was looking to follow, better suited tropical areas whereas we are in an arid zone. But he is an idealist so we let him follow his heart. And he on his part has also done wonders," he smiled.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 02/09/2025)

Faulty repairs raise flood fears at Sukkur Barrage



Concerns have emerged over the alleged use of substandard material in the ongoing repair and upgradation of Sukkur Barrage, a critical flood control infrastructure on the Indus River. As forecasts predict a major flood wave entering Sindh this week, there are growing fears that the barrage might not withstand the impending pressure.

According to sources, a confidential letter written by the Superintending Engineer of Sukkur Barrage to the Project Director has exposed disturbing details regarding the quality of the work. The letter states that even with a moderate flow of 300,000 cusecs, vibrations were observed in the gates of the barrage, raising alarms about their structural integrity.

The letter further reports that the hydraulic systems and gearboxes are malfunctioning, while nuts, bolts, and gate-operating wells have already begun to rust within just one month. The gates also reportedly vary in weight, affecting their performance and stability. The contractor responsible for replacing twenty-eight gates this year has already faced technical faults in sixteen of them.

This development comes as a large flood wave from Punjab is expected to enter Sindh in the coming days, putting immense pressure on the barrage, which is already showing signs of vulnerability.

Sources have alleged widespread irregularities in the awarding of repair and rehabilitation contracts. Several mega projects related to river embankments and flood protection are said to have been handed over to favoured contractors. These include the Revival of Doors and Underpasses project, with a reported expenditure of ten billion rupees, and the Rehabilitation of Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD), which cost six billion rupees. Major lining projects such as those for Adeero Lal and Nari Chach Lower have also reportedly been awarded to a contractor known as Pappu Channa. Contracts for other large-scale schemes are also said to have gone to the same contractor.

Sources further claim that for the past one and a half years, a small group of officials within the Irrigation Department has been running the system with little oversight.

When contacted, Sindh Irrigation Minister Jam Khan Shoro and the Project Director of the Sindh Barrages Improvement Project, Pritam Das, confirmed that the gates of Sukkur Barrage are still in the custody of the foreign company responsible for their installation.

(By Saleem Jhandir The Express Tribune, 04, 02/09/2025)

Safari Park elephants on road to TB recovery

The two elephants at the city's Safari Park — Malika and Madhubala — reportedly showed significant signs of recovery from tuberculosis (TB), with park officials stating that the animals are now 80 per cent healthy.

According to Safari Park administration, the elephants were diagnosed with TB around four months ago. Since then, they have been under continuous treatment administered by a team of Sri Lankan veterinarians. Due to the contagious nature of the disease, public access to the elephants was restricted following the diagnosis.

The park management confirmed that the treatment has been ongoing for the past three months, and both Malika and Madhubala are steadily improving. A delegation of Sri Lankan veterinary experts is expected to visit Pakistan in October for follow-up assessments. Based on their evaluation, a decision will be made regarding whether to reopen public access to the elephants.

It is worth noting that the four elephants currently at Safari Park were originally brought to Karachi from Tanzania in 2009.

Tragically, two of them — Noor Jehan and Sonia died after prolonged illnesses in 2023 and 2024 respectively. Their deaths raised concerns over elephant care standards, prompting intensified veterinary oversight for the remaining pair.

The administration says it is hopeful that with continued care, Malika and Madhubala will make a full recovery and soon be able to resume their place as a central attraction at the park.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 03/09/2025)

New monsoon reality

IN the mountains of South Asia, the monsoon once arrived like a marching band — broad, rhythmic and predictable. Today, however, it strikes with precision, dropping torrents of water on narrow valleys and towns while nearby areas stay dry. These ultra-intense downpours, commonly called 'cloudbursts', unleash more than 100mm of rain per hour over small catchments, turning a single street or hamlet into ground zero of destruction.

In August 2025, Buner in KP experienced such a storm: 150mm of rain fell in just an hour, unleashing flash floods and landslides that killed hundreds. Across the border, India's Uttarkashi saw a cloudburst sweep away homes in Dharali, while another struck Kishtwar, displacing families and flattening infrastructure. These are not isolated accidents but part of a wider transformation of the South Asian monsoon, which is becoming less predictable and more violent.

The science is clear. Warmer air traps and carries more moisture, and as mountains force this moisture upward, it condenses and falls violently, creating what scientists describe as 'rain bombs'. The IPCC confirms that heavy precipitation events are becoming more frequent across South Asia and will continue intensifying throughout this century. When such rain bombs coincide with glacier-melt season, the impact multiplies: river flows spike suddenly, flash flood risks surge and downstream communities face devastation.

The toll of these storms is profound. Houses, bridges, micro-hydel, orchards and entire markets can vanish in minutes, leaving settlements cut off from roads, power and communication. Pakistan's catastrophic 2022 floods caused nearly \$30 billion in damage, demonstrating how even localised cloudbursts can tip fragile mountain economies into long-term crisis. Environmentally, saturated slopes collapse, boulders crash downstream, river channels shift, forests are uprooted and vital water sources become contaminated, deepening health and food insecurity.

Urgent action is imperative.

Urgent action is therefore non-negotiable. The KP government must rigorously enforce the River Protection Ordinance of 2002, which prohibits construction within 200 feet (61 metres) of riverbanks and restricts development up to 1,500m in sensitive mountain zones. Recent ADB modelling for the Swat River basin reconfirmed that these buffers are not mere regulations but essential safeguards. Authorities must also densify rain-gauge networks, integrate radar with AI-based nowcasting, restrict construction on debris-flow fans and dry streambeds, and operationalise monsoon contingency plans with clear responsibilities. Investments should prioritise resilient infrastructure — larger culverts, debris racks, raised platforms and single-span bridges that can survive turbulent flows. Equally important is facilitating rapid access to international loss and damage finance, so recovery is swift and communities do not sink deeper into poverty.

Preparedness at the household and community level is equally critical. Families should map hazards such as unstable slopes and blocked gullies and keep go-bags ready with IDs, medicine, torches, power banks, dry rations and water purification tablets. Villages can link meteorological alerts to WhatsApp or SMS trees, identify safe muster points and teach members to avoid bridges or basements during cloudbursts. Preventive actions — clearing drains, securing vehicles, installing gratings — can reduce losses. When storms strike, people should move laterally to higher ground if rumbling or falling boulders are heard, and cut electricity if water seeps indoors. After the event, all water should be treated as unsafe, the damage documented, blockages reported and slopes monitored for aftershocks.

Precision in language matters. Not every heavy shower is a 'cloudburst'. Mislabelling weakens early warnings and desensitises communities. True cloudbursts, like those in Buner or Dharali, are rare but catastrophic; distinguishing them from ordinary downpours ensures better communication, stronger preparedness and more credible risk messaging.

The new monsoon reality is stark: not gentle, season-long rainfall but violent, hyper-local downpours — weeks' worth of water collapsing from the sky in a matter of hours. Each rain bomb can shatter homes, disrupt livelihood, and overwhelm fragile ecosystems. Yet resilience is possible. As Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai said, "It's the little things citizens do. That's what will make the difference. My little thing is planting trees." Today, our collective little things — planning, preparing, protecting — become acts of survival. Afforestation, watershed protection and community vigilance remain among our strongest long-term defences against an unpredictable climate.

(By Saima Hashim Dawn, 07, 04/09/2025)

Flood accountability

IN just a few weeks, Pakistan has been struck by its worst flooding since 2022, with Punjab facing devastation on a scale not seen in decades. In eastern and southern Punjab, millions have been displaced, villages submerged and relief systems overwhelmed. KP is grappling with flash floods and landslides that have claimed hundreds of lives, while Sindh, Balochistan and Azad Kashmir remain on high alert, vulnerable to rising waters and weak infrastructure.

With an escalating humanitarian crisis on our hands, the need for transparency in flood mitigation is urgent. While federal and provincial authorities clamour to reassure the public that rehabilitation efforts have started, on-the-ground realities are vastly different.

In Punjab, communities along the Sutlej, Chenab, and Ravi rivers recount harrowing tales: hundreds of villages inundated, families evicted from their homes without essentials, and relief camps devoid of clean water, medical aid and sanitary facilities. Women and children share two washrooms among thousands, meals arrive once and livestock go starving. Such reports are an indictment of a relief system undermined by inefficiency, complacency and a dearth of oversight.

Compounding the crisis is the controversy surrounding Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. She posted a 'portable toilet' image as part of flood-relief operations, only for critics to unveil it as a recycled stock photo. She has also drawn flak for ration boxes stamped with her image and an ill-judged gaffe on rainfall. In short, Punjab's flood response has been marred by missteps that risk eroding public trust at a critical time. Relief must be real, not staged.

However, the point is not to scapegoat one province, but to demand accountability everywhere. In Sindh, PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has called for transparency, urging authorities to "leave no stone unturned" in relief efforts and long-term rehabilitation planning. Words, however, must translate swiftly into action.

Federal lawmakers must also be held to account for their role — not just in rhetoric, but in presence. Are they visiting their flood-ravaged constituencies? Is anyone monitoring the quality of aid? Are funds and supplies reaching the needy rather than being siphoned off by bureaucracy?

All political parties must recognise that disaster is not a moment for politicking, but a test of governance. Every province must issue transparent, auditable data on relief distribution, evacuation figures, camp facilities, and rehabilitation plans. Independent monitoring bodies — journalists, civil society, even volunteers — must be welcomed, not restricted. Floods respect no banners or borders. Our collective response must match the scale of the tragedy — not with posturing, but with precision. Only when transparency becomes the rule, not the exception, can the nation begin rebuilding — not just homes and fields, but trust.
(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 05/09/2025)

Fresh monsoon spell likely to bring 'heavy rains' to Karachi

The city is bracing for heavy rainfall over the coming days as strong monsoon currents penetrate Sindh as a deep depression is expected to enter the southeastern parts of the province from India within the next 24 hours, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) said on Sunday.

While issuing a severe weather warning, the PMD highlighted the likelihood of torrential rains, gusty winds and possible urban flooding across Karachi and other parts of Sindh.

"Thunderstorm and rains are expected tomorrow [Monday] in Karachi with possibility of heavy falls," said PMD's focal person Anjum Nazeer Zaigham.

An advisory issued by the PMD stated that a depression over southwest Rajasthan and adjoining Guajrat has intensified further into a deep depression. "It is very likely to move westward and entered in southeastern Sindh during the next 24 hours causing widespread rains with strong winds."

During the day, Karachi experienced overcast and humid conditions, with dense cloud cover persisting throughout. Light rain was also reported in the outskirts of the city.

The maximum temperature in the city was 32.6 degrees Celsius with 75 per cent humidity, increasing the discomfort for residents even before the anticipated downpour.

The Met office has warned that thundershowers with strong gusty winds and scattered "heavy to very heavy falls" are likely in Karachi Division, Hyderabad, Thatta, Badin, Sujawal, Dadu, and Mirpurkhas until September 10.

Meanwhile, President Asif Ali Zardari has called on all institutions to remain fully prepared in view of the heavy rains in Sindh.

He directed provincial, district and municipal authorities to stay on high alert and ensure advance arrangements. He also emphasised the need for close monitoring of water levels in Hub Dam and other reservoirs to safeguard communities.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 08/09/2025)

Federal cabinet declares climate, agriculture emergency

The federal government imposed a climate and agriculture emergency on Wednesday in the wake of floods that devastated dozens of districts across the country, particularly in Punjab, giving rise to fears of food inflation.

The decision was made during a meeting of the federal cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The cabinet also announced the formation of a special committee led by Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal to recommend measures to mitigate the impacts of the deluge on the economy. The terms of reference (TORs) of the special committee will be devised soon, the source added.

In a post-meeting press conference, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, flanked by Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, said the PM had directed the immediate enforcement of a climate emergency.

Climate change, one of the most debated subjects globally, has been severely affecting Pakistan due to the shifting weather patterns, the minister said.

“Unfortunately, in past decades, we failed to protect our forests and trees, while encroachments narrowed natural waterways — rivers, streams, and channels that once allowed easy passage of rainwater. This has worsened the flooding situation we see today,” he said.

He said the climate minister, Musadik Malik, had been tasked with submitting a comprehensive report to the prime minister within 15 days. The cabinet would then deliberate on the report to determine how Pakistan could cope with climate change and prepare effective strategies to protect the nation from such devastating losses in the future.

“Since 2022, we have witnessed the devastation caused by floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Punjab. Now, this water is flowing into Sindh from the five-river basin, and our prayers and efforts are focused on minimising the losses there as well,” the minister added.

He said the cabinet discussed the destruction, particularly to agriculture, along with human and financial losses, in detail. An agriculture emergency will help assess the extent of damage to agriculture across the country and determine how farmers could be compensated for their losses, he said, adding that these challenges could not be addressed without the cooperation, support, and consultation of the provincial governments.

“Therefore, the prime minister has decided to convene an immediate meeting of all provincial stakeholders under the leadership of their respective chief ministers. This country belongs to all of us, and together we must overcome its challenges,” he said, adding that stakeholders from Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir would also participate.

Earlier, PM Shehbaz stressed the need for formulating a comprehensive roadmap and strategy to overcome the challenges posed by climate change.

“We cannot deal with climate change overnight,” he said while chairing the cabinet meeting, adding that Pakistan could not tackle the challenge alone and that everyone had to come together for this task, a statement by the PM’s Office quoted the premier as saying. He said an apex-level meeting would follow the cabinet meeting, to be attended by the four chief ministers, to formulate a policy to cope with the current situation.

It may be noted that the monsoon floods affected 4.2 million people, 1.58m animals, and more than 4,400 villages across Punjab, as per a report by the Punjab Provincial Disaster Management Authority. Besides Punjab, Gilgit-Baltistan also bore the brunt of flash and glacial floods, wiping out houses and agricultural land.

Ban on gas connections lifted

The cabinet also decided to lift a four-year-long ban on domestic gas connections and supply regasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG).

Dr Chaudhry said PM Shehbaz decided to lift the ban on new gas connections imposed in 2021, addressing a longstanding public demand. He expressed gratitude to the PM and the petroleum minister for resolving a major issue that households had been facing for years. “The difficulties caused by the suspension of gas connections will now be resolved,” he added.

Speaking on the occasion, Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik said the two state-run gas companies, SNGPL and SSGCL, had been asked to seek applications for new gas connections from consumers. The petroleum minister said RLNG would be 30-35 per cent cheaper than the imported Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), adding that consumers, who had already applied for the gas connections, would have the option to switch their connections to RLNG. They would deposit their security fee as per the decision of the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority, he added.

Mr Malik assured that efforts were underway to enhance local gas production to reduce dependency on RLNG in the future and ensure more affordable energy for the public.

The cabinet also approved the trilateral intergovernmental framework agreement for a joint feasibility study between Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, based on the recommendation of the railways ministry.

The agreement, signed last month, is considered a key project for regional trade and connectivity. The cabinet also endorsed decisions made by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet, the Cabinet Committee on Inter-Governmental Commercial Transactions, and the Cabinet Committee for Legislative Cases.

(By Syed Irfan Raza Dawn, 01, 11/09/2025)

Regional climate risks

WE in South Asia are the children of the monsoon, as described by David Jiménez in his 2008 book.

While governments may not always recognise it, we are bound by an ecosystem that inextricably links our resilience through shared climate realities from one end of South Asia to the other.

Shared ecosystems

1) Rivers: The Indus River system serves as a central artery for India and Pakistan, comprising six major tributaries: eastern (Beas, Ravi, Sutlej) and western (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab).

These shared waters account for over 90 per cent of Pakistan's agricultural use and support seven Indian states and territories: Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Indian-occupied Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi. Heavy monsoons and poor transboundary management are increasingly causing deadly flooding in the Punjab and Sindh floodplains.

2) Mountains: The Hindu Kush, Karakoram and Himalayan ranges have interconnected geological features. The Himalayan watershed extends across northern India through occupied J&K, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, extending westward from Pakistan.

The Karakoram lies primarily in Gilgit-Baltistan and extends into disputed Ladakh and Aksai Chin. The Hindukush runs through Afghanistan into northwestern Pakistan, merging with the Karakoram at its eastern end.

These three ranges converge near Jaglot in northern Pakistan, where the Gilgit and Indus rivers meet. This complex system houses some of the world's largest glaciers and has become a hotspot for glacial lake outburst floods (Glofs), creating a geologically volatile landscape.

Only coordinated Indo-Pakistani climate governance can prevent downstream disasters.

3) Deserts: The Thar desert spans India and Pakistan, spreading desertification and drought in both countries.

This arid subtropical desert experiences low irregular rainfall, soil erosion and water scarcity, driving demand for inter-basin transfers like the Beas–Bikaner and Indira Gandhi canals. Most of this desert lies in India, primarily Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab and Haryana. The remainder extends into Pakistan's drought-prone districts in Sindh and Punjab. The Pakistani Punjab portion is known as the Cholistan desert.

4) Coasts: This maritime climate zone affects monsoon patterns, cyclones and ocean currents impacting India and Pakistan's coastal weather.

Pakistan faces transboundary threats from powerful Arabian Sea tropical cyclones along India's 2,500-kilometre western coastline.

Recent years have seen increased storm frequency and intensity, creating growing shared risks.

5) Delta: The vast Indus delta mangroves are also divided. From Thatta, Badin, Sajawal and Karachi to India's Gujarat coast, these mangroves depend on the Arabian Sea's tidal waters and freshwater flows of the Indus that regulate salt levels, sediment and nutrients essential for growth.

The Rann of Kutch also straddles the border, with the larger portion in Gujarat and a smaller part in Sindh. It serves as a seasonal flooding basin during the monsoons, transforming itself from desert to marsh.

6) Interconnectedness: Climate disasters create predictable chain reactions: upstream heatwaves trigger downstream flooding, mountain glacial bursts cause delta flooding, and Arabian Sea storms affect the entire coastal ecosystem.

Almost all climate-triggered events when originating in Indian states or held territory, cascade downstream to Pakistan. This upstream-downstream dynamic creates disaster chains that demand anticipatory joint management as the following three case studies demonstrate:

a) Kashmir floods: In September 2014, unprecedented floods caused by heavy post-monsoon rains devastated the Kashmir region and downstream areas on both sides.

The disaster originated from Indian-held Kashmir's meteorological conditions, with the Jhelum and Chenab swelling beyond danger levels, submerging Srinagar and numerous villages. The floods then followed the natural downstream flow into Pakistani Punjab, affecting over 1.1 million people and inundating more than 700 villages. Floodwaters breached riverbanks, displacing millions and causing deaths. This disaster demonstrated Pakistan's vulnerability to upstream water management decisions and underscored the urgent need for shared early warning systems.

b) Transboundary heatwave: The spring 2022 heatwave originated in India's northern plains before sweeping into Pakistan, breaking temperature records and reaching over 49 degrees Celsius in parts of Pakistan.

In India, the heatwave severely damaged the wheat crop, reducing yields and spiking global wheat prices. As the heatwave moved downstream to Pakistan, it triggered accelerated glacier melt leading to Glofs and intensified rains that worsened the floods, submerging a third of the country and displacing millions. This event exemplified how atmospheric extremes originating upstream create compounding climate impacts downstream.

c) Arabian Sea cyclones: Tropical cyclones forming in the Arabian Sea develop closer to India's longer coastline before affecting Pakistan, following weather pattern movements. Cyclone Kyarr (2019), while not making landfall, caused coastal flooding and tidal surges in Maharashtra and Gujarat before impacting Sindh and Balochistan.

Cyclone Tauktae (2021), one of the deadliest cyclones in the Arabian Sea, devastated India's west coast before bringing destructive rain and ferocious winds, forcing evacuations and causing infrastructure disruptions. These events show how climate threats move from upstream origins to downstream impacts.

Global lessons

Despite having no diplomatic relations since 1993, Armenia and Türkiye demonstrate that shared dam management is possible even amid hostile political tensions, operating the Arpaçay Dam through monthly meetings that maintain equitable water-sharing based on agreements of 1927.

Conversely, Ethiopia's unilateral construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam without downstream consent created permanent regional tensions with Egypt and Sudan, demonstrating precisely the type of conflict that cooperative management could prevent.

These shared ecological realities demand immediate joint climate management between India and Pakistan. Each case study demonstrates how disasters originating in India cascade downstream to Pakistan, making collaborative early warning systems and shared water infrastructure management essential for Pakistan's resilience. Without joint management of upstream barrages and dams, Pakistan remains dangerously vulnerable to decisions made by upstream floodgate controllers.

A major lesson from the 2025 floods emerges: only coordinated Indo-Pakistani climate governance can prevent downstream disasters and eliminate suspicions of water terrorism. Joint management of upstream water infrastructure would ensure transparent, cooperative responses to extreme weather events, protecting both nations while building trust. The alternative is a continuation of cascading disasters that neither country can manage by itself.

(By Ali Tauqeer Sheikh Dawn, 06, 11/09/2025)

Climate emergency

THE federal cabinet's decision to declare a climate and agriculture emergency in the country was overdue given the magnitude of devastation resulting from the floods sweeping across Punjab and beyond.

The images of inundated fields in thousands of villages, displaced families, destroyed homes and dead livestock underscore the seriousness of the catastrophe. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has set up a special committee to assess the extent of damage to agriculture, determine how farmers can be compensated and recommend steps to mitigate the deluge's impact on the economy.

The devastation will test both the state's resolve and ability to rehabilitate displaced communities, protect food security and rebuild rural livelihoods in the face of recurring climate shocks. Immediate relief must come first: announcement of financial compensation for smallholders for their losses and soft loans to buy inputs for the next crop cycle; provision of food and fodder supplies; and veterinary and healthcare services in the flood-affected areas to prevent the outbreak of disease.

Equally critical will be the protection of consumers from a possible surge in inflation, which may require timely food imports and stringent action against hoarders.

That said, the massive nationwide human and economic losses and destruction of infrastructure caused by floods past and present show that even prompt and generous relief and rehabilitation efforts remain insufficient.

The government, therefore, should combine relief and rehabilitation with long-term sustained investments in climate adaptation and mitigation so that the economy and farmers are not left at the mercy of extreme weather events, be they floods, droughts or heatwaves.

While declaring a climate and agriculture emergency, the PM has rightly stressed the need for a comprehensive strategy to tackle climate challenges.

In this respect, a broader framework for action — the 31-point Declaration on Rights of Nature & Climate Justice — has already evolved under the Dawn Media Group's Breathe Pakistan initiative.

Drawing from climate rights guaranteed under Article 9A of the Constitution, the call is for all stakeholders to build a "climate democracy". The initiative provides a plan on how to build climate resilience around the restoration of the ecological balance to protect the vulnerable, and secure justice and sustainability for future generations.

Indeed, the national challenge is enormous and demands wide-ranging constitutional, legal and social reforms, besides close cooperation between the centre and provinces.

It also requires other stakeholders — businesses, high-net-worth individuals and civil society — to step up and help the government build climate resilience. After all, climate change is no longer a challenge for governments alone; nor does it impact just the rural economy. It also imposes significant costs on businesses in multiple ways as Pakistan's vulnerability to destructive climate-induced events increases by the day.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 12/09/2025)

Floods and Pakistan

By now everyone in Pakistan who watch TV should know the science and interrelationship of cloud and glacial burst, flash floods, deforestation and landsliding, hopefully the difference between Cusec as a measure of flow quantum and thus intensity, and MAF as the volume of water which flows through our rivers, floods or no floods. And if you know the science of it, one must also know the consequences, the catastrophe and the loss associated with such levels of water flow. One must also be able to thus place in perspective the politics associated with the issue of water between provinces or between states or the irony of it.

Here is a bit more of science - in fact there is much more but I don't want to laden you with it; let that lie in the domain of specialists. The water flow in our rivers has reduced to around 100 MAF annually from 135MAF that they carried in 1947. Population growth and reduction in the flow together have pushed Pakistan in the category of water scarce nations. Of the 100 MAF Pakistan stores only 16 MAF in its dams and reservoirs which is abysmal.

Per one estimate, this year with excess rainfall in catchment areas, augmented by cloud and glacial burst, the water that will flow or spread through our rivers will be in the order of 185-195 MAF. Almost twice the amount usually carried. Sadly, it will cause, and has already, caused loss of precious lives, home and hearth, livestock and devastation of the crops which were under cultivation causing cumulative loss of billions of dollars in relief, rehabilitation, recovery and economic loss, making deficiencies in food, health and exports an existential challenge. What is more, almost all of the water will either flow into the ocean — none being preserved and stored, because we have no storage facilities — or stand idle in perfectly good agricultural fields turning brackish over time and salinating our lands. This is quadruple whammy.



And yet we may not have seen such a consequence. Most of it, if not all, is through adverse human intervention and even poorer leadership which has persistently failed to comprehend the challenges that now stare us in the face and have caused immense devastation. From science must emerge the art of management as well as leadership but only if the science of it is first well understood. 185 MAF flow in the rivers will anyway be too much to carry for any river system if the inherent capacity is far lower but there is a case to be made for appropriate infrastructure to manage and control the flow in floods.

Usually, the rivers are a stream only for most of the year. Is there a case permitting controlled dredging by the construction companies and builders to remove the layers of sand that have almost filled the rivers till their upper edges where water above the holding capacity will spread out? Similarly, the embankments can be deepened and reinforced to contain the water flow. Just as we desilt canals in the off season, let this be a recurrent work on the rivers too. Incremental improvement will help mitigate a super-flood.

Next is channeling the water flow. There was a huge furor on digging Thar canals in parochial characterisation of a common national asset. Just as we have deferred nay obviated the thought of Kalabagh Dam in our consideration, we gave up on digging more canals.

The Sutlej came to life in a ferocious return and remains the river in fury as the rest have tended to settle down. With a canal system for and through Thar, it would have made for a perfect water reserve. Further, it would turn arid land cultivable over time with right treatment. Of course, the canals would take a long time building and the waters would have done what they did through the channels that exist at this time but as climate threatens perpetually there will be more such deluges. Maybe we will be able to store better and save better and be better and rationally ready to mitigate the loss and use it as an opportunity to benefit out of.

Canals in Thar will still lie in Thar and should be designed to carry and distribute water when even Indus can hold it in its banks. Climate change will make that possible more often than we like. Should bane not turn into a boon with little innovation and breaking out of stereotypical shackles? Dams, reservoirs and canals remain the primary sources of mitigating floods and storing water. They must remain our topmost priority for the deluges that will now be the routine.

Urban flooding is the result of unplanned urban growth without compatible infrastructure. Our roads, water and electricity, and sewerage infrastructure in cities can only support so many people. Our cities have only grown in multiples outrunning their capacity. Karachi is a prime example. It will be very difficult to dislodge people now but whatever main arteries of water and sewage remain will need seasonal clearing to keep them functional and running. These are known steps but are never paid attention to by municipal authorities. Even routine administrative function can ensure this little is done.

Subsequently, over time, planned distribution of populations that crowd our city choke points need to be relocated. Infrastructure to support such dislocation must be built in parallel. Rural to urban migration must be curbed. For it, money needs to be spent equitably in all areas to enable growth and job opportunities closer to population points.

Climate change is a constant. It isn't going away. It will define the environment in which humanity will need to coexist. It will rain even more next year and cause severer floods. Infrastructure will take time to develop. Meanwhile, what shall our flood mitigation strategy be with what we have? Can we put in place improved water aquifers to channelise urban flooding into useable storage, at least in Lahore where some sort of rudimentary infrastructure exists?

Institutions such as Flood Control Commission or a similar entity along with better equipped and better led Disaster Management and Mitigation Authority at Federal and Provincial levels need to be established. It can be enhanced later to include all types of contingencies needing emergency rescue and relief measures. It should be a specialist-manned and specialist-led entities. We have played enough by keeping generalists in the lead in our bureaucracy. It is time to make that change.

We are not short of resources or structures, just that over time we let those structures decay with inattention and lack of scrutiny to keep those relevant. It is time to revamp the entire governance paradigm if we must retain the integrity and relevance of government with the people of Pakistan. We can't give them health or education, we should at least be able to save their lives when catastrophes strike.

(By Shahzad Chaudhry The Express Tribune, 15, 12/09/2025)

Residents of Karachi's flooding-prone areas adapt to the new normal

The residents of Saadi Town and surrounding gated communities in Scheme 33 of District East deserve all praise for their resilience and positive attitude during the recent flooding in their localities as most of the water receded on Friday.

A rug hangs out to dry from a balcony of a home. Grey clouds still cover the sky but life carries on as usual in Saadi Town. Just a couple of days ago, the houses here looked like water-locked islands.

"The water did not enter our houses. Since this is not that old a town, the houses are built quite above the roads so we were fine, despite being marooned," Babar Mirza, resident of Saadi Town, Block 7, told *Dawn*.

Even though the water has receded, it has left the roads in bad shape with an uneven surface, cracks and potholes. But the wild grass and weeds in vacant plots are lush green from the rain. They provide distraction from the moisture stains on brick walls.

Communities in Scheme 33 say their expensive residential town 'turns into a katchi abadi' when it rains

Saadi Town, Pir Zaman Town, Saadi Gardens and all other townships were submerged, according to the residents. The water spared none of them. They were all in the same boat.

"It was alright. I have lived in Saadi Town for some 22 years now. We have been through this before," said Majida Bibi, another resident. She said they were prepared for that this time. "Our pantries were well-stocked as we had only recently shopped for the entire household at the start of the month. Even though we were trapped in our homes, we had adequate supplies to live on so there was no need to panic. And see how quickly the water receded," she pointed out.

Haji Haroon Abdul Latif who runs a pan shop in the area said that he lived nearby at Mosamiat. "By the time I closed my shop to go home, the water level had risen to two to three feet. My motorcycle stopped in the water. But there was a mechanic I knew of not far from here, who was able to fix it," said the pan shop owner. "We did not expect the water to recede so soon but it did thankfully," he added.

Meanwhile, Sher Azam, who runs a footwear shop built at quite a height in one street which still had some water, smilingly shared his ordeal. "My shop is quite high from the ground, as you can see. But the water reached its highest step. Then if any vehicle passed by, the current turned the water into little tides which entered my shop. Some show boxes were ruined but thankfully I got a high table just in time to shift my stuff on it and hence save it," he said.

"Now when most of the water has left this area with just a few streets still submerged, passers-by question me why there is still so much water here, or whether I have complained about it anywhere. This is neither my doing nor my fault," he shrugged and frowned.

Dawn then reached out to information secretary for Saadi Town, Saadi Garden Action Committee, Irfan Mughal, who said that flooding in the area was not as big an issue as the infrastructure.

"Our gutter lines, laid out in 1975, have collapsed. The builder tells us that it is not so as actually the lines in Safoora Goth are blocked. But then why are the gutters there not overflowing?" The resident and information secretary wondered.

He also informed that there was a makeshift storm-water drain dug out in their area which opens into the Malir River. "But it was blocked by one of the builders here while using it as a dumping site for trash. There is also a pipeline under the Superhighway with one end opening at the Northern Bypass and the other at Saadi Town. The flooding rainwater enters through it to reach Saadi Gardens and after passing through there it flows into Saadi Town. This flowing flood of water from the Northern Bypass to Saadi Town takes around seven to eight hours but no one cares to block it at any point from entering a residential area," he complained.

"Then when we are flooded, we find the media here doing photo shoots of our plight," he said.

"We are an expensive residential town but we turn into a katchi abadi [shanty town] as soon as it rains heavily," Mr Mughal regretted. "And on top of that we are paying double residential and water taxes here as we have to pay the builder of our township as well as the cantonment board," he said.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 13/09/2025)

Seawater intrusion displaces fishing community

For fishermen living alongside the coast of Sindh, the ups and downs of life are contingent upon the quality and quantity of river water flowing into their area. In recent times, however, the flow of the Indus towards these areas has significantly reduced, thereby allowing seawater to seep in and destroy the lands and livelihoods of fishing families.



Yasmeen Shah, Central Leader of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, revealed that the erosion of land in the coastal areas of Sindh was first reported in 1950. "So far about 3.5 million acres of land has already been lost to the sea. The fishing community has suffered the most since their villages were washed away by the sea, due to which thousands of families had to migrate from their areas. Most of these families migrated to Karachi and other cities in search of employment," revealed Shah.

"Due to the policies of the Sindh government, the contract system in the fisheries sector has been strengthened, which has severely affected the employment of poor fishermen. On the other hand, no arrangement of social security has been made for the fishermen at the government level," added Shah. Referring to the new fisheries policy of the federal government, Shah opined that it would further threaten the employment of fishermen by protecting the interests of big companies seeking to thrive in the fisheries sector.

According to Naseer Memon, an expert on disaster management and resettlement, before the construction of the Tarbela Dam, about 300,000 cusecs of water used to reach the kutch area of Sindh every year, an amount which reached 500,000 cusecs every three to four years.

"Some experts believe that in 2022, a large amount of water flowed down from the Kotri Barrage into the sea, which could have been saved by building a dam on the Indus River. Although that water was not river water, a large amount of it had accumulated in the lower areas of Sindh due to the breakdown of Manchar Lake. At least 12-million-acre feet of water is required for the existing water storage projects, including Bhasha Dam, Mohmand Dam, Kachchi Canal, Raini Canal," noted Memon.

Memon further informed that after the Kotri barrage, the Indus river has to travel 300 miles to reach the sea. "On the route of the river there are three districts of Sindh, Thatta, Sajawal and Badin, which are home to two million people. Do they not need water? In such a situation, the construction of new canals would mean depriving millions of people living in lower Sindh of drinking water," emphasized Memon.

"Global experts claim that at least 5,000 cusecs of water are needed daily or 25-million-acre feet in five years under Kotri to save the Indus Delta ecosystem. However, apart from the monsoon months, this amount of water never passes below Kotri, due to which there is continuous sea intrusion. As a result, 5 00,000 hectares of fertile land in the coastal districts of the province have come under sea water," explained Memon.

Fatima Majeed, newly elected chairperson of the Fishermen Cooperative Society for the welfare of fishermen, told The Express Tribune that the fishing community had been facing problems for a long time. "Increasing the employment opportunities of fishermen and launching their welfare projects will be our top priority. We will also try to increase the export of fish so that more employment opportunities could be provided to the fishermen," said Majeed.

The Express Tribune tried contacting Director General Fisheries Sindh Siraj Ahmed Solangi to inquire about the steps taken by the Sindh government to protect the rights of fishermen, but despite waiting for a long time, no response was received from him. (By Razzak Abro The Express Tribune, 04, 13/09/2025)

Reporting on floods

IN reporting on floods, four terms have been used constantly. They have traditional planning-related meanings, which can no longer be applied to them because of the phenomenon of climate change. These are: 'master plan', 'land use', 'encroachment' and 'riverbed'.

Formal settlements in Pakistan are designed on land use percentages for different usage and are part of building by-laws and zoning regulations. For instance, KDA regulations allocate 45 per cent of project land for residential accommodation; 25pc for roads; 12pc for commercial use; and the rest for amenities. There is now an increased requirement for open spaces and amenities for health and recreation purposes.

In addition, we will have to work out how much area of the settlement will be needed for drainage purposes. We will have to develop easily applicable formulae to determine this and to apply it to flood conditions. Some methods of supplying informal settlements with design methods and their extension will also be needed to help informal developers design settlements. Right now, they try to copy formal procedures to make future regularisation of their settlements easier.

Another aspect to understand is how informal systems operate. They consist of developers, designers, extension agents and financial collection and management systems. They negotiate with land owners on the purchase and occupation of land. They produce more than half of Pakistan's housing stock. As such, their needs and systems of production cannot be overlooked; if they are, they will continue to practise in an ad hoc manner. This is an important factor in promoting, regulating or permitting the development of informal settlements.

The mapping of waterways is necessary.

With the emergence of motorbikes, much more land for development has become available for informal housing. The location of housing schemes can now be more distant from city centres because of motorbike outreach.

Much of the floods have been the result of encroachments on waterways that have popped up on the paths of rivers and streams, thus blocking the natural flows. Encroachers are being blamed for this, and there is a consensus that they should be ruthlessly punished. However, these encroachments could not have emerged without the permission or indifference of government servants, politicians, and in many cases, the judiciary. Large schemes have been built in low-lying areas with their support, granted through the paying of bribes. It is also my understanding that it will be next to impossible to remove all such structures because of the scale of encroachment, and the loss of jobs and capital after and during such removal. So this will have to be negotiated through give and take before it can even begin. A proper process will have to be devised for it.

It is true that rivers and waterways have been blocked with devastating results. To plan for the future, the mapping of waterways is necessary along with their tributaries and distributaries. In almost all cases, no such mapping exists, and the plans submitted for approval to local agencies do not relate to them, even if they exist. All future plans for approval must have proper contours so as to define the slope of the land and its distance to a proper water body which can receive the floodwaters. To do this effectively, it becomes necessary to define what constitutes a 'riverbed'. This is essential because, in view of climate change, the definition must encompass not only the river but its floodplains as well.

Given these co-nsiderations, it be-comes necessary to protect the land between the river and its floodplains, and develop forest, scrub, and alternative agriculture on it. This will reduce land available for real estate development. But this is what we require to create a happier and healthier, physical and social environment.

This loss of land for urban development can be made up by developing higher-density settlements, beyond the floodplains, and for this again, new zoning regulations will have to be developed.

What is being proposed is not easy to do but it will have to be part of a larger legal and institutional arrangement to tackle the flooding issue, and to save Pakistan from recurring devastation. This will also have to become an integral part of academic training so that future planners can carry out relevant research and their teachers can go beyond teaching what they have been taught. In addition, our understanding of the river systems of Pakistan is not enough. We have to relate this understanding to the rivers of India, Kashmir, the Tibet and Afghanistan.

(By Arif Hasan Dawn, 07, 14/09/2025)

Flood-displaced families take shelter on sidewalks

The footpaths of Teen Hatti and Garibabad bridges have turned into makeshift shelters for hundreds of flood-hit families after the recent overflowing of the Lyari River washed away their homes.

According to residents, more than 300 shacks and all belongings inside were swept away by the surging waters. Women, children, and elderly members of the affected families are now living under the open sky on the footpaths, without access to food, clean drinking water, or toilets.

Most of the displaced belong to poor Hindu households, though residents stress that families belonging to all religions live together peacefully in the informal settlements along the Lyari River. Many of them earn their livelihood by selling flowers, trading second-hand clothes, or collecting junk. Now, with their homes and even motorcycles lost to the flood, many have been reduced to begging. "This was like doomsday," recalled Kranti, who fled with her children as the water rose to the top of Garibabad bridge. "Within minutes, everything was washed away - our homes, our food, our belongings."

Another resident, Krishma, said they are now left "empty-handed on the footpath." "Life changed in a terrifying moment. Our huts, our clothes, even utensils were gone. Now our children sleep under the open sky."

Women have voiced particular concerns over the absence of toilets and privacy. "Girls and women are living on the sidewalks without facilities. It is a constant source of fear and hardship," said another resident. Several families also reported that dowry items of young girls were swept away, raising fresh anxieties about future marriages.

Despite the scale of destruction, locals say no government body or welfare organisation has come forward with assistance.

"We have been living under the Teen Hatti bridge for years, earning a livelihood by selling flower garlands," said Mohan Das, a local Hindu community leader. "But after the flood, everything has changed. We are called nomads, but we have nowhere else to go."

Social worker Sapna Devi said the small settlement school at Teen Hatti has also closed after being damaged by the flood.

"The children are roaming aimlessly, the shacks are gone, the toilets destroyed. We don't have the means to rebuild," she said, appealing to the chief minister for urgent help.

Residents, meanwhile, are trying to rebuild their shacks with their own limited resources. "Neither the government nor any public representatives have come to help," said Reshma, a mother of 11, who is now living under a tree near the riverbank. "We are surviving on whatever little we can manage, but how long can this go on?"

For the displaced families of Garibabad and Teen Hatti, the Lyari River flooding has not just destroyed homes - they have upended lives overnight.

(By Aamer Khan The Express Tribune, 04, 15/09/2025)

Sindh, Centre agree to formulate climate plan before next monsoon

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik on Monday agreed to develop a 300-day Climate Action Plan to prepare for the next year's monsoon.

According to a press release issued by the CM House, the meeting also decided to modernise the weather forecasting system, ensuring timely alerts and preparedness.

Both Mr Shah and Dr Malik agreed to constitute a 'working group' under Sindh Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah to prepare the action plan within two weeks.

The meeting, held at CM House on Monday, was attended by Sindh Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah and Principal Secretary Agha Wasif.

The meeting noted that the next monsoon season is expected to begin 15 days earlier than usual.

Against this backdrop, all four provincial governments will present their proposals, including necessary projects, under this plan. It was noted that proactive measures could significantly reduce damages caused by heavy rains and riverine floods.

Both sides acknowledged that Pakistan is facing severe losses due to climate change and emphasised the need for global support to minimise the damage.

The meeting also agreed on strengthening the carbon credit market. "The federal government will fully support provinces in opening the carbon credit market," said Dr Malik.

The CM said that the provincial government had already initiated carbon credit marketing and stressed the need to expand it further.

Plan to improve capacity of Sukkur Barrage

The meeting also discussed improving Sukkur Barrage capacity, reinforcing fragile embankments of the Indus, and restoring old waterways to prevent loss of lives and property during riverine and flash floods.

The CM pointed out that this year's challenges were compounded by riverine floods.

Highlighting the situation at Sukkur Barrage, the CM said its originally designed capacity was 1.5 million cusecs, but due to hydraulic issues and closure of 10 gates, the capacity has reduced to 960,000 cusecs.

"We must enhance Sukkur Barrage's capacity," he emphasised.

The CM also expressed concern over the fragile condition of some embankments along the Indus River.

He noted that Japan is assisting Sindh in strengthening these embankments, particularly the KK Bund and Qadirpur-Shank Bund, and expressed hope that the projects would materialise soon.

He underlined the importance of restoring natural waterways to manage monsoon floods.

"After the construction of barrages in the 1930s, the Katcha region came into existence, altering the natural flow," he said, adding that Sindh has 14 canals and both the Right Bank and Left Bank of the Indus must have their natural drainage paths restored.

He urged the federal government to support Sindh in increasing the Sukkur Barrage's capacity.

Dr Musadik Malik assured him of full cooperation and reiterated that international assistance is essential to tackle the adverse impacts of climate change.

(By Dawn Reporter, 13, 16/09/2025)

Rain-borne risks

HEAVY rains have left Pakistan awash not just with floodwater but also disease. Across Punjab and Sindh, hospitals are overrun with patients suffering from mosquito-borne illnesses and waterborne infections. Entire neighbourhoods have turned into stagnant ponds, ideal breeding grounds for *Aedes aegypti*. The result is a surge in dengue cases, with malaria close behind. Dirty water is also taking its toll. Reports from relief camps describe children doubled over with diarrhoea, families struggling with gastric pain and vomiting, and doctors battling suspected cholera clusters. In makeshift shelters, skin rashes, eye infections and coughs are spreading fast. These maladies are hardly new. They return each monsoon, exposing the same underlying weakness: Pakistan's creaking sanitation and drainage systems, and its chronic underinvestment in public health. The Met Office has issued a high-risk dengue alert from Sept 20 through early December, citing waterlogging, humidity above 60pc, and continuing rainfall as near-perfect conditions for the mosquito's spread. Forecasts also point to further rainfall, raising fears of fresh flooding and prolonging the public health crisis.

Yet the response remains reactive. Provincial authorities issue warnings; local councils scramble to fog neighbourhoods against mosquitoes; hospitals plead for more medicines. International agencies deliver purification tablets and rehydration salts. But little is done to prepare before the rains fall. The result is an annual cycle of avoidable suffering, disproportionately borne by the poor who lack access to clean water or private healthcare. Breaking this cycle requires more than temporary relief. The government must invest in drainage and sewerage systems in its cities, where unplanned sprawl has outpaced infrastructure. Disease-surveillance networks must be strengthened so outbreaks can be tracked and contained swiftly. Relief camps need reliable supplies of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities. And vector control should be year-round, not merely after floodwaters rise. Unless preparedness replaces firefighting, each monsoon will continue to unleash misery.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 17/09/2025)

Call to restore natural waterways to prevent urban flooding in Karachi

Climate change experts and members of civil society on Friday called for the immediate restoration and clearing of the city's natural waterways and warned that continued neglect in this matter could lead to more frequent and severe urban flooding in the city, as seen during recent rains.

This was the gist of a session titled 'Obstacles to Karachi's Natural Waterways and Potential Threats' held at the Karachi Press Club.

The speakers also highlighted that housing societies built on natural waterways like Saadi Town and Saadi Garden, along with projects near the Malir Expressway, also known as Shahrah-i-Bhutto, are environmentally unfriendly.

They also pointed out that hill torrents from the Kirthar range swelled the Lyari and Malir rivers, and stressed the need to remove all blockages and encroachments in these areas to ensure a smooth water flow.

Speaking on the occasion, urban planner Muhammad Toheed said that climate change is now an undeniable reality, and while countries around the world have upgraded their drainage and infrastructure systems in response, Karachi continues to lag far behind.

"Environmental and climate-related issues are nowhere on our list of priorities," he said, adding that despite Pakistan being among the most vulnerable countries to climate change, the issue is still not treated with the urgency it deserves.

He pointed out that Karachi suffers from a lack of proper planning and coordination among civic bodies. There is no significant progress in road engineering or drainage infrastructure. The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation must also be held accountable, he said and highlighted that contractors often build roads without engineering supervision, which results in poorly designed surfaces that cause water accumulation and the formation of low-lying flood-prone areas.

Mr Toheed further criticised the discharge of sewage into stormwater drains by the Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation.

"This is a disaster. Now we can't even tell the difference between a sewerage line and a storm water drain," he said. "The city's sewerage system has collapsed, with sewage stagnating in several areas even in the absence of rainfall."

He stressed the urgent need to restore and separate the city's drainage and sewerage infrastructure to prevent further deterioration.

'Poor urban planning destroys Malir's agricultural land'

Agriculturist Azeem Dehqan said that Karachiites should learn about the city's history, adding that saving the metropolis from its ongoing crises is a moral responsibility shared by all citizens.

He pointed out that Malir and its surrounding areas were once fertile agricultural lands where crops, fruits and vegetables were widely grown, but this productivity has declined significantly over the years due to poor urban planning and the rise of housing societies and development projects that are not environmentally friendly.

Similarly, author Ramzan Baloch said that Malir once had clean drinking water and was known for producing high-quality crops, but over the years, the area has suffered severe degradation of its natural resources.

He also lamented that the people have no interest in environmental issues, which is one of the main reasons for the lack of practical action on climate-related challenges in Pakistan.

Mr Baloch also blamed those in power for the city's current crises and said that it is the responsibility of the rulers to address these problems, but they have failed to take meaningful action.

Social activist Bashir Baloch said large volumes of rainwater flow from the Kirthar range into the Lyari and Malir rivers. Therefore, authorities need to remove all blockages and encroachments in these areas to ensure proper water flow and prevent future disasters.

He cited a historical example and pointed out that the British had once constructed a railway bridge over the Malir River, which was later washed away by heavy rains due to the large volume of water flowing through the river. Something similar had happened during the current rains, he added.

He also criticised the mayor and claimed that he lacked a proper understanding of the city's geography and its natural water channels, as evident from his recent media briefings.

Climate activist Yasir Darya said that due to climate change, weather patterns have become increasingly unpredictable, which has disrupted the natural cycle of seasons. He added that even weather experts are now struggling to accurately forecast conditions beyond a few days. In such a situation, he stressed, better urban planning is urgently needed in Karachi to prepare for and adapt to these changes.

Resolution

A resolution presented during the session called for the restoration and clearing of Karachi's natural waterways and sewerage system.

It also demanded the protection of remaining agricultural land, the formulation of relevant laws and the treatment of sewage for agricultural use.

The resolution further emphasised the need to protect the villages within Karachi's limits.

Lawyers Abeera Ashfaque, Kazim Mahesar and others also spoke on the occasion.

(By Waqas Ali Ranjha Dawn, 13, 20/09/2025)

Experts urge protection of Karachi's natural waterways

At a session held at the Karachi Press Club under the theme "Obstructions and Risks to Karachi's Natural Waterways," environmental experts, legal professionals, urban planners, writers, and civil society representatives underscored the urgent need to safeguard the city's natural drainage channels and ecological balance.



The gathering, attended by legal expert Abeerah Ashfaq, Karachi Press Club Secretary Sohail Afzal Khan, Kazim Hussain Mahesar, Hafeez Baloch of the Indigenous Rights Alliance, urban planner Muhammad Tohid, Professor Dr Abubakar Baloch, environmentalist Darya Khan, historian and writer Azeem Dehqan, and many others, highlighted the vital role of the Malir and Lyari rivers, along with their connected streams and tributaries, in maintaining Karachi's ecological balance and providing natural flood drainage. Participants stressed that the survival of these waterways and their ecosystems was essential for the city's safety and long-term sustainability.

Speakers demanded that both the Malir and Lyari rivers be formally recognized as "living waterways" and that all obstructions, encroachments, and illegal constructions along their courses be removed. They further emphasized that any future construction on these natural waterways should be completely banned to preserve the city's ecological resilience.

A resolution was unanimously passed during the session. It called for Karachi's peri-urban areas, particularly Malir, Gadap, Moedan, and Kathore, to be declared permanent green zones and rural territories. This, the resolution argued, would protect farmlands and centuries-old villages from being consumed by rapidly expanding housing schemes and would allow agricultural lands to retain their vital importance. The resolution also demanded strict enforcement of the existing ban on sand and gravel extraction from the Malir river and its tributaries, warning that such activities compromise the structure of the waterways and disrupt natural flows.

The participants urged the government to classify Malir district's agricultural land permanently as a green zone in the city's master plan. They further called for restoration of leased lands to local farmers or granting them ownership rights, while providing subsidies to farmers to strengthen local food production and maintain ecological balance. Concerns were also raised about the destruction of mangrove forests and other coastal ecological assets, with participants demanding an immediate halt to deforestation, encroachments, and degradation of coastal resources. Effective programs should instead be launched to restore and expand mangrove coverage, they said.

Speakers stressed that in the face of climate change, rapid population growth, and unplanned urban sprawl, Karachi must urgently adopt modern and sustainable global planning standards. This includes the enforcement of safe housing and construction regulations as well as the formulation of a robust disaster management plan. They also insisted on a total ban on the dumping of toxic industrial and chemical waste into the Malir river or any natural waterway. Industries, they said, must be compelled to dispose of their waste through modern waste management systems, and unchecked extraction of groundwater for industrial and commercial use should be prohibited to safeguard the city's water reserves.

The resolution further called for immediate and effective legislation to protect Karachi's natural resources, waterways, and agricultural lands. Participants also urged that further construction of Bhutto Highway be subjected to an impartial environmental assessment. Any land exposed by the highway's extension near the Malir river, they proposed, should be utilized for forest development to restore ecological balance.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 20/09/2025)

Punjab to set up flood relief committees at local level

The Punjab government will establish flood relief committees at district and tehsil levels to oversee aid and rehabilitation in areas devastated by recent floods.

"A survey form, a mobile application and a central monitoring dashboard will ensure effective aid distribution and oversight," Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz said while chairing a meeting on Friday.

She directed officials to initiate comprehensive rehabilitation efforts for affected families, ensure the immediate restoration of roads and bridges and devise simple, effective procedures for providing assistance.

The chief minister said the floods had impacted 3,775 villages across 64 tehsils in 27 districts, damaging more than 63,000 concrete houses and over 309,000 mud houses.

Survey teams comprising officials from the Urban Unit, Revenue Department, Agriculture Department and the Pakistan Army will collect data to ensure accurate assessments.

CM Maryam emphasised that no victim should be left without support. "We will compensate each individual for their losses so that no one is deprived of their rightful relief," she said, directing the establishment of additional relief camps and distribution points.

Sutlej breach submerges villages

A devastating breach of the Sutlej River at Noraja Bhutta has intensified the crisis in south Punjab, inundating 150 more villages across Multan, Lodhran and Bahawalpur districts. Thousands have been displaced as floodwaters encroached on a 20-kilometre stretch near the Multan-Sukkur M-5 Motorway.

In Bahawalpur, villages including Nowshera Jadeed, Saadullahpur, Soiwala, Nai Basti and Basti Chakar were submerged. In Lodhran, Adam Wahan, Munshi Wala, Jhangra and Thali Wala were washed away.

Jalalpur Pirwala remains under water, with authorities reviewing a plan to breach the motorway to redirect floodwaters into the Chenab. A technical committee is expected to deliberate on the plan.

Multan Division Commissioner Amir Karim Khan visited Jalalpur Pirwala to supervise rescue and relief operations. He inspected the damaged motorway section, where National Highway Authority officials briefed him on ongoing repair work using heavy machinery.

Motorway police spokesperson Imran Shah said the M-5 was closed due to flooding, with diversions set up for travellers. Alternate routes through the national highway from Shah Shams and Uch Sharif interchanges were being provided.

Fatalities, losses

Punjab Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Director General Irfan Ali Kathia said the death toll in Punjab had reached 123. Speaking at a press conference, he noted that floodwaters were receding in several areas, with boat operations discontinued as water levels dropped.

He confirmed the end of the monsoon season and said all rivers had returned to normal levels, except for a slightly higher flow in the Sutlej.

However, water remains on 10-12 kilometres of the M-5 motorway, keeping a 22-kilometre section closed.

He stated that water from the Indus River did not cause any problems. "A breached section of the bridge has been filled in," Mr Kathia said.

A report from the South Punjab Secretariat confirmed large-scale human and material losses, including 45 deaths. Around 1.17 million people were affected and 1,112 villages inundated. Floods also damaged 1.17m acres of farmland and destroyed crops on 1.25m acres.

Relief efforts include 1,145 camps providing food, medicine and other essentials. More than 1.5m people and 1.47m livestock have been evacuated. Medical treatment has been provided to 451,978 people, and 848,119 animals have been treated.

BISP relief

Earlier, PPP's Acting President Yusuf Raza Gilani visited Jalalpur Pirwala and reviewed the flood situation.

Speaking to the media, he said that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has demanded that flood victims be assisted through the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

He held a meeting with Adviser to the Prime Minister Rana Sanaullah two days ago and discussed political matters and flood-affected areas.

He said that Mr Bhutto-Zardari had stressed BISP's role in relief efforts while Rana Sanaullah was of the view that assistance to flood-affected people would be conducted through other programmes.

Mr Gilani urged the government to reconsider their decision to help flood-affected people from other programmes and said that the flood victims' families should be supported via the BISP.

(By Zulqernain Tahir and Imran Gabol Dawn, 01, 20/09/2025)

Flood rehabilitation efforts go in vain

During every natural disaster, politicians make publicized promises to the affectees, assuring them that all losses of property will be compensated. However, for devastated victims rebuilding their lives from scratch after hitting rock bottom, a simple cash transfer can only build paper homes.



According to official figures, the torrential rains of 2022 destroyed at least 2.1 million homes in the rural areas of Sindh alongside damaging an additional 4.9 million acres of agricultural land, leading to a huge increase in the poverty ratio reported among the rural population.

In the aftermath of the calamity, the Sindh government initiated a project to provide financial assistance for the reconstruction of affected houses, however, due to the increase in poverty, the affected people have not been able to benefit much from the project.

Sana Khouja, a spokesperson for the Sindh People's Housing for Flood Affectees (SPHF), informed that the construction of 600,000 houses had been completed in various districts while 1.3 million houses were under construction.

"The bank accounts of 1.4 million victims have been opened. In total, each victim gets Rs300,000 in installments for the construction of their house with Rs75,000 given as the first installment, followed by two payments of Rs100,000 and a final disbursement of Rs25,000 as the last instalment," said Khouja.

Khalid Mahmood Sheikh, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the SPHF, informed that flood victims built the roof of their houses after receiving the third installment, after which they started living in their homes within a month.

Denying Sheikh's assertion, Taj Mohammad Marri, a farmer from Sanghar claimed that the majority of affectees who received money in installments for the reconstruction of their houses had not benefited from the scheme. "Many of these affectees have either failed to build their homes on the land or are not living in them. The destruction caused by the 2022 floods led many families towards crippling poverty, forcing them to leave their native areas for employment. Many of those who migrated have still not returned," pointed out Marri.

According to Dr Kaiser Bengali, a renowned economist, the poverty ratio in the districts of Sindh, including Thatta and Sujawal, stands at 75 per cent. "In order to reduce poverty, the government would have to take steps at a larger scale, especially those involving the creation of employment opportunities in the rural areas," highlighted Dr Bengali.

Reportedly, various NGOs, including the Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO) and the HANDS Welfare Foundation, were hired to oversee the construction of houses across different districts.

Speaking to The Express Tribune on the condition of anonymity, the head of one such organization acknowledged that the amount given to the victims in instalments was insufficient to build a proper house, but it still held some value for the average impoverished family.

"The implementation of the project for the construction of houses was also delayed due to several reasons. The first survey of the affected houses was conducted in November 2022 while in July 2023 another survey was conducted by the Sindh government to verify the data. In the first survey, the number of completely destroyed houses was less but this number increased in the second survey," revealed the official.

(By Razzak Abro The Express Tribune, 04, 22/09/2025)

Mayor opens country's first mangrove biodiversity park

Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Saturday inaugurated the country's first Mangrove Biodiversity Park at Korangi Creek.

This is not only the first biodiversity park focused on mangroves in the country, but also the first park that floats on water, said a press release issued by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC).

It said that the park was established in collaboration with the Sindh forest department.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Mayor Wahab said the establishment of this park is an important step towards the protection of mangroves and raising public awareness.

He welcomed the involvement of people from the real estate sector in environmental protection, calling it a positive sign for future generations.

The mayor mentioned that he brought his son to the event so that he could learn about the importance of mangroves and the environment from an early age. He appealed to civil society and the business community to join hands in making this project a success.

He also announced that the KMC will establish another mangrove park near the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) building.

He urged other authorities such as Port Qasim and KPT to set up similar parks in their respective jurisdictions to further strengthen environmental protection efforts. The mayor pointed out that whenever steps are taken for the betterment of the city, various obstacles are created, but the administration will not back down from its mission.

He invited civil society, the media, and the business community to share their suggestions and collaborate to make Karachi a modern and environmentally friendly city.

Referring to Bagh Ibne Qasim, he remarked that despite being a 130-acre park, it hardly receives 130 visitors daily. "This raises a question for all of us — why do people prefer private clubs over public parks," he asked.

Located along Korangi Creek, the park was conceived and designed by environmentalist Shah Murad Aliani and developed in consultation with architect Tariq Alexander Qaiser.

Designed with minimal impact, it uses 80 per cent recycled and natural materials such as wood, bamboo, and upcycled fishing nets. Eco-sensitive features include floating pathways, interactive learning boards, and a floating education centre.

Beyond its design, the park is home to over 72 bird species, such as kingfishers, egrets, Eurasian curlews, and many other migratory birds. Mudskippers and Fiddler crabs are also nestled amongst the Avicennia roots.

(By Dawn Reporter, 13, 28/09/2025)

Conservation funding gap

A new UN report has warned that the world faces an annual funding gap of \$300 billion to \$1 trillion for nature conservation. This financial chasm threatens not only our environment, but the very foundations of the global economy — the report says that over half of the world's GDP, or roughly \$58 trillion, is moderately or highly dependent on nature.

Currently, a meager \$200 billion is invested in conservation each year, representing less than 1% of global GDP. This is in stark contrast to the trillions invested in activities that actively harm biodiversity. The UN analysis underscores that synergy between climate action and sustainable development is the best way forward, estimating that good policies could lead to 40% greater efficiency in government spending.

For a country like Pakistan, these are not abstract figures but a numerical representation of the devastating real-world consequences of climate change. Ranked first on the Climate Risk Index despite contributing less than 1% to global emissions, Pakistan is not only incapable of financing the necessary climate adaptation initiatives, but has also been let down by the developed world, which bears almost all of the historical — and modern-day — responsibility for climate change. The 2022 floods alone inflicted over \$30 billion in damages, yet the international community has failed to deliver on pledges for recovery assistance.

Experts now warn that Pakistan requires between \$40 billion and \$50 billion annually just to mitigate its climate risks — a figure that dwarfs all the assistance Pakistan has ever received and is almost equal to the entire FY26 federal budget.

Bridging the conservation finance gap is both an economic and moral imperative. It requires structural reforms, rethinking economic priorities, subsidies and taxes, scaling up private sector investment, and ensuring that international pledges are more than empty promises. The cost of inaction, as demonstrated by Pakistan's recurring floods, will be far greater.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 01/10/2025)

Karachi brought to standstill as rain floods roads, cuts power

Moderate to heavy rainfall on Tuesday brought the city to a standstill, as it flooded numerous roads and streets and plunged several neighbourhoods into extended power outages, adding to residents' woes.

According to the Met department data, the highest amount of rainfall was 34mm in the Old Airport area, followed by PAF Faisal Base, 29mm; DHA Phase VII, 27mm; Gulshan-i-Hadeed, 25mm; Jinnah Terminal, 21mm; Korangi, 20.5mm; Bahria Town, 9.2mm; Met Office (University Road), 8.4mm; Keamari, 7.5mm; Nazimabad, 1.4mm; PAF Masroor, 1mm; and North Karachi, 1mm.

The afternoon downpour lashed the entire city and triggered widespread traffic chaos. Major thoroughfares such as I.I. Chundrigar Road, M.A. Jinnah Road, and Sharea Faisal were choked with bumper-to-bumper traffic, forcing vehicles to crawl at a snail's pace.

The situation on other major streets, including Jahangir Road, Abdullah Haroon Road, Dr Ziauddin Ahmed Road, Korangi Road, Clifton Road and University Road, was far worse, with commuters waiting for hours to move ahead.

Hundreds of motorcycles and automobiles broke down due to inundated roads, with bikers dragging their two-wheelers and motorists abandoning their broken-down vehicles along the footpaths.

District South, a hub for provincial and federal governments, multinational companies, and banks, bore the brunt of the rain-induced chaos.

With public transport scarce, auto-rickshaw operators took advantage of the situation by overcharging stranded commuters, particularly women. A bank employee on I.I. Chundrigarh Road shared her frustrating experience as she had to pay Rs500 to reach her home in Soldier Bazar.

People had to wait for over an hour to get out of the traffic mess, especially in areas like Shaheen Complex, PIDC, Metropole Hotel, and Saddar.

In some low-lying localities, such as Lyari and downtown, rainwater flooded homes, while in other areas, it formed stagnant ponds and puddles forcing residents to place bricks to create makeshift pathways and avoid wading through filthy rainwater mixed with sewage as overflowing gutters added to the chaos.

While several localities remained without power, the K-Electric, the sole power utility of the city, said that its network remained stable and less than 175 of 2,100 feeders saw a temporary outage mainly due to safety reasons.

It said that the affected feeders were also quickly restored as rain stopped and safety clearances were received from the field teams.

Moderate rain likely today

Karachi and several cities of Sindh received the rain under the influence of a weather system currently prevailing in the region.

"The well-marked low pressure area over Gulf of Cambay and adjoining Gujrat (India) has moved west northwestward and now lay over Saurashtra, Gujrat (India) about 340Km southeast of Karachi.

"The system is likely to move west/southwestwards and emerge over northeast Arabian Sea along Gulf of Kuch by late night/ tomorrow (Wednesday) morning," the department's advisory says.

It further adds that the system is likely to intensify further into a depression by tomorrow due to favorable environmental conditions, sea surface temperature, low/moderate vertical wind shear and upper-level divergence.

"Under its influence, wind-thunderstorm/rain of light to moderate intensity is likely in Tharparkar, Umerkot, Sanghar, Mirpurkhas, Badin, Shaheed Benazirabad, Naushahro Feroze, Hyderabad, Jamshoro, Thatta, Sujawal, Tando Muhammad Khan, Tando Allayar, Matiari districts and Karachi division on Wednesday.

It warns that sea conditions are likely to remain rough/very rough with squally winds 45-55km/hour and advises fishermen not to venture into deep sea till Oct 2.

(By Tahir Siddiqui and Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 01/10/2025)

Low-intensity tremor felt in parts of Karachi

A low-intensity earthquake jolted parts of the city on Wednesday morning, but officials said that the latest seismic activity had nothing to do with more than five dozen tremors the city experienced over two months ago.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, the earthquake measuring 3.2 magnitude on the Richter scale occurred at 9:34am, with its epicentre located seven kilometres northwest of Malir at a depth of 10km.

Speaking to Dawn, Chief Meteorologist Ameer Hyder Leghari, also a senior seismologist, explained that today's seismic activity was caused by the (active) fault passing close to the Thana Bola Khan.

He recalled that the 60-plus low intensity earthquakes the city experienced over two months back were caused by the reactivation of Landhi-Korangi fault line. "Hence, these are entirely two different situations," he said.

Mr Leghari said that seismic activities caused by active faults were a normal thing.

According to experts, Karachi is surrounded by several active and dormant fault lines, and the seismic events — over 60 plus low-intensity tremors this year — were consistent with the region's natural tectonic movements.

The Landhi, Quaidabad, Gadap and Malir areas are located near active fault lines, making them more vulnerable to seismic events.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 02/10/2025)

SBCA launches Sindh-wide crackdown on illegal buildings

The Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) has launched a province-wide survey of dangerous buildings and ordered immediate, on-the-spot demolition of all illegal structures across Sindh.

The operation, apparently, aims at ensuring public safety and bringing long-overdue accountability to Sindh's concrete landscape.

This fresh move is the second major initiative by the SBCA since the July 2025 Lyari building tragedy, which claimed 27 lives and sparked widespread calls for reform and accountability in the building control authority.

Last month, the authority proposed the government in a drafted law to establish a dedicated force to monitor illegal constructions. The draft seeks to make all related offences cognizable, non-bailable, and non-compoundable, introducing strict penalties for those found guilty.

Grading system introduced in building authority for field officers to enhance internal accountability, says DG

On Thursday, the SBCA announced the launch of the province-wide crackdown on dangerous buildings and illegal constructions, following directives from Provincial Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah.

Only last week, the local government portfolio was withdrawn from Saeed Ghani and handed over to Mr Shah.

SBCA Director General Muzamil Hussain Halepoto, who recently assumed office, is spearheading the drive.

It has been emphasised that the measures are aimed at safeguarding human lives, enhancing safety, and ensuring transparency and accountability in construction practices across Sindh.

"The DG SBCA has ordered a comprehensive survey of all dangerous buildings across the province, directing that unauthorised and illegal constructions must be stopped immediately and demolished on the spot," said the SBCA statement.

"The DG has asked the Building Inspectors, Senior Inspectors, Assistant Directors, and Deputy Directors to conduct regular vigilance within their jurisdictions to identify unsafe structures and construction violations."

In order to “enhance efficiency and accountability”, DG Halepoto introduced a grading system for SBCA field officers, the statement added.

The performance-based system will be reflected in each officer’s personal service profile, linking career progression to on-ground results.

Daily field-book

As part of the new protocol, field officers are now required to maintain a daily field-book, documenting all inspections, enforcement actions, and site activities.

These records will serve as an official performance log, enabling systematic monitoring and stricter oversight, the statement added.

The DG further directed the IT Section of the SBCA to develop a comprehensive database of all dangerous buildings and demolished illegal constructions, with daily updates to ensure transparency and effective oversight.

He added that a modern digital monitoring system would also be introduced to strengthen vigilance.

“Highlighting strict accountability, DG Halepoto made it clear that officers who fail to submit reports on time or are found negligent in their duties will face strict disciplinary action under Efficiency & Discipline (E&D) rules,” added the statement.

He also directed that all officers must ensure their attendance, reporting to offices daily at 9am sharp reiterating that these new measures, reflect the government’s vision of transparency, efficiency, and service to the people.

“Our priority is to protect citizens, regulate urban development, and ensure that no illegal or unsafe construction is allowed to endanger lives,” the statement quoted the SBCA DG as saying.
(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 14, 03/10/2025)

The last pit

GEORGE Masih had unclogged six completely choked raw sewage gutters with his bare hands. Working since 1 am, he was tired and felt increasingly dizzy. He gasped for every breath and stalled with every step, as he crawled out from each death trap. By now his lungs were bloated with poisonous gases and his body soaked in layers of disease, excreta and indignity. Forced once more into yet another blocked gutter, George’s frail, half-dead body could endure no longer. This pit would be his last descent, his final humiliation at the hands of a merciless society. Connected to nothingness with the life above, neither a flimsy rope nor a hazy hope, he collapsed into the poisoned void — never to rise again. His son Vishal jumped into the gutter in desperation to save him, but the choking fumes were even quicker to consume the 17-year-old lad. Moments later, 16-year-old Sahil (another close relative), rushed to help, only to be swallowed by the same fatal darkness.

It has been claimed that some officials were present at the site where helpless sanitation workers were being asphyxiated to death every few minutes. Equipped with two gutter-cleaning ceremonial vehicles (about Rs30 million each), they appeared to have been indifferent onlookers. Did they feel no remorse or responsibility to provide safety equipment, to restrain the process or to recover the dead bodies — a task performed many hours later by Edhi’s men?

The 2024 annual report by Citizens’ Commission for Equality and Human Rights stated that “95 per cent work of gutter cleaning in Pakistan continues to be performed by sanitation workers entering the raw sewage gutters and undertaking manual scavenging. The work is carried out with bare hands using no safety equipment or precautions whatsoever, leaving them defenceless against lethal infections, open wounds, crippling illnesses and instant death. It is estimated that about 100 workers die in sewage gutters every year in Pakistan”. It is ironic that the handful of expensive machines owned by some organisations stand unused as showpieces, while the humiliating task of scavenging is still manually performed by the oppressed and the voiceless workers.

We have suffocated them in the darkest and filthiest depths.

We spent 78 long years bestowing fortunes and ‘Fortuners’ to our bureaucrats, while inflicting immense inhumanity, injustice and cruelty on our sanitation workers. We have choked, suffocated and killed them in the darkest and filthiest depths of raw sewage gutters. No collective apology from the state and its 250 million citizens can mitigate this utterly barbaric crime. Perhaps the only compensation is to make a completely new and humane beginning, not by speeches, but by taking a number of practical steps. Begin by immediate legislation that outright bans all manual scavenging and human entry into sewers. India’s supreme court made manual scavenging unconstitutional. Why cannot the parliament of Pakistan pass the relevant laws to protect sanitation workers here?

Next, completely replace manual scavenging and sewer entry by deploying locally fabricated machines designed for jetting, rodding, suction or grabbing functions. If a bunch of volunteer citizens could develop such a machine (called ‘Bhalai’), at one-tenth the cost of a ‘Fortuner’, there would certainly be scores of others who could do a much better job.

Third, make sanitation work an equal opportunity employment, where at least 50pc workers are Muslims. The salary of sanitation workers must be twice the minimum wage, ie, Rs80,000 per month as of 2025. Giving them proper uniform, duty hours, safety equipment, EOBI and social security would incentivise this profession and raise their respect and importance in society. All sanitation workers employed for sewage duties in Pakistan must be full-time employees of government organisations and not contracted or privately engaged workers.

Finally, apply the universally recognised principle that health and safety are the responsibility of the top management and hold those in the highest position of authority personally accountable for any injury or accident.

Three days after the gruesome sewer accident, the three dead bodies had still not been buried, no postmortem had been carried out, no investigation ordered, and no FIR lodged. The state, it seemed, had closed the subject by quietly distributing a paltry sum to the victims' families — already paralysed with poverty, pain and shock. The state made sure there was never a lawsuit against its own criminally negligent officials and that the gut-wrenching oppression will continue for the next 78 years.
(By Naeem Sadiq Dawn, 07, 04/10/2025)

Mayor inaugurates country's 'largest' trampoline park

Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Sunday inaugurated a trampoline park in Safari Park, in what the KMC claims is "Pakistan's largest and most modern facility of its kind".

Talking to reporters at the inauguration ceremony, the mayor said that Safari Park had become deserted in recent years due to the lack of facilities.

"However, the positive outcomes of KMC's hard work over the past two years are now visible. Today, hundreds of families visit Safari Park on weekends, which reflects the citizens' trust in the KMC's dedication and planning," he claimed.

He further said that initiatives were being taken to promote sports and recreational activities in various parts of Karachi.

Wahab says initiatives are being taken to promote sports in Karachi

"There are two other trampoline parks in the city, but the facilities at Safari Park are of highest standard and are available to the public at affordable rates," he added.

He said that the administration was sincerely focusing on improving recreational spaces in the city so that citizens — especially children and youth — could enjoy healthy entertainment opportunities.

"In continuation of these efforts, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation is promoting sports activities across the city," Mayor Wahab said.

He said that opponents were quick to criticise but failed to take any practical steps themselves.

"They even take our projects to court, but we remain steadfast in our mission to serve the people," he added.

He said PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, during the floods, not only represented Sindh but advocated for the entire country on the global stage.

"He personally accompanied the UN Secretary-General to Larkana and other cities to highlight the plight of Pakistan's flood victims at the international level. Our government has built 2.1 million houses for flood-affected people — a historic example of public service," the mayor added.

Accompanied by Deputy Mayor of Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad, and others, the mayor said despite various pressures, the government delivered results in Karachi.

"I also like to congratulate the people of New Karachi, where development projects have now commenced. The Pakistan Peoples Party, driven by the spirit of service, will continue working for the city's development and prosperity," he added.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 14, 06/10/2025)

No local lifeline for flood victims

A FEW weeks ago, along the Multan Sukkur M5 motorway, some 35 kilometres from Jalalpur Pirwala, families squatted on the roadside under the blazing sun while the floodwaters lay right beneath. Their belongings were stacked up under their charpoys while chickens fluttered in tiny cages, the only livestock they had managed to rescue.

Most of the people living alongside the motorway from Multan to Jalalpur Pirwala and Alipur are small farmers or their main source of income comes from livestock. But during this disaster, many lost their livestock and thereby their only source of income.

The Sutlej inundated hundreds of homes at the Noraja Bhutta embankment and damaged the motorway, thereby cutting off Jalalpur Pirwala from Multan. Weeks later, the situation for most of these flood survivors is no different; many are still camping on nearby roads waiting for the water to subside.

Around a couple of weeks ago, the Punjab government announced that the rescue and relief work had concluded. But there was not much relief or rescue work to begin with. When the Sutlej swelled and water came rushing into homes in the villages of Chak No. 67M and 68M at midnight, the locals were taken by surprise. They were given no warning by the local administration and so they ran for cover, grabbing whatever they could take along.

Electricity had been cut off days before the floodwaters came, and so phone batteries were too low to call Rescue 1122, leaving people with no choice but to help themselves. The rescue boats promised by the Punjab government never arrived and so people had to be creative in their rescue efforts. One man strung together plastic bottles to make a float on which he mounted his belongings and then swam through snake-infested water to dry ground. Another found a large karahi and carried his child in it to the dry part of the M5 motorway.

Those in the Alipur area of Sitpur who managed to call Rescue 1122 were told that they would have to wait their turn as they were now part of a long queue of people waiting to be rescued. Some people complained that days went by but their turn never came. Others paid exorbitant amounts to private boat operators to rescue their families and livestock.

In some cases, boats were available but could not rescue families wading through floodwaters nearby because the assigned official was absent. Some NGOs run by religious entities arranged boats and haphazardly picked up families caught in the floodwaters. Local politicians were seen rescuing people, too, but despite their best efforts, they could not effectively carry out a relief operation during a disaster of that scale. And this is the issue — a climate disaster that has overwhelmed the local and provincial administration.

The tent villages or flood relief centres were overcrowded. In Alipur city, a government high school, which had been converted into a camp, had a capacity of 2,000 people but 3,000 were staying there. There were just nine toilets serving these 3,000 people and water would often run out. Those flood survivors who had chosen to stay with their relatives would often come to the camps to eat their meals, and so there was never enough food to go around.

In a government camp in Jalalpur Pirwala, 35 pregnant women were being treated by a midwife. But they complained of headaches and were worried about the uncertain future their babies would be born into. Doctors provided by the Pakistan Navy claimed that people had developed skin diseases, mostly fungal infections, and diarrhoea. However, there were not enough medicines, while the number of patients kept multiplying each day.

Had there been a local government in place, the task of rescuing people would have been much easier.

Now most of the flood relief centres have been shut down and the government has forced people to return to their homes, while a few areas in the Sitpur region of Alipur and the Khan Bela area of Jalalpur Pirwala are still underwater.

The Punjab government is in the process of collecting data on the damage caused by the floods in 27 districts. A joint survey team comprising personnel from the army, the district administration and various other departments has been sent out. But it is a case of too little too late. Help did not come when it was most needed and the flood relief camps failed to provide shelter and food to those who required it.

Had there been a local government (LG) in place, the task of rescuing people would have been much easier. Local politicians would have been better equipped to understand and assess the needs of their areas and would have worked harder to rescue people than the babus or the military who, confused by the local dynamics, lost precious time waiting for orders.

There can be no alternative to a local body government where the true representatives of the people are available to help, especially in times of disaster. They have a stake in the system and rely on the people for votes and therefore are motivated to perform. The PTI and PML-N have repeatedly denied the 120 million people of Punjab a local government. The last LG elections were held in 2015 and the elected bodies completed their tenure in December 2021, after which the provincial government introduced a new LG law, but fresh elections have been repeatedly delayed.

The Punjab government must show maturity, and instead of bickering with the PPP, focus on developing a strong LG system to cater to the many needs of a growing population. Good governance is intrinsically linked to democracy, with its roots reaching the people, and it cannot be realised without a local government in place.
(By Munizae Jahangir Dawn, 06, 10/10/2025)

Gold rush fever grips Karachi as crowds dig along Malir River

A modern-day gold rush unfolded along the banks of Karachi's Malir River, as hundreds of residents — spades, sieves and shovels in hands — flocked to the Korangi Causeway in search of glimmering specks, said to be gold.

Drawn by viral social-media clips showing people digging and panning through river sand, men, women and children gathered at multiple spots near the causeway, hoping to strike it rich. Videos show groups knee-deep in mud, scooping sand into pans and sifting through it under the afternoon sun.

"I saw people picking out shiny grains from the sand," said one onlooker filming the scene. "Everyone believes it could be gold."

Some participants claimed to have found glittering particles, though experts have cautioned that the authenticity of the so-called gold remains unverified. "The gold content of these particles has not been established," one metallurgical analyst told The Express Tribune.

The spectacle drew large numbers of women and children, with families joining the search in what many described as both a treasure hunt and a social-media sensation.

Local authorities, meanwhile, urged citizens to remain cautious and not fall for unconfirmed reports circulating online. "People should avoid crowding the riverbanks or endangering themselves based on rumours," a municipal official said.

By evening, as the crowds began to thin, the riverbanks were dotted with dug-up patches — traces of a citywide fever that, for a moment, turned Karachi's industrial corridor into a scene out of a gold-rush film.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 12/10/2025)

Chimpanzee caught in police action 25 years ago dies at Karachi Zoo

A female chimpanzee named Bibi, who had been living in solitary confinement at the zoo for a long time, died on Saturday.

Sources said the chimp had been under treatment for months.

Speaking to *Dawn*, Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) official Daniyal Sial confirmed her death, saying that "senility" had been declared the cause of death in her post-mortem report.

"Bibi has been under treatment for a long time for multiple health complications, mainly resulting from old age," he said, adding that she was around 40 years old.

According to the KMC sources, Bibi was handed over to the zoo after being caught by the police in an operation

Bibi was captured after she and her mate had escaped from a PECHS house in 2000; the male chimp was killed in police operation in the year 2000. She, along with her mate, had escaped from a house in the PECHS area where they had been kept illegally as "pets".

"The male chimp had to be killed when it had grabbed a police official while Bibi was captured and brought to the zoo where she was later paired with another male chimpanzee. He died three years' later due to malignant growth on his ear," explained an official, adding that the zoo is now left with only one surviving female chimp.

Chimpanzees are listed as endangered species on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. They have already disappeared completely from four countries and are under tremendous pressure everywhere else they live, mainly due to illegal wildlife trade and habitat destruction.

Under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora regulations and laws, chimpanzees are classified as an Appendix I species, completely banning the trade in chimps and parts, except in rare cases such as scientific research.

"In compliance to the international law, we have the Pakistan Trade Control of Wild Flora and Fauna Act 2012, strictly monitoring all movements concerning wildlife," said Sindh Wildlife Conservator Javed Ahmed Mahar.

He pointed out that the Rule 86/Sub-rule 7 of the Sindh Wildlife Protection, Preservation, Conservation and Management Rules 2022 didn't allow import of primates.

"The primates kept in the zoo were among the species once brought to the country under shady deals, prior to the enactment of these laws. Now, there is strict surveillance at the international, national and provincial levels over trans-boundary movement of wildlife species," he said, adding that these laws banned trade of all wildy caught species.
(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 13/10/2025)

List of properties commercialised under repealed Sindh Building Control Authority rules sought

The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Monday directed the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) and others to file details of residential properties converted into commercial ones following an amendment to building rules, which now stands repealed.

The SBCA had issued a notification allowing commercial use of residential properties in the city on March 13 and thereafter, several identical petitions were filed in the SHC impugning the notification, which introduced various controversial changes in the Karachi Building and Town Planning Regulations.

The authority had withdrawn the notification on May 13 after facing severe criticism and legal challenges and thereafter, such petitions were disposed of.

However, one of the petitioners insisted that his petition had not become infructuous since the impugned notification was issued in violation of the apex court's orders and it was also not repealed from the date it was issued but from May 13, apparently to benefit some influential persons, including to unseal a restaurant owned by a political figure of the province.

When the matter came up for hearing before a two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Iqbal Kalhoro on Monday, the petitioner argued that the notification in question was violative of the judgements of the Supreme Court about commercialisation in residential areas of the city and that residential properties were commercialised under the garb of such notification.

The counsel for the SBCA contended that the impugned notification had been repealed, but he did not know the date.

After hearing both sides, the bench in its order said: "Learned counsel for SBCA as well as AAG [assistant advocate general] with coordination of Sindh Master Plan Authority are required to submit details of the properties which under the garb of said notification have been commercialized".

"If the claim of the above-said authorities is that no property was commercialized, the heads of these departments shall file their personal affidavits in support of it", it added The bench adjourned the hearing till Nov 10.
(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 14/10/2025)

KMC unable to relocate Rano to sanctuary until Nov 15, SHC told

The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation remained unable to shift the lone female bear Rano from the Karachi Zoological Gardens to a sanctuary in the federal capital within the stipulated period and informed the Sindh High Court that the relocation of Rano could take place after Nov 15.

KMC officials also submitted to a two-judge bench headed by Justice Muhammad Iqbal Kalhoro that they, in coordination with the wildlife department and others, were committed to executing the shifting of the brown bear after mid-November since a technical team of international animal welfare and rescue group was presently not available while enclosure/crate required for the transfer was also unavailable.

The bench directed the KMC to file a report about health and living conditions of all animals being kept at the Karachi zoo at the next hearing.

Expressing serious resentment over lack of sufficient staff and facilities at the zoo, the bench remarked that zoos should be abolished and animals be kept in natural habitats and asked the officials whether there was any concept of a national park as an alternative to zoological gardens.

The bench was hearing a petition filed for shifting of brown bear Rano. The petitioner also sought declaration of recognition of animal cruelty to the female bear, currently confined at Karachi Zoo.

On Sept 14, the SHC had ordered shifting of the bear from Karachi Zoo to the Bear Sanctuary, Islamabad Wildlife Management Board within two days.

When the petition came up for hearing on Friday, senior director zoo safari and recreation KMC Ikhtlaq Ahmed Yousafzai filed a report in the compliance with the last order.

The report said that the KMC has sent letters to the Austria-based animal welfare and rescue group Four Paws International, Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) and Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) requesting for technical support, arrangements and air-cargo facilitation respectively.

It also maintained that the IWMB has confirmed its willingness to receive the bear at the Islamabad International Airport and sought details about the bear's diet and medical history for appropriate care and the same was provided accordingly.

The report further stated that the PIA has acknowledged KMC's request and outlined the operational requirements for live-animal airlift from Karachi to Islamabad under the relevant regulations including an approved crate, vet fitness and sedation certificate, clearances of Civil Aviation Authority, temperature-controlled handling and cost formalities.

The Four Paws has informed the KMC that its technical team was presently engaged in a large-scale animal-welfare mission in Argentina till Nov 15 and therefore proposed to conduct the bear's relocation after Nov 15, it added.

"That KMC has no objection to this schedule as it aligns with professional animal welfare standards and ensures compliance with international transport regulations. During the intervening period, the bear shall remain under continuous care of Karachi zoo veterinary staff and the conservator, wildlife department, government of Sindh", the report concluded.

Slamming the current treatment being meted out to the animals at the zoo, Justice Kalhoro remarked that it was not the issue of one animal, but many others were also being affected.

He also noted that it seemed very difficult for the authorities concerned to maintain the zoos here and the same should be abolished and animals be kept in natural habitats.

Justice Kalhoro further remarked that in his childhood, he saw animals were kept at zoos in bad condition and many animals were injured.

Representing the petitioner, Jibran Nasir submitted that the Karachi Zoo has only one veterinarian while the counsel for KMC maintained that no new appointments have been made since there was a ban on fresh recruitments.

Adjourning the hearing for two weeks, the bench directed the KMC to file a report about health and living conditions of all animals being kept at the zoo and also asked it to submit a report about the ban on recruitment.

Jude Allen Pereira petitioned the SHC and contended that he was an animal rights activist and approached the court in public interest to seek declaration of recognition of animal cruelty to the female brown bear, currently confined at Karachi Zoo in violation of relevant law.

Citing the KMC through mayor Karachi, senior director zoo KMC and others as respondents, the petitioner also maintained that Rano was transferred from a breeding farm & research centre of the city in March 2017 under an animal exchange programme and the female bear has been held in solitary confinement for the past eight years within a small and barren concrete pit at the Karachi Zoo.

(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 18/10/2025)

Smog season

AS temperatures begin to drop, smog makes an unwelcome arrival in many parts of the country, particularly Lahore and urban Punjab. This [health](#) and climate crisis has been brewing for some years, while the state — nudged on by civil society and experts — has begun to take steps to combat the smog hazard.

South Asian cities have some of the worst air on the planet, and many Pakistani urban centres are included in this unenviable list. For example, on Tuesday, both Lahore and Karachi were amongst the [top five most polluted cities](#) globally, as per IQAir monitoring data, with air quality described as “very unhealthy”. And as winter sets in, things will get worse.

In Lahore's case, experts say a combination of local factors and pollutants blowing in from across the border with India are responsible for the dirty air. In particular, pollution caused by firecrackers set off during the Diwali celebrations in India has aggravated matters, as that country's supreme court relaxed a ban on fireworks, allowing 'green firecrackers' for the occasion.

The Punjab administration has taken steps to help reduce air pollution. This includes deploying [anti-smog guns](#) as well as [rounding up](#) people responsible for emissions from factories and [vehicles](#), and those [burning crop stubble](#). The provincial government has also urged people to wear masks outdoors, and keep doors and windows closed. These steps were direly needed as [last winter](#). Lahore witnessed some of the worst air quality levels on record.

It remains to be seen whether the state's efforts result in a noticeable change in air quality. Along with such precautionary steps, it is essential to reduce emissions and encourage a switch to electric vehicles, while providing more public transport options to reduce the carbon footprint. Experts also recommend a shift to mechanical composters to address the burning of crop stubble.

While many steps are required locally and nationally, air pollution is also a transboundary issue, and a coordinated response is needed for better air across South Asia. As a senior UN official told the recently held [Air We Breathe conference](#), organised by DawnMedia in Lahore, Pakistan cannot face the threats of air pollution and climate change alone; these are issues that require an international response.

The latest example of [firecrackers set off](#) in northern India affecting air quality in Punjab is one small example of this. While relations with our eastern neighbour may be at rock bottom, both states need to [cooperate](#) on issues such as transboundary pollution and climate change.

Clichéd as it may sound, dirty air knows no borders, and it is only through sharing data and best practices that South Asia can tackle the problem of poisonous air. In the meantime, we must do all possible locally to shield people from the acrid smog.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 22/10/2025)

Focusing on climate, trans community seeks freedom and identity

The chunky jewellery glittered, bangles jingled, silver and gold gota kinari and tassels shimmered while the blue, pink and white transgender pride flag fluttered in the afternoon breeze.

The “DJ Wale Babu” was requested to play the anthem ‘Hum Hijre Hain’ and everyone sang in chorus as they stood up with heads held high in the name of freedom and identity.

That's how the Hijra Festival on the theme of “From climate to identity, from struggle for liberation” this year kicked off at Burns Garden here on Saturday.

“My dress is from Generation, my bangles from Zainab Market and jewellery borrowed from my sister,” shared Dr Sarah Gill, the first known transgender medical doctor of the country, as she took over moderating responsibilities for the evening. The doctor, specialising in public health from Szabist these days, was also one of the organisers of the festival.

Hijra Festival demands implementation of employment quota reserved for trans persons

While explaining the purpose of hosting the Hijra Festival, transgender model Kami Chaudhry, its other organiser, explained that they desire the freedom to live life the way they are. “That's why we set aside one day in the 365 days of the year when we can set aside our challenges, our struggles and sorrow, to celebrate our existence,” Kami said. “It is also a day when we raise awareness about our community and our rights as human beings, a day when we also highlight our demands,” she added.

“The theme of this year's festival stresses climate change, our identity, and the struggle to liberation. We are out on the roads under the harsh sun, and we are still outside, soaked to the skin in the rain because many of us don't have a roof over our heads. And still we survive. We survive to bring up our demands, again for the umpteenth time,” Kami reminded. “We demand the full implementation of the employment quota reserved for transgender persons as well as the mandatory inclusion of the transgender community in disaster management, relief, housing and health programmes so that no one is left behind in national policy and practice,” she added.

Babli, a trans person from Islamabad, said that as a citizen of this country, her identity is important to her. “Some people believe that we are easy targets, so they paint a big question mark on our existence. But as citizens of Pakistan, we are as important as

the president or prime minister of Pakistan, as we have the same green CNIC as them and are deserving of the same rights as them," Babli pointed out.

Senior trade unionist Nasir Mansoor congratulated Dr Sara Gill and Kami Chaudhry on successfully holding the Hijra Festival for a third consecutive time. "You have to stand up for yourselves and fight for your rights," he said.

Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Szabist, Dr Riaz Shaikh also congratulated all trans persons at the festival for organising the event.

Sadia Chaudhry, a member of the Transgender Council and a town councillor from the Jamaat-i-Islami, said that she was very happy to be there. "I pray to meet you all again in happier times next year," she said.

Mahnour, another trans person, said that their community also works for climate awareness. "We have tree plantation drives as we also advocate climate awareness, but we also need integration and inclusion in society to make our efforts work," she said.

Arzoo, Moazzam Jahan, Rumaisa, Bunny and trans activist Bindiya Rana also spoke.

Meanwhile, Senorita, Hina Gul and Zehrish Khanzadi put up brilliant performances.
(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 26/10/2025)

City's air quality deteriorates with stagnant air

The city's air quality has deteriorated sharply in recent days, with thick pollution hanging over the skyline, officials and experts said.

While Lahore ranked the world's most polluted city on Sunday with an air quality index (AQI) reading of 267, Karachi came in at sixth place with an AQI of 160 at 10pm, according to monitoring platform IQAir.

A Met official said that the haze visible across the city was neither fog nor smog in the traditional sense. He explained that in the past some days north-easterly winds were very weak, almost stagnant, preventing pollutants from dispersing.

"This is not smog or fog. These are suspended pollutants like smoke from vehicles and emissions from factories that are trapped near the surface due to calm weather," he said. "Normally, winds carry away these particles, but in recent days, the air was still, making the pollution much more noticeable."

He added that this condition is typical during October and November, when changing seasonal patterns often bring reduced wind speeds. The official noted that Karachi's situation is still relatively better than Punjab's, where higher humidity levels contribute to the formation of smog during the same period.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 27/10/2025)

Adapt or die

THE prime minister has just been approached by a group of business leaders who have made proposals to help revive the economy. My advice to him is to keep them running. It is good that he has formed working groups among them, who will develop more detailed proposals. Once the proposals are developed, they should form a committee to review them. After that should come a consultative process to circulate the proposals for wider input from civil society, civil servants and the State Bank. Then he should do something truly unprecedented: submit them for parliamentary review.

Standing committees in the House and Senate should then call members of these working groups to come and brief them about the proposals. After that, the same committees should call for wider public input from analysts and commentators. Wise guys like yours truly here would be happy to oblige with detailed comment on the pros and cons of each proposal. And after that comes the implementation stage, for which there should be an interdepartmental task force drawn from retired civil servants, members of parliament, independent experts and business leaders. But before that, it will be important to draw up the terms of reference for this task force, for which there should be a separate committee.

Here is a bold statement, and in the spirit of Gen Z era engagements, please prove me wrong. Nothing good has ever come out of these proposals the business community has been bringing to the government over the past half century. Of all the lasting policy measures in place today, or any catalysing policy steps taken over the decades, show me one example of a measure that was proposed by the business community which became the basis of lasting economic dynamism.

You would be hard-pressed to think of a single example because there are none. Pakistan's business community has literally grown up thinking that it is the government's job to help them make a profit. They press this point by subtle attempts at blackmail. 'We will be forced to shut our plants down' they say sometimes. Or 'we will take our investments to another country'.

Nothing good has ever come out of the proposals the business community has been bringing to the government.

Simple fact here is that not one of these gents is fit to run any business in any country beyond maybe glorified rent-a-car services or, yes, a pizza franchise. It's only in Pakistan that they make outlandish profits for minimal effort, where they privatise the gains but socialise the costs of the incentives the government provides them with, and where they can credibly lobby a government to do more to help make their business profitable. If they threaten to close their plants, call their bluff. They don't create jobs on the scale they like to think, in any case. Certainly not by any comparison to the informal sector or agriculture. If they threaten to take

their investments to foreign shores, welcome them. Those who can already have. Those who have not, cannot. And they know it.

But there are some things the business community should understand, to the marrow of their bones. One, the era of cheap energy is over. With Pakistan's gas fields in advanced stages of decline and the grid weighed down by large-scale defections and high-capacity payments, the only way to bring energy costs down is via subsidies, and there should be zero appetite for that today. Two, the era of cheap money is also over. Over the years, these same business leaders have grown accustomed to cheap, subsidised credit provided by the State Bank through various schemes. But those schemes have been abused heavily, especially in the time of the PTI government when they were used to pump money into real estate rackets and inflate prices of speculative assets like plot files under the specious argument of using housing and construction as an engine of growth.

It was in response to this that the IMF basically required the State Bank to surrender the power to run such schemes altogether. This was a good step and has been taken now. These schemes pump printed money into the economy, which is captured first and foremost by the billionaire elites, converted into dollars and remitted into their accounts abroad. Then comes the inflationary pressure they inevitably create, as the supply of rupees in the economy rapidly outpaces the availability of dollars, and the ensuing mismatch between foreign currency and domestic liquidity in the system forces an abrupt exchange rate devaluation. The resulting inflation hits the poor, who have seen little to none of the benefits from the period of growth trickle down to them.

The story is the same with the interest rate. The State Bank has wisely held rates steady in the last three announcements, and should continue to do so until external sector pressures subside reliably. Maybe, the State Bank should announce some sort of external sector comfort threshold that must be crossed before further rate cuts can be considered. These can include reserve import cover crossing the three-month bar, forward liabilities of the State Bank below \$1bn, the export to import ratio remaining stable within a narrow, predefined corridor for at least two quarters. This will help mute some of the annoying babble around CPI inflation and interest rates.

The business community must understand that things are changing, and they need to keep pace with a changing world. Energy-intensive industries will find it difficult to survive in the new world, if they don't make their own arrangements for energy going forward. Speculative enterprises like real estate should be allowed to gasp for air long enough till they internalise the virtues of actually adding value to make money. But under no circumstances should government take it upon itself to help revive industry fortunes. This is a great moment to communicate a long overdue message to the freeloaders. It is time to adapt or die. Let them do what business people do everywhere else: work and take risks.

(By Khurram Husain Dawn, 06, 30/10/2025)

Gusts from Thar Desert sweep city at 48.6km/h

Karachi experienced stronger-than-usual winds on Wednesday, with gusts reaching up to 48.6 km/h (26 nautical miles). Pakistan Meteorological Department attributed the surge to a low-pressure system over the Arabian Sea.

Similar gusty conditions may continue intermittently today (Thursday), with dusty winds reported in several city and suburban areas.

According to the Early Warning Centre, sea breeze remains largely inactive, and winds from the northeast-particularly from the Tharparkar region-are likely to dominate.

The city's maximum temperature is expected to hover between 33°C and 35°C on Thursday and Friday.

While daytime weather across most parts of Sindh will remain hot and dry, cooler nights are forecast. Residents are advised to stay cautious, especially in open areas, as wind-driven dust may affect visibility and air quality.

Breathing ailments, chest infections and allergies are on the rise due to dusty weather.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 30/10/2025)

Deteriorating air quality chokes Karachi

Although the arrival of autumn has become synonymous with the smog season in much of Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, little attention is paid to the quality of air in the industrial hub of the country, where high vehicle and industrial emissions have polluted the atmosphere.

Air pollution in Karachi has become such a serious issue that even the Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP) has expressed deep concern over the city's worsening air quality in a recent environmental report. The AGP has urged the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) to establish a monitoring network in Karachi to track air quality, particularly PM10, PM2.5, SO₂, and NO_x levels and to take necessary measures to reduce the emission of toxic chemicals.

In the report, the AGP stated that SEPA should register all industrial units operating in Karachi and build a comprehensive database on them. Furthermore, pollution charges should be imposed on industries contributing to environmental degradation, and specific rules should be formulated for this purpose.

According to environmental activist Afaq Bhatti, one of the major causes of air pollution in Karachi is vehicle emissions since with the city's rapid urban expansion, the number of vehicles including buses, trucks, motorcycles, and cars has skyrocketed. Many of these vehicles are old models lacking proper emission controls, worsening the pollution problem.

"Industrial pollution is another major concern. Karachi hosts numerous factories and industrial zones, many of which do not comply with environmental regulations and release harmful chemicals and particulates into the air. Ongoing construction projects across the city also contribute to poor air quality, mainly due to dust and particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) generated during construction," said Bhatti who further noted that open garbage burning, which is common in Karachi, too released toxic chemicals and particles into the air.

Meanwhile, Muttahida Qaumi Movement (Pakistan) Deputy Parliamentary Leader in the Sindh Assembly, Taha Ahmed Khan, emphasized that air pollution in Karachi had reached dangerous levels, causing widespread illnesses. Khan recently wrote a letter to Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, urging immediate administrative action to curb the city's worsening air pollution, which he described as a serious public health crisis affecting millions of residents.

In his letter, Khan expressed deep concern over the deteriorating air quality across Sindh, particularly in Karachi, and cited data from AirGradient's Karachi Map and Linked Things AI, both recognized for their scientifically validated air monitoring platforms.

According to the data, PM2.5 levels in Karachi often exceed 150 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) - six times higher than the World Health Organization (WHO)'s safe limit of $25 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. In some areas, levels have even surpassed $200 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, making Karachi one of the most polluted major cities in the world.

"Prolonged exposure to such high pollution levels increases the risk of respiratory diseases, heart problems, and reduced life expectancy, with the worst effects seen in low-income neighborhoods and informal settlements where healthcare facilities are already inadequate," noted Khan.

Khan urged the Sindh government to immediately adopt a comprehensive "Clean Air and Electric Vehicles Policy", including zoning restrictions for high-emission vehicles and industrial areas, expansion of electric public transport systems in Karachi and Hyderabad, incentives for promoting electric vehicles and renewable energy integration, alongside the strengthening of urban tree plantation and mangrove restoration programs.

(By Razzak Abro The Express Tribune, 04, 30/10/2025)

Rano prepares for a new life in Islamabad rehab centre

As female bear Rano undergoes behavioural training at the Karachi Zoo, Sindh Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah has directed the concerned wildlife team to take all measures and ensure that her relocation to Islamabad is safe and transparent.

He was chairing a high-level meeting on Wednesday at the Sindh Secretariat to review the arrangements being made on the Sindh High Court (SHC) orders for Rano's relocation to a rehabilitation centre operating under the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB).

The attendees included secretary forest & wildlife, municipal commissioner, conservator wildlife and representatives of the IWMB, among others.

During the meeting, officials representing the provincial wildlife department shared that a custom-designed and built iron cage meeting all safety standards had been prepared for Rano's relocation and that the female bear was currently undergoing behavioural training sessions, helping her establish a bond with the team.

Female brown bear undergoing behavioural training at Karachi Zoo; CS directs wildlife team to ensure safe relocation

The members included Dr Aamir and Abida Raees from Karachi Zoo, wildlife rangers Abbas, Anees, and Sana Raja from IWMB and wildlife trainer Abid from the provincial wildlife department.

Officials informed Mr Shah that Rano had shown a very positive response to the training. She had developed a friendly bond with the team, especially with wildlife ranger Sana Raja.

Rano, they said, now ate honey directly from her hand and eagerly waited for her arrival daily, indicating strong trust and progress in her behavioural adaptation.

The chief secretary directed that Rano must not be forcibly handled or sedated during the transfer process. He also emphasised that the bear should voluntarily enter the transport cage through gradual and positive reinforcement training methods.

He also instructed that the entire transfer process be video recorded for documentation and transparency and that all arrangements in Islamabad be completed before Rano's transfer.

In the first phase, according to the SHC's orders, the female brown bear would be transferred to the rehab and in the second, she would be relocated to her natural range in Gilgit-Baltistan.

It might be recalled that the SHC had ordered the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation to relocate brown bear Rano, a critically endangered species in zoo captivity since 2017, to the sanctuary managed by the IWMB within two days.

The SHC also ruled that the transfer of the female Himalayan bear must take place through air cargo under the supervision of a senior official of the wildlife department and directed the KMC to extend cooperation and ensure the shifting.

The orders came on a petition raising concern over the bear's condition.
(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 30/10/2025)

Karachi's Korangi Expressway turns into toxic wasteland

The Korangi Expressway, once a bustling thoroughfare, has now become an open landfill, plagued by the rampant burning of garbage and the illegal establishment of waste collection points. The relentless stench, clouds of toxic smoke, and plastic debris swirling through the air have turned life into a daily ordeal for residents of the areas around it — and even the motorists and motorcyclists.

The persistent air pollution has begun to take a heavy toll on the health of locals. Respiratory issues, especially asthma, and flu-like symptoms are widespread, while the once vibrant greenery along the Expressway is being smothered by the ever-growing accumulation of waste.

Waste collection points along the Expressway, often situated at multiple spots, have become epicenters for burning refuse. Trucks deliver garbage from across the metropolis, which is then set on fire to reduce its volume before being transported to landfill sites.

This practice not only contributes to the thick, noxious smoke enveloping the areas around the Expressway but also poses a safety risk for commuters. On some occasions, visibility has dropped to zero due to the smoke, creating hazardous conditions on the road. Meanwhile, plastic bags, carried by the wind, have become a common sight, clinging to trees, vehicles, and roads.

The situation has become increasingly unbearable for residents. Breathing has become difficult, especially for vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, and asthma patients. The stench from the burning garbage has made daily life a struggle.

Students of the Iqra University, which is located near the affected area, have reported that the smoke and foul odor have disrupted their ability to focus, even inside classrooms. "There are no leaves left on the trees-only plastic. It feels as though the whole area is adorned with trash. This isn't a natural change, but rather a failure of the administration," one student Ali Aamir said while talking to The Express Tribune.

Another student said, "We used to enjoy tea at the open-air café, but now, even with masks on, the smoke makes it impossible to sit outside. Our eyes burn from the fumes."

The situation is equally troublesome for motorcyclists, who are often caught in the crossfire of flying plastic bags. These bags can stick to riders' faces, hands, or get entangled in tyres, increasing the risk of accidents. "This is a major artery of the city, yet it is being neglected by the authorities," one citizen complained.

Environmental expert Dr Amir Alamgir from the University of Karachi warned that Karachi's air pollution levels exceed global standards, worsened by traffic, industrial emissions, and garbage burning. "Plastic makes up over 60% of Karachi's solid waste. It blocks drains, pollutes the sea, and suffocates trees," he said. He urged public awareness and environmental education to combat the crisis.

Medical professionals echoed concerns, linking the smoke to rising cases of asthma and lung diseases. They advised residents to wear masks, shut windows, and protect vulnerable groups.

Sindh Solid Waste Management Board Managing Director Tariq Ali Nizamani acknowledged the issue and said complaints had been received. "Strong winds worsened the spread, but we're working on solutions," he said. The board has proposed 24-hour operation of Garbage Transfer Stations (GTS) and detained individuals burning waste for metal extraction. Four guards have been deployed to prevent further incidents.

With World Bank support, four enclosed GTS stations are under construction to curb odor and pollution. "Once operational, waste collection will follow scientific methods, offering relief to citizens," Nizamani assured.

Residents and students have urged authorities to relocate garbage points away from homes and schools and take strict action against illegal waste burning.

(By Ayesha Khan Ansari The Express Tribune, 04, 31/10/2025)

SHC-mandated committee inspects Karachi Zoo to assess animals' health

A committee constituted by the Sindh High Court (SHC) on Sunday visited the Karachi Zoo to check the physical and mental health of female brown bear Rano and other animals kept in the zoo.

During the visit, the committee members inspected various enclosures, observed animal behaviour, and evaluated their overall health conditions.

The objective of the visit was to ensure that the animals are being kept in accordance with prescribed welfare standards and to identify any areas that may require improvement.

The zoo administration extended full cooperation to the visiting committee. The team provided detailed briefings regarding ongoing animal care practices, feeding routines, veterinary check-ups, and maintenance of enclosures. It was noted that regular veterinary support, proper nutrition, and improved hygiene measures have contributed positively to animal welfare.

However, the committee also observed a few areas for further enhancement and recorded specific recommendations to ensure continued compliance with animal care standards and to further uplift the zoo environment.

These observations will be formally presented to the SHC in the upcoming report for appropriate consideration.

The zoo administration reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining international standards of animal welfare, transparency, and cooperation with all relevant authorities to ensure a safe, healthy, and good environment for all animals under its care.

On Oct 17, the SHC had ordered the committee to visit the Karachi Zoo and prepare a detailed report about number of animals being kept at the zoo as well as physical and mental health of such animals.

It had also directed the KMC and others to shift Rano to a sanctuary in the federal capital in two weeks as authorities sought more time for the relocation of the brown bear.

The SHC noted that the issue was not of one bear but hundreds of animals being kept in captivity, apparently just for the entertainment of people.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 14, 03/11/2025)

Citizens' health at risk in Karachi as 'hazardous' clouds of dust, smog hang in the air

With a significant drop in minimum temperature, Karachi has been experiencing what the Met Office has described as "hazardous smog" that poses a serious health risk to people, particularly children.

Health experts have called upon the general public and vulnerable citizens to wear face masks to protect themselves from cold and raise their immunity levels by eating nutritious food.

The situation, they said, had worsened due to clouds of dust being generated throughout the day from the many under-construction sites in the city.

Speaking to *Dawn*, Chief Meteorologist Ameer Hyder Laghari explained that what Karachi was experiencing early morning these days was not fog but rather "hazardous" smog — a type of intense air pollution that reduces visibility and harms human health and the environment.

"In winters, the cold weather slows down the movement of air pollutants and the low wind speed fails to disperse them, leading to the build-up of smog. For fog to happen, we need high moisture content in the air that we don't have right now," he said, warning about the health impact of smog, especially on children.

The data released by the Pakistan Meteorological Department showed that the minimum temperature has dropped from 20 degrees Celsius this Monday (Nov 3) to 17 degrees Celsius on Friday (Nov 7). Relative humidity early morning was 17 and 16 per cent in the morning and evening on Friday, respectively.

On Friday, according to the Air Quality Index (AQI) report, Karachi has been ranked the fourth most polluted city in the world. The air quality has been declared "hazardous" to human health, said an *APP* report.

Wearing face masks

According to health experts, taking precautions — especially wearing a face mask and avoiding going out unnecessarily — is the best way to protect oneself from air pollution and to minimise the risk of respiratory illnesses.

"But, this is hard to implement in case of children. There is no doubt that dust allergy has become a major problem in Karachi and children have been the worst hit. In recent weeks, we have been seeing a huge number of cases of chest infection, many of them with pneumonia requiring admission," said senior paediatrician Dr Ved Vaswani, currently associated with Burhani Hospital and Al-Mustafa Medical Centre, adding that the situation hadn't improved yet.

Seconding his opinion, Dr Abdul Ghafoor Shoro representing the Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) said that cases of chest infections in children had risen dramatically.

"Delayed medical intervention leads to pneumonia. Its symptoms include fever, severe coughing and difficulty in breathing," he said. He emphasised that junk food is harmful and stressed the need to eat healthy food. He said that children should be protected from cold especially at midnight when there was a sudden drop in temperature.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 08/11/2025)

Climate vulnerability

It has become far too easy for the world to warn Pakistan about climate risks while offering little beyond frameworks, advice and debt-linked facilities. Whether it is the World Bank speaking of environmental fragility or the IMF promoting its Resilience and

Sustainability Facility, the message is framed as support but delivered as a burden. These familiar refrains resurfaced once again at the closing plenary of the Sustainable Development Conference in Islamabad, where international financial institutions expressed deep concern over Pakistan's escalating climate vulnerability, rapid population growth and shrinking natural resources. The remarks were presented as guidance — yet they served largely as reminders of how little has changed in the global response to the climate crisis Pakistan confronts daily.

This persistent imbalance between advice and action defines the global climate order. Pakistan is pushed to integrate climate considerations into its public financial management in a context where genuine international support has been chronically delayed or quietly diluted. The Loss and Damage Fund, celebrated as a historic breakthrough, remains largely symbolic for frontline states.

Meanwhile, adaptation financing comes slowly, and mostly as loans that strain already limited fiscal space. None of this negates Pakistan's own obligations. Air pollution is worsening, groundwater is vanishing and environmental regulation remains weak. Rapid population growth is placing unsustainable pressure on a resource base already eroded by decades of mismanagement. The state cannot afford complacency in the hope that external help will fill the gaps. But it is equally true that no country can withstand the frequency and scale of climate disasters Pakistan faces without meaningful global assistance.

If the global community is serious about climate justice, then predictable financing and substantial grants must replace procedural promises. Pakistan is trying to act but these efforts cannot compensate for a global financing system that remains structurally unjust.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 09/11/2025)

Under climate assault

A new report on the impact of climate change underscores that the countries least responsible for the climate crisis are the ones bearing its most brutal costs. Pakistan is one of the countries for which this is a devastating present-day reality. The latest Climate Risk Index 2026 from the respected NGO Germanwatch ranks us 15th among the countries most affected by extreme weather events over the past three decades.

This relatively low ranking belies the acute and escalating suffering on the ground and conflicts with several other assessments that place Pakistan among the five worst-affected and most at-risk countries. The true picture is painted by the relentless sequence of disasters plaguing the nation. From the unprecedented 2022 floods that submerged a third of the country and displaced millions, to the repeated inundations in 2024 and 2025, it is clear that we are under a climate assault, despite contributing less than 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

This injustice is at the core of the report, which highlights that the ten most affected nations in the long term are all from the Global South, and none from the high-income group. The human and economic toll is staggering. Apart from the thousands of lives lost globally every year, Pakistan alone has faced economic losses exceeding \$30 billion from recent floods, crippling an economy already under strain and destroying livelihoods. The most vulnerable among us — children and the elderly — are paying the highest price, with underfunded healthcare systems failing to protect them from climate-driven disease and death.

An effective climate response demands that world leaders, particularly those from high-emitting nations, move beyond hollow promises at forums like COP30. They must immediately ramp up emissions reductions and finally make good on long-delayed climate finance for adaptation and loss and damage. For its part, Pakistan must focus on investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, early warning systems and water-secure agriculture.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 15/11/2025)

Torturous zoo

The court-appointed observers' findings paint a grim picture. The zoo lacks facilities for basic veterinary procedures, and its clinic is in a state of disrepair, housing broken and rusted equipment. But the status of veterinary facilities and equipment is a moot point when the zoo's sole veterinarian, despite over 30 years of service, lacks any formal education in wildlife care. How the zoo's management allowed this to happen and how the country's veterinary institutes and regulators failed to notice it does not speak well for anyone involved.

The case of the Himalayan brown bear named Rano, which actually led to the current court-ordered investigation, is a glaring example of the farcical failings of the zoo's management. For several years, the bear was fed a steady diet of milk and bread, neither of which should even have accidentally been left within her reach.

Meanwhile, her pen had not been properly cleaned for two years, and the small pool inside was lined with waste. She was so mentally traumatised that she had been violently headbutting the bars of her pen with her head, leading to a maggot-infested head injury and her eventual relocation to a sanctuary in Islamabad. The skin condition affecting a white tigress at the zoo, and the visible signs of depression and loneliness in its lone surviving chimpanzee, are heartbreaking.

The state of Karachi Zoo is another confirmation that Pakistan's zoos in general are defined by animal cruelty. The most humane thing to do would arguably be to scale down the zoo, or even close up shop, as Islamabad Zoo did in 2020 due to appalling conditions.

Alternatively, the court could order reforms to bring it up to par, but given the laundry list of problems and the fact that our governments have abjectly failed to look after citizens, expecting animals to get proper care is wishful thinking.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 17/11/2025)

Ecosystem of change

SCEPTICS argue that the annual climate conferences are elaborate talk shops that produce renewed pledges without commensurate action. This dismissal is fundamentally flawed. It misses the unprecedented transformation unfolding across the global economy.

The Conference of the Parties process under the UNFCCC is the most consequential engine for a paradigm shift in global development. It has created an irreversible ecosystem of change that is accelerating transformation across every major sector. The process has succeeded not through mandate but by embedding innovations in science, economics, ecology, and legal accountability into the global policy bloodstream. COP has effectively rewired the global development trajectory.

UNFCCC's uniqueness: The climate convention that works through annual COPs is uniquely anchored in robust, consensus-driven science from the IPCC, whose First Assessment Report in 1990 confirmed that human activities were substantially increasing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and causing global warming, directly catalysing the UNFCCC's adoption in 1992. No other environmental convention has such a powerful, independent scientific body constantly updating evidence. The IPCC reports are formally accepted by governments and directly shape ambition for subsequent negotiations, creating a built-in ratchet mechanism through the UNFCCC's five-yearly Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that compels countries to progressively increase climate ambition backed by latest science.

The UNFCCC has superseded virtually all other global development frameworks. SDG-13 on climate action has become the organising lens through which all other development goals are interpreted. Climate finance rivals traditional development assistance.

The NDCs under the Paris Agreement often command more resources than national SDG implementation plans. The COP process has catalysed new fields of intellectual inquiry: climate finance architecture, just transition, climate litigation, net-zero pathways, adaptation economics, climate-triggered displacement, migration, and conflicts.

Three decades of COP negotiations have transformed climate action.

Climate change poses an existential planetary threat measurable by single, universally understood metrics: GHG emissions and global average temperature rise, with the critical 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold serving as a clear danger line. In contrast, the sister Rio conventions on biodiversity and desertification grapple with multifaceted, localised variables that lack such universal, disruptive metrics. Similarly, climate adaptation and resilience, despite being critical for vulnerable countries like Pakistan, lack standardised global metrics, making it harder to mobilise international finance and political attention compared to mitigation efforts.

Transformations & barriers: The world has not succeeded in limiting global warming to the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C threshold, and this failure carries consequences. Yet to dismiss the past decade as wasted would be to ignore substantial accomplishments. Ten years ago, scientific models projected warming of up to 3.8°C by century's end. Today, that projection has improved to between 2.5 and 2.9°C — still dangerous but representing nearly one degree of warming averted through collective action.

Three decades of COP negotiations have transformed climate action from diplomatic aspiration into structural economic reality, driven mostly by economic imperatives. Solar power costs have plummeted, making renewable energy the cheapest option for new power generation worldwide. E-vehicles have moved from luxury novelty to market reality as one in five cars sold globally is now electric. Clean energy investment has reached unprecedented levels. Financial markets have reoriented, with climate risk now recognised as fiduciary risk. The Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero represents over \$130 trillion in assets.

These transformations occurred during the hottest decade on record — a reminder that progress and peril coexist. The world is still failing to meet the 1.5°C benchmark. More troubling is the inability to finance adaptation. While mitigation finance flows relatively freely, especially private sector investments, adaptation finance remains insufficient.

This gap reflects a fundamental asymmetry in the global climate architecture where those least responsible for the crisis bear its heaviest burdens. At COP29, countries acknowledged developing nations require \$1.3tr annually by 2035 to manage climate impacts, including \$300 billion yearly for adaptation in public finance from developed countries. The commitment falls short of actual need, and where this money will come from remains uncertain. Global warming already inflicts some \$1.4tr in annual economic damage worldwide. These costs fall disproportionately on those least responsible yet most vulnerable. The adaptation finance promised represents less than what the world already loses each year, underscoring the inadequacy of international response.

The question is no longer whether transition is possible but whether it can accelerate sufficiently to avert catastrophe. Infrastructure, technology, and economic logic for decarbonisation now exist. What is uncertain is whether national political systems can translate the momentum to adopt their ecosystems of change.

Pakistan's dilemmas: Pakistan's experience reflects both promise and challenge. We have witnessed an explosive rooftop solar revolution while official energy planning paradoxically pursues coal projects that global markets have deemed stranded assets. The farm sector responds, but only to international pressure. Major cities remain absent from global transformative networks like C40. While PSDP has not leapt forward, major infrastructure projects face climate risk screening from international lenders. The SECP has begun to push for sustainability reporting standards, but these market-driven shifts have not translated into a coherent national reform agenda.

Pakistan's adaptation needs are estimated at 10 to 18 times larger than current public finance flows, creating a dangerous situation where crucial domestic reforms are delayed pending promised climate finance that may not arrive. The structural

asymmetry compounds this: international funding for mitigation flows as a global public good, while adaptation remains unattended and underfunded.

The UNFCCC has spurred global transformation with undeniable economic benefits. Countries that have embraced this shift report more jobs and stronger growth rates. China's experience is striking: it now earns more from green technologies than the US does from fossil fuels. Yet we must be clear about what COPs can and cannot do. They set direction and global ambition only within the bounds of consensus. National ambition, reform agendas, and delivery mechanisms remain the responsibility of each country. The COP is not an alternative to domestic action.

(By Ali Tauqeer Sheikh Dawn, 06, 20/11/2025)

Preparing for floods

Climate change continues to be a serious threat to Pakistan, and the latest warning from NDMA only reinforces how urgent the situation has become. With projections suggesting 22-26 per cent above-normal rainfall during the 2026 monsoon, the country is once again staring at the possibility of large-scale displacement, economic losses and avoidable tragedy. Each year, weather extremes grow sharper, yet our policies and infrastructure struggle to keep pace.

The sheer scale of vulnerability is evident from this year's monsoon alone, during which 3.1 million people had to be relocated to safe areas. Such staggering numbers are less a sign of preparedness and more an indictment of how deeply exposed communities remain. The NDMA's emphasis on improved disaster management — from regulating river flows to restricting tourism during the high-risk months of June and July — is an understanding that passive reactions are no longer enough.

Pakistan's early warning system, which alerts provinces six to eight months in advance, is a critical tool. But its value depends entirely on whether provincial authorities act on these alerts. Weekly advisories must translate this into practical steps: reinforcing embankments, clearing drains, relocating settlements from riverbeds and ensuring that relief supplies and rescue teams are in place before the first cloudburst hits.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's directive for the accelerated implementation of the Ministry of Climate Change's short-term plan is a necessary push, but it will mean little without consistent follow-through. Likewise, convening the National Water Council desperately needs national-level planning on water management to avert the disastrous flooding patterns witnessed in 2010 and 2022.

What remains uncertain, however, is whether Pakistan will finally act with the seriousness the crisis demands. Above-normal rainfall does not have to lead to above-normal disasters, but only if we prepare timely and decisively.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 21/11/2025)

3 lion cubs born at Karachi Zoo

Three lion cubs have recently been born at Karachi Zoological Gardens and they are in "excellent health and active".

An announcement to this effect was made by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) on Tuesday. It said following their birth on Nov 16, the cubs underwent a thorough medical examination by the in-house veterinary team at the zoo.

According to the zoo's medical staff, all three cubs are in excellent health, active and showing strong early signs of growth and vitality. Their mother is also reported to be healthy and is receiving continuous care.

The KMC took around 10 days to announce the birth because lion cubs are very vulnerable in their first few weeks, as they are born blind and entirely dependent on their mother for care, a zoo official said, adding: "Hence, it's important to protect them from outside interference and help the mother strengthen her bond with the babies."

Mayor Wahab says birth reflects KMC's strengthened commitment to better habitat management, veterinary care

In August 2024, two lion cubs were born at the zoo and the officials had said that it was the first birth among the big cats in more than 12 years at the facility.

While the birth of the three lion cubs is expected to attract significant public interest, particularly among families, children, and wildlife lovers, the zoo management said that public viewing will be limited initially to ensure their safety and to avoid any stress during their early nurturing period.

"Once the veterinary team deems it appropriate, the cubs will gradually be introduced for public viewing," it added.

Happiest moment for Karachi Zoo: mayor

Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab expressed great happiness over the birth of the cubs.

He directed the zoo administration to ensure special care, enhanced monitoring and a dedicated treatment plan for the cubs, underscoring the importance of providing them with an optimal environment during their early developmental stages.

He further emphasised that every possible measure must be taken to maintain proper nutrition, security and veterinary supervision for both the cubs and their mother.

"This is one of the happiest moments for Karachi Zoo and a testament to the improved standards of animal welfare under the KMC," the mayor stated. "The birth of the lion cubs reflects the zoo's strengthened commitment to better habitat management, veterinary care, and overall conservation practices."

The KMC administration noted that the birth of the cubs is not only a source of pride for the city but also a promising indicator of the zoo's ongoing efforts to reform and uplift its wildlife facilities.

Over the past year, the statement said, Karachi Zoo has implemented several key improvements, including upgraded enclosures, enhanced veterinary services, nutritional management plans and better environmental conditions for various species.

The KMC reaffirmed its commitment to further strengthening wildlife conservation efforts, upgrading zoo facilities and continuing to provide humane care to all animals housed at the Karachi Zoo.

The administration has pledged to carry forward these improvements with the same dedication, ensuring that the zoo remains an educational, recreational, and conservation-focused space for residents of Karachi.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 26/11/2025)

Concrete jungle to make Karachi hotter in coming years, UN report warns

Karachi is among the nine densely-built mega cities in Asia and the Pacific region, which are particularly vulnerable, and are projected to become substantially hotter in the years ahead, United Nations report titled 'Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2025', reveals on Wednesday.

Urban areas are already at high-risk for extreme heat due to the urban heat island effect. Densely built surfaces trap heat and raise city temperatures above those of surrounding rural areas.

This challenge is being exacerbated by rapid and often unplanned urbanisation, coupled with insufficient green spaces, the report adds.

Seoul, Tokyo, Beijing, Delhi, Karachi, Dhaka, Manila, Jakarta and Phnom Penh are vulnerable, with temperatures expected to rise 2°C-7°C above global warming.

Densely built surfaces trap heat while rapid urbanisation and shrinking green spaces raise city temperatures

"As access to cooling, water and healthcare come under increased strain, children, the elderly and outdoor low-wage earners in poor and densely populated urban areas are disproportionately affected."

Higher-income areas usually lie in cooler, greener neighbourhoods, exacerbating issues of equity and environmental justice, the report says.

For the period 2041-2060, the Asia-Pacific countries projected to be most arid are: Mongolia, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Iran and Turkmenistan.

The report says that extreme heat is reshaping the region's disaster landscape and driving the fastest growing climate-related hazards.

The report shows that rising temperatures are "impacting all, everywhere", with expanding and intensifying risks to food systems, public health, urban living, rural livelihoods, infrastructure and ecosystem.

The report released by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) warns that across Asia and the Pacific region, the increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme heat events are now creating a silent but growing health emergency. "Under all future climate scenarios, heat stress is projected to rise sharply across the region with mortality potentially doubling by 2050."

The report says the rising threat of extreme heat demands a new level of urgency. "Every country needs to act now, with implementation of regional cooperation initiatives turbocharged to meet the scale of this evolving disaster risk landscape."

(By Amir Ahmed Dawn, 13, 27/11/2025)

Climate change and Karachi

A new UN report has warned of the acute danger of an "urban heat effect" on several large cities, including Karachi, raising new concerns about how the cash-strapped government will prevent or mitigate urban climate disasters. The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in its Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2025, identified Karachi among nine major Asia-Pacific megacities projected to become "substantially hotter", primarily due to rapid, unplanned urbanisation and strained infrastructure creating the urban heat island effect, where dense construction, concrete and asphalt absorb and retain heat, pushing city temperatures anywhere from 2°C to 7°C higher than surrounding areas less-developed areas.

The burden of this urban crisis will also not fall equally on citizens, as the UN assessment makes clear that children, the elderly and outdoor workers living in congested, low-income neighbourhoods will suffer the most, even though the people profiting from these dangerous conditions are mostly ultra-rich individuals and businesses that may not even be based in those cities.

Even among local residents, wealthier residents of green enclaves and well-designed housing societies may not be particularly phased by rising temperatures, but poorer city residents in densely populated areas will see the existing lack of access to reliable electricity for cooling, adequate water and healthcare worsen. The report also warns of nationwide droughts that will not only make urban areas hotter and reduce water availability, but also hit agriculture hard, turning several fertile areas arid and potentially unusable for crops currently grown there.

While Pakistan can't tackle climate change on its own, Islamabad and provincial leaders need to emphasise long-term, science-based strategies that place extreme heat at the centre of urban planning and multi-hazard disaster management. This requires investing in heat-ready early warning systems, strengthening public healthcare and implementing nature-based solutions, such as expanding green spaces, to counter the urban heat island effect.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 28/11/2025)

Green turtles return in large numbers

In a promising sign after years of decline, the Sindh Wildlife Department has recorded a significant increase in green turtle nesting along Karachi's coast, placing nearly 30,000 eggs in secure, iron-grilled nests over the past four months (August to November). Around 3,000 hatchlings have already begun their journey into the sea, officials said.

According to Ashfaque Memon, in-charge of the Marine Turtles Unit at Hawkesbay, the department has set a target of 50,000 green turtle eggs for the 2025-26 season. "This year, we are seeing a remarkable improvement. Nearly 30,000 eggs have been collected so far, and thousands of hatchlings have already been released into the sea," he told The Express Tribune.

Memon said that in earlier years, this number was recorded only over an entire nesting season — but the resurgence of mother turtles has renewed hope for conservation efforts.

Return to Karachi's nesting beaches

Mother green turtles continue to arrive under the cover of darkness along the long stretch of the Hawkesbay coast. Wildlife teams ensure complete silence and darkness, as even minor disturbances — such as noise or bright lights — can force the turtles back into deep waters, where many do not survive the return journey.

Once the turtles lay their eggs, staff carefully transfer them to protected hatcheries to safeguard them from predators, poaching and environmental threats.

Green turtles nest not only at Sandspit, Hawkesbay and Paradise Point, but also on various Balochistan beaches including Jiwani, Gwadar, Ormara, Pasni, Dheeran, French Beach, Mubarak Village, Cape Monze and around Charna Island.

Drastic decline in species

Memon noted that until around 2000, seven turtle species were found along the Sindh and Balochistan coasts. Due to marine pollution, commercial activity and recreational disturbances, only **two species** now remain. The olive ridley turtle has become "almost extinct" locally — with no live female recorded on Karachi shores since 2010. Only a few dead specimens have washed ashore in recent years.

Long-running conservation effort

Since 1975, the Sindh Wildlife Department has released nearly 900,000 hatchlings into the sea. Green turtles - found across the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian oceans - typically live up to 70 years, though some reach 100. Each female lays 120-170 eggs per nesting cycle, each similar in size to a table-tennis ball.

However, their survival rate remains critically low. According to IUCN estimates, only 0.1% of hatchlings survive — meaning just one out of every thousand reaches adulthood.

Why turtles matter

Marine biologists warn that turtles are vital for ocean health. They feed on underwater seagrass, preventing it from growing too tall. Without turtles, the unchecked growth of seagrass can choke marine ecosystems by reducing water circulation and oxygen levels.

"This is exactly why global conservation bodies — and the Sindh Wildlife Department — continue their tireless efforts," Memon said.

(By Aftab Khan The Express Tribune, 05, 03/12/2025)

Karachi beaches under scrutiny as Sindh assembly debates safety measures

Sindh Assembly on Friday saw an engaging discussion on the safety of beachgoers in Karachi.

Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) MPA Quratulain Khan asked about safety measures at Karachi's beaches after five people drowned at Himalaya Beach.

Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar said coastal security was overseen by Coast Guards, but Sindh government has also deployed police pickets and lifeguards.

He said the government was considering establishing a Sindh Maritime Police and would write to Coast Guards officials immediately.

Dozens of picnickers drown at the city's beaches each year. Though the government imposes Section 144 during summers, people rush to the sea, jump in with no knowledge of swimming and not lifejacket. Beach is the sole picnic point for millions of residents of the port city. However, each summer high tides and strong undercurrents devour many people.

Home minister said that the implementation of Section 144 is a major issue. Many people don't heed warnings and tragedy happens. The maritime police is likely to improve security on the beaches.

Peoples Bus Service coming to Hyd soon

Peoples Bus Service will soon operate on every road in Sindh, Sindh Senior Minister for Transport Sharjeel Inam Memon assured the provincial assembly on Friday, reiterating the government's commitment to providing modern transport facilities to citizens.

"Buses will be introduced in multiple areas of Hyderabad very soon," Sharjeel said responding to a point of order raised by MQM-P lawmaker Sabir Qaimkhani.

Qaimkhani demanded more buses in Hyderabad, particularly from Gaari Khata to Guddu Chowk and along Tando Mohammad Khan Road.

Sharjeel added that traffic administration had performed well but reforms in traffic management were necessary. "In accidents involving trailers and motorcycles, it is not always the trailer's fault. Responsibility must be determined case by case, and penalties imposed accordingly," he said.

Memon invited lawmakers to share constructive suggestions with the transport department, promising they would be considered.

Lawmakers raise concerns over minerals, pollution and jobs

During the question hour on mines and minerals, JI MPA Muhammad Farooq alleged that salt extracted from sewage water was being sold in markets, spreading diseases. He asked why the provincial government had not banned the practice. Parliamentary Secretary Yousuf Baloch replied that no complaints had been received but assured action if evidence was provided.

Fauzia Hameed questioned recruitment for Grade 14 and 16 posts. Baloch said appointments were made through the Sindh Public Service Commission on merit across districts. He added that while a geological survey had been conducted nationwide, the quality and quantity of minerals in Sindh had yet to be determined.

Waste management

MQM-P's Aamir Siddiqui criticised the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board, saying garbage collection was poor despite monthly charges from citizens. Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government Qasim Siraj Soomro countered that Siddiqui had himself written a letter praising officials for resolving complaints. He said 127 sanitary workers and 146 garbage bins were deployed in Siddiqui's constituency.

Farooq of JI also objected to moves to make Karachi University's ECCBS institute autonomous, warning it would restrict access for ordinary students. MQM's Shariq Jamal highlighted severe water shortages in Karachi and thanked the government for repairing Model Colony Road after eight years.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 06/12/2025)

Murad inaugurates Lost Cities of the Indus Delta

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has reaffirmed his government's commitment to promoting scientific literacy, innovation, and inclusive education across the province, saying Sindh's cultural heritage and scientific tradition form the foundation of one of the world's oldest civilisations.

He was speaking as the chief guest at a ceremony held at The Dawood Foundation's MagnifiScience Centre to mark Sindhi Cultural Day and inaugurate an interactive exhibition, Lost Cities of the Indus Delta.

TDF's Hussain Dawood, members of the Dawood family, educators, students, researchers and members of civil society attended the event.

Mr Shah said the exhibition was a powerful reminder that Sindh has been a cradle of knowledge, urban planning and creativity for thousands of years.

"Sindh is the birthplace of one of the world's oldest civilisations — the Indus Valley Civilisation — known for its scientific temperament, sustainable engineering, arts and craftsmanship," he said.

Says Sindh's heritage and scientific spirit go hand in hand

"Today, as we inaugurate the Lost Cities of the Indus Delta, we reconnect with our glorious heritage and present it to the new generation in a modern, scientific way," he said.

The CM praised The Dawood Foundation for its efforts in creating a national landmark that blends science, culture and community learning. He said that since its opening in 2021, the MagnifiScience Centre has welcomed more than 650,000 visitors and offers over 400 hands-on exhibits in physics, chemistry, biology, environmental sciences and everyday life concepts.

"What makes this centre truly special is its inclusivity — children, adults, teachers, differently-abled visitors, everyone feels equally welcomed and inspired," he added.

Mr Shah particularly acknowledged TDF's contribution to public education through STEM programmes for government schools, teacher training initiatives and community outreach. "This is not just education — it is empowerment," he remarked.

The Sindh government, he said, shares the same vision of expanding digital skills, research culture, environmental awareness and future-ready learning.

He said that Sindhi Cultural Day is a reminder that culture is not limited to heritage alone but is also rooted in inquiry, creativity and openness, values on which the Indus Civilisation thrived. "This exhibition beautifully unites the scientific brilliance of our ancestors with the innovative potential of our youth today," he stated.

He appreciated the leadership of Hussain Dawood and the continued commitment of TDF to national development. "Centres like MagnifiScience are key partners in our journey to build a knowledge-driven society," he noted.

He expressed the hope that the MagnifiScience Centre would continue to inspire future generations. "It is through science, culture and imagination that nations rise and prosper," he said.

The visit reaffirmed the provincial government's support for accessible science education and cultural preservation.

During the tour, the CM explored hands-on exhibits, interactive experiments, and immersive educational programmes.

Mr Hussain Dawood stated, "Science must be experienced, not memorised. MagnifiScience Centre provides that opportunity, a space where learning, discovery, and heritage intersect."

Vice Chair Sabrina Dawood added, "Karachi needed a place where children and families could engage with science in meaningful and enjoyable ways. MSC not only offers that experience but does so while staying connected to our cultural roots."
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 14, 08/12/2025)

Transport sector emerges as key cause of air pollution

While the mainstream discourse on air quality has remained focused on Lahore and Karachi, a recent report by the Pakistan Air Quality Initiative (PAQI) has described the phenomenon as being equally stark in Islamabad-Rawalpindi and Peshawar, as well as peri-urban and rural areas.

PAQI's comprehensive Unveiling Pakistan's Air Pollution: A National Landscape Report on Health Risks, Sources and Solutions provides multi-sectoral emissions inventories, concluding that urban smog is overwhelmingly generated within Pakistan's own airsheds.

As it focused on four major cities of Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Islamabad-Rawalpindi, the report said Pakistan's air pollution was not a single, monolithic problem, but a series of distinct local emergencies.

"Each city's economic DNA creates a unique emissions fingerprint, demanding a tailored response," it said, adding even the rural areas were not immune from this crisis, but remained under-researched.

"From Karachi's port corridors to Peshawar's valley basin, the air we inhale contains concentrations of pollutants far above levels considered safe for health," it added.

Day after day, Pakistan's cities and many rural districts live with particle and gas concentrations that breed disease, shorten lives, reduce productivity, and sap community energy, it said.

For its inventory, PAQI draws on satellite-derived aerosol datasets, chemical transport modelling, and PAQI's real-time monitoring network to map the sources, scale, and health impacts of PM2.5 (fine particulate matter) across Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad-Rawalpindi and Peshawar.

"Lahore is a complex, three-front battle against a toxic blend of emissions from transportation (35%), heavy industry (28%), and a dense ring of brick kilns (17%)," the report said.

It referred to Karachi's crisis as overwhelmingly industrial. "Nearly half of its health-damaging fine particulate matter (49% of PM2.5) originates from its industrial sector and port activities."

In the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, it's a crisis driven by urban design, with transportation accounting for 53pc of the emissions.

Peshawar, trapped in a valley, is poisoned by a mix of transit trade and traditional industry, resulting in the country's highest per-capita pollution burden, it said, adding that 51pc emissions are due to the transport sector while 18pc is attributed to brick kilns.

"The data exposes a stark heterogeneity. Lahore's smog stems mainly from transport (35%), heavy industry (28%), and kilns (17%); Karachi's air is dominated by maritime and industrial emissions; Islamabad-Rawalpindi suffers from congestion and dust; and Peshawar endures atmospheric trapping worsened by two-stroke engines. Yet, as I have argued repeatedly, national responses still rely on uniform bans and seasonal theatrics," one of the authors noted in the report.

The PAQI study also called for focusing on under-researched and unregulated contributing sources for a complete picture of Pakistan's air quality crisis, including crop-residue burning, household air pollution, and open burning of waste. Household air pollution from biomass fuels is a leading cause of death in Pakistan, with PM2.5 levels in rural kitchens measured at up to 600 times higher than those using gas, it added.

The lack of effective rural air quality monitoring remains a critical knowledge gap, hindering the development of policies that promote sustainable agricultural practices and provide farmers with viable alternatives to burning, it noted.

PAQI founder Abid Omar said, "This inventory ends the era of speculation." "For the first time, Pakistan has a rigorous, data-driven map of where its pollution comes from. The science is clear: our crisis is overwhelmingly local and structural. We now have the evidence. What Pakistan needs next is implementation," he added.

The report offered evidence-based interventions, such as empowering the public with information, closing the governance gap, and targeting super-emitters, such as transitioning to cleaner fuels and electrifying the 30 million two- and three-wheelers that form the backbone of urban mobility. "The solutions are at hand. The barrier is no longer a lack of evidence but a lack of will. It is time to act," it stressed.

Punjab EPA response

The Punjab government, however, contested the data published in the report. Punjab Environment Protection Agency (EPA) spokesperson Sajid Bashir "rejected" the report about local factors causing pollution and told Dawn that PAQI "did not have data to develop a report". He said that the government was spending billions of rupees to control emissions and more than 80 per cent of industry in Lahore has installed equipment to control emissions.

He also claimed that PAQI did not have accurate data about LTV, HTV, motorcycles, rickshaws and the number of brick kilns operating in the country. He instead blamed India for pollution in Lahore and asked PAQI to "reveal its resources and from where it was registered to get satellite data and images and in which laboratory they were analysing all the data". It may be noted that a 2024 study by the Urban Unit had identified transport as a key polluter.

(By Imran Gabol Dawn, 01, 10/12/2025)

URBANISM: THE GEOGRAPHY OF PAKISTAN'S POPULATION GROWTH

Urbanisation patterns over the past two decades dictate that the future is decidedly city-bound. The UN-Habitat's World Cities Report 2022 shows that the global urban population will increase from 54 percent in 2015 to 62 percent by 2036.

Pakistan is no stranger to this trend. We are living through the greatest demographic shift of our time and Pakistan's cities are woefully unequipped to deal with the fallout. Unlike conventional urbanisation, which is driven by economic success, Pakistan's is fuelled by population increase — 2.55 percent annually, the highest in South Asia.

A recent World Bank study argues that Pakistan is far more urban than official figures suggest — closer to 88 percent rather than the reported 39 percent. The surge in population, combined with waves of rural-to-urban migration, is driving an explosion in demand for housing, water, transport and jobs.

CITIES SPREADING THIN

The UN-Habitat's 2022 report estimates that over the next 50 years, most of the physical expansion of cities — 141 percent of city land growth — will occur in low-income nations, with another 44 percent in lower-middle-income countries, such as Pakistan.

However, city authorities lack the resources or capacity to keep up. The influx of migrants rapidly overwhelms local governments, creating a service delivery crisis. Pakistan's major cities are spreading outwards into suburbs and peripheral zones, converting land for urban use far faster than services or natural buffers can keep pace.

Pakistan's cities are expanding outward at unprecedented rates, replacing vegetated land with concrete sprawl. This isn't just an urbanisation story, it's a climate crisis in the making

What this also means is that the country's population challenge is playing out most visibly at its urban edge, where sprawling growth is replacing green fields, orchards and open land with concrete, asphalt and housing colonies.

THE VULNERBALE EDGE

Expanding cities consume landscapes that once kept them habitable. Lahore's edges, lined with farmland and tree belts two decades ago, are now covered in paved housing schemes. Data from the Urban Unit of Punjab's Local Government and Community Development department shows that Lahore's built-up area expanded by 326.23 square kilometres between 1990 and 2020, replacing vegetated, open land and water bodies across the metropolitan region.

Karachi follows the same pattern. WWF-Pakistan has documented how protected mangroves and coastal green spaces have been cleared for housing schemes and urban development, weakening ecosystems that regulate coastal temperatures and humidity.

Even meticulously planned Islamabad has succumbed to this relentless sprawl. The capital has experienced one of the steepest increases in its built-up area nationwide. According to WWF-Pakistan's GIS analysis, Islamabad's concrete footprint exploded nearly seven-fold (a 686 percent increase) in just three decades, growing from 2,693 hectares in 1990 to 18,469 hectares in 2020.

Alarmingly, much of this rapid expansion has occurred on the city's fringes, encroaching upon the sensitive ecosystems of the Margalla Hills National Park and vital open scrublands.

THE THERMAL SHIFT

As cities expand, what disappears is nature's cooling system: fields, orchards, wetlands and tree belts that store moisture and regulate airflow. Replacing these landscapes with concrete, asphalt and brick alters the thermal behaviour of the entire city. Land that once cooled rapidly at night now traps heat long after sunset. Surfaces that once absorbed rainfall now accelerate runoff and leave little water in the ground.

This outward expansion matters because, as cities sprawl, they alter the physical and climatic conditions of their environment. Studies across Pakistani cities show that land surface temperatures in peripheral zones are rising much faster than in central cores, pushing millions of people into heat-exposed housing before they even cross the threshold of "urban liveability."

For example, a recent Pakistan-based study found nighttime land surface temperature differences between city centres and outskirts of 4.1-5.0 degrees Celsius in major cities, with strong correlations between population density, built-up area and surface temperature.

FROM PERIPHERY TO FRONTLINE

The country's population crisis is fundamentally a land-use crisis. It is happening because a growing population is being pushed into more vulnerable, hotter and flood-exposed places, built through sprawling development. The true climate tension will play out in the coming decades in Pakistan's peri-urban belts, where demographic pressure and poorly managed land conversion dangerously magnify the risks of increasing heat and environmental collapse.

Heat disrupts how people live, move and earn. Pakistan's demographic boom concentrates in peri-urban areas, where thermal stress accumulates, generating social and economic pressures: reduced labour productivity for outdoor workers, intensified air pollution in low-tree-cover housing schemes, and heightened public health crises from heatstroke and related illnesses.

Without tree cover or shade, peripheral temperatures remain high into evening, limiting activity and raising cooling costs. For millions of low and middle-income families that cannot afford air-conditioning, this means prolonged exposure to temperatures that exceed thresholds for health and productivity.

Sprawl also strains services that were never designed to accommodate this scale of outward growth. As cities stretch, municipal water networks thin out, leaving newer neighbourhoods dependent on private bore wells or tanker supplies.

In hotter microclimates, this intensifies demand on already stressed aquifers, increasing extraction precisely where natural recharge has been reduced by paved surfaces. Power grids in peri-urban areas, often the last to be upgraded, struggle during peak heat months, when cooling needs spike. When power outages coincide with heatwaves, the consequences can be fatal, particularly for children, the elderly and outdoor workers.

Low-density expansion also forces longer commutes and near-total reliance on private vehicles, raising emissions and exposing more people to peak temperature. For women, the lack of shaded walkways, safe public transport and covered waiting areas limits mobility further, constraining access to education, employment and healthcare during summer months.

RETHINKING URBAN GROWTH

As these patterns deepen, the geography of Pakistan's population growth will begin to resemble the geography of its climate risk.

New households are being absorbed into localities where temperatures remain elevated after sundown, where water must be sourced privately, and where roads, schools, clinics and parks arrive long after residents do. Essentially, the population boom is increasing the number of urban Pakistanis living in conditions shaped by heat.

It is important to ask how many people Pakistan will have in 2050, but it is also equally important to ask where those people will live and in what kind of urban environments. If the sprawl continues to guide this expansion, the next several decades will trap millions into hotter climates, with limited public infrastructure and declining ecological buffers. The physical form of our cities will shape demographic futures far more than demographic futures will shape the cities.

Slowing this trajectory requires rethinking how urban growth is managed. It means protecting the vegetated belts and agricultural lands that still exist on city edges, encouraging compact and mixed-use development and planning for density rather than extension.

It also means strengthening metropolitan governance, so that land-use, transport and environmental management are coordinated rather than fragmented across competing authorities. None of this will halt population growth, but it will determine whether that growth intensifies climate exposure or is absorbed into more resilient, liveable urban forms.

Pakistan's population challenge is inseparable from the spatial choices its cities are making today. If sprawling expansion continues unchecked, the urban edge will become the country's most enduring climate frontier, where demographic pressure, land conversion, and rising heat converge to shape the everyday realities of a rapidly growing nation.

(By Bakhtiar Iqbal and Sheheryar Khan Dawn EOS, 04, 14/12/2025)

Victory for medicinal plant highly prized for its resin

Gughar — a high value medicinal plant which has been declared protected under the Sindh Wildlife Protection Act 2020 — has now also been listed in the Appendix II of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES).

According to officials, the decision was taken at the 20th meeting of Conference of the Parties (CoP), CITES, recently held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

The development, sources said, followed effective lobbying efforts of the Pakistani delegation that put up a revised plea before the global forum to consider the plant for inclusion in the CITES.

The initial proposal put up by Germany and supported by EU countries couldn't get the two-third majority.

Describing the development as a major success for Pakistan on the international forum, officials said that the status would help tackle the growing threat of the plant's illegal trade.

Gughar, native to Karoonjar Hills, now listed on CITES; the status will help tackle growing threat to plant's illegal trade

"This decision will help promote global traceability of the plant's trade," said Sindh Wildlife Conservator Javed Ahmed Mahar, adding that while the CITES Appendix 11 didn't place a ban on the plant's trade, it called upon the member states to set up a mechanism to make the trade transparent and traceable.

"The CITES Appendix II creates a strict science-based control system that only allows international trade when specimens are legally acquired and sustainably sourced. Every shipment is required to carry standardised CITES permit, creating a fully traceable chain of custody that can be verified at any border," Mr Mahar explained.

Sources said plant's illegal trade from Pakistan had increased dramatically in recent years following complete ban by India on its extraction from the species' native population growing in Rajasthan. The plant's resin, they said, was in high demand across the world.

In 2024, the wildlife department in collaboration with anti-narcotics force had confiscated two major illegal shipments containing high-value plant materials, including that of gughar, which was declared protected the same year.

The decision came in light of Sindh High Court's last year's order placing a complete ban on mining and excavation activities at Nagarparkar's Karoonjar hills, a key habitat of the plant.

Precious plant

A perennial shrub, gughar (*Commiphora Wightii*) is found in parts of Tharparkar, Sindh, and Balochistan in Pakistan, India and Oman. The plant is targeted for its dense oily resin known as guggulu or guggul.

This substance, expert say, is widely used in traditional medicines for the treatment of various disorders. Scientific evidences show the shrub to be profoundly effective against diverse chronic diseases such as inflammatory bowel disease, Alzheimer's disease, cancer, arthritis, pancreatitis, dermatitis, diabetes, infectious diseases, intestinal metaplasia, otitis media, respiratory diseases, asthma, psoriasis, and gingivitis.

Besides, according to experts, it also exerts hepatoprotective, neuroprotective, anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant, cardio-protective, hypolipidemia, and thyroid stimulatory effects by targeting multiple signalling pathways.

"*C.wightii* is vulnerable to overexploitation, both because of its life history characteristics as well as the higher yields produced when destructive methods are used to harvest its gum. The species is slow growing with a poor germination rate and harvest is focused on mature individuals that are at least five years old (and 8-10 years old in India). Unregulated commercial exploitation is therefore expected to impact the recruitment and regeneration capacity of *C.wightii*, which is already heavily depleted," says the proposal read out by Dr David Harter of Germany at the conference.

It calls for urgent regulation to control its international trade and promote the recovery of the remaining population of the species. (By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 15/12/2025)

5.2-magnitude quake jolts Karachi, parts of Balochistan

A 5.2-magnitude earthquake was felt in Karachi and parts of Balochistan in the small hours of Tuesday, causing panic among residents. No casualties were immediately reported.

According to the Met office, little before 1am, tremors were felt in many parts of the city.

It said that the earthquake measured 5.2 on the Richter scale and had a depth of 12 kilometres, with its epicentre located approximately 87km northwest of Karachi. "The shallow depth intensified the shaking, making it widely felt across the city and nearby regions," said a Met official.

Tremors were also felt in parts of Balochistan, including Hub, Winder and Gadani, where residents reported brief, but noticeable shaking. However, no immediate reports of damage or injuries were received from those areas.

Residents evacuated after cracks in Lyari building

In Karachi, residents in several areas reported strong jolts, prompting people to rush out of their homes, workplaces and commercial buildings as a precautionary measure. In many neighbourhoods, fear and confusion prevailed for several minutes following the quake.

Rescue officials said cracks appeared in a residential building named Baba Arcade located in Nayaabad, Liaquat Colony of Lyari. According to Edhi Foundation officials, the cracks emerged immediately after the earthquake, raising safety concerns among the residents.

“As a precaution, people living in the building evacuated their apartments and gathered in open spaces nearby to avoid potential risk,” said an Edhi Foundation spokesman.
(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 17/12/2025)

Climate March in Karachi seeks end to fossil fuel use, demands transition to clean energy

Activists and people from all walks of life participated in the Climate March 2025 to express their concern over the effects of climate change in the city, country and the rest of the world.

The march, which was organised by the members of civil society, was started from Frere Hall. The participants proceeded towards the Karachi Press Club. A large number of people, including rights activists, trade union members, students, women and children, participated in the walk.

They expressed concerns over climate change by chanting slogans and waving placards and holding banners.

One of the banners in the red colour background read: “There is no Planet B”. Another big one called for an end to coal use, urging protection for people from unhealthy wastewater and air pollution, while another carried the message “Right to Life”.

Some participants lay down on the road while displaying placards to register their protest. One such placard read: “The reason behind climate change is capitalism and feudalism.”

Participants say working class is the worst affected by climate crisis; activist Yasir Darya claims less than 50 electric buses operating in Karachi

Several protesters were also seen wearing Palestinian keffiyeh scarves and carrying Palestinian flags to express solidarity with the people of Palestine.

Attending the march, labour union leader Nasir Mansoor told *Dawn* that the working class is the worst affected by climate change, as they are displaced or even lose their lives due to heatwaves or excessive rainfall.

He added that during past heatwaves, 70 per cent of those who died were members of the working class.

Speaking about the issues, he said that a transition from fossil fuels to clean and renewable energy in industries and other sectors was necessary, but it should not lead to lay-offs of workers. He further demanded that the government, in implementing such a transition, must work in consultation with working-class organisations to ensure protection of workers’ rights.

“Without the end of capitalism, the question of climate change remains incomplete,” Mr Mansoor claimed.

Home-Based Women Workers Federation Secretary General Zehra Khan said that heat stress is increasing, particularly among labourers working in garment factories, where workers often faint due to extreme heat, making it essential for factories to have proper cooling systems.

She added that while the Sindh Occupational Safety and Health Act exists, it does not mention heat stress leave.

She said the legislature should provide legal safeguards on the issue so that workers can be entitled to heat stress leave.

Speaking to *Dawn*, environmental activist Yasir Darya said that industries and sectors using fossil fuels should be transitioned at the earliest, adding that this transition must include electric vehicles, particularly electric buses in public transport.

He further said that a Chinese electric car manufacturing company was setting up a plant in Sindh, but stressed that more such plants were needed so that locally manufactured buses could be made cheaper and also exported to African countries.

He claimed that the country has a total of 300 to 400 electric buses, and under 50 are operating in Karachi, while the rest are in cities of Punjab.

Criticising the government, he said the situation reflected negligence on the part of the city administration and the Sindh government.

(By Sumair Abdullah Dawn, 13, 22/12/2025)

Karachi Metropolitan Corporation told to stop breeding of exotic species at zoo

The Sindh government has directed the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) to immediately take steps to stop the breeding of exotic species at the Karachi zoo, with particular emphasis on big cats.

The directive was issued by Sindh Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah while chairing a meeting of officials representing the KMC, zoo and relevant departments.

The meeting reviewed the existing conditions, management practices and future planning related to exotic animals housed at the zoo.

Mr Shah emphasised that the government was committed to ensuring animal welfare, ethical management and compliance with international best practices concerning captive wildlife.

He stated that uncontrolled breeding of exotic species, especially big cats, posed serious challenges in terms of animal welfare, space constraints, safety and long-term management, and needed to be addressed without delay.

During the meeting, the KMC and zoo authorities were directed to initiate immediate measures to halt the breeding of exotic animals and develop a clear, time-bound plan in consultation with qualified wildlife experts.

The chief secretary underscored the need for expert guidance to ensure that all actions taken were scientifically sound, humane and aligned with conservation principles.

He further instructed that a comprehensive assessment of existing exotic animals at the zoo be carried out, including their health, habitat conditions and future care requirements.

"The focus should remain on responsible wildlife management, discouraging unnecessary captivity and breeding of exotic animals, and promoting practices that prioritise animal well-being and public safety," he noted during the meeting.

It might be recalled that three lion cubs were born at the zoo last month.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 22/12/2025)

Mayor opens upgraded recreational spots at Karachi Zoo

City Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Sunday inaugurated infrastructure and recreational projects at Karachi Zoo, calling them a step to "transform" the facility into a modern, safe and nature-friendly recreational and educational centre in line with international standards.

Speaking to journalists at a ceremony at the zoo, he said that the facility, also known as Gandhi Garden, is a valuable asset of the city and that practical steps are being taken to upgrade it.

He said that for several decades the internal pathways, enclosures, and facilities of Karachi Zoo had been in a dilapidated condition; however, a modern enclosure has now been constructed over an area of two acres, where the lions Chandni and Rani are being kept in an open environment that is harmonious with their natural habitat.

These enclosures are fitted with modern bulletproof glass, while special arrangements have also been made for water play and resting.

Mayor Wahab said that elephants like Rani and Chandni were born in this very zoo, which is proof that the animals are healthy, as unhealthy animals are "not capable of reproduction".

He said that measures are being taken to ensure better food, care, and health of animals at the zoo, and the services of additional veterinary doctors are being acquired so that animal care can meet international standards.

He further stated that the zoo's Reptile House has been reopened to the public after renovation, while a beautiful tower has also been constructed for citizens, especially young people and selfie enthusiasts.

For the convenience of visitors, modern walkways, seating areas, and informative signboards are being installed so that the place can become a quality recreational and educational center for families and students.

The mayor said that thousands of people visit the Karachi Zoo daily, particularly citizens from poor and middle-income backgrounds.

Considering this, the entry fee has been set at Rs30 for children and Rs50 for adults, and the income generated is being reinvested into the improvement of the zoo.

He clarified that no decision has been made to purchase any new large animals; instead, the focus is on the care and breeding of existing animals.

'Dogs' neutering did not work as envisioned'

On the issue of stray dogs, the mayor referred to a challenging situation where different suggestions are given by different segments of society.

"One group demands that dogs should not be killed, while on the other hand, there are parents whose children are affected by dog bites," he said.

"Therefore, a balanced and middle path solution must be found. The Sindh government has decided on dog neutering at the request of dog lovers, but it could not work as envisioned. Whatever decision the City Council makes regarding stray dogs will be implemented."

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 29/12/2025)

COP30 unpacked

COP30 in Brazil last month was a high mark of multilateralism in 2025. In the background of geopolitical tensions, it held its ground and deliberated a spectrum of critical issues, produced positive outcomes, and launched several new initiatives for stronger climate action under the Belém Package. The meeting was also viewed with disappointment by some as its proposals for much-needed climate finance could have been stronger and its plans for decarbonisation more clearly defined.

Here is a quick look at some major outcomes of the Belém Package.

National climate plans: The 2015 Paris accord reflects a shared desire for global action with a well-crafted time-bound roadmap. Since then, successive COPs have taken decisions to support governments in the implementation of their five-year climate plans known as Nationally Determined Contributions. As COP30 coincided with the five-year cycle, 122 countries accounting for almost 74 per cent of global carbon emissions submitted their new NDCs — expected to be more ambitious by including a wide range of policy options and measures for supporting economic shifts necessary for a just transition.

To complement national climate plans, COP30 launched two new initiatives: the Global Implementation Accelerator, which will support countries in implementing their NDCs, and the 'Belém Mission to 1.5' — billed as an action-oriented platform to bridge the NDCs gap and enhance international cooperation across mitigation, adaptation and investment. Both initiatives are voluntary and will be led by the current and next COP presidencies.

Climate finance: The Achilles heel of climate action was at the centre of the discussions. COP30 agreed to triple adaptation finance by 2035, building on a previous pledge to double adaptation funds by 2025. It decided to scale up climate finance from both public and private sources for developing countries to at least \$1.3 trillion annually by 2035, and established a two-year work programme to follow up the implementation of this pledge and mobilisation of \$300 billion by developed countries for adaptation.

A resolve to work collectively was evident.

Another outcome is the establishment of the Global Climate Finance Accountability Framework to bring coherence to fragmented pledges and ensure transparency and credibility in financial disbursement. From the perspective of developing countries, the decision calls for enhancing the role of concessional and grant-based finance as well as debt-for-climate swaps.

Global goal on adaptation: This is apart of the Paris accord. It aims to scale up adaptation, strengthen resilience, and reduce vulnerability to climate change. However, its implementation was very slow until an overarching framework was agreed two years ago that identified key areas for action, including water, health, and food in which countries needed to build resilience. To move things further, COP30 adopted a set of indicators to measure progress and monitor implementation of pledges on finance and technology support — a decision that will boost efforts towards realising global adaptation goals. This is good news for developing countries.

Trade policies: These and their links with climate action are well recognised, but are a sensitive issue at COPs. Developing countries seek assurances against 'unilateral economic measures', which they fear could translate into economic restrictions disguised as import regulations. COP30 launched a new dialogue on climate and trade to discuss the issues in detail. UNCTAD, WTO, and the International Trade Centre have been invited to join the dialogue.

Fossil fuels: These were again under the spotlight. Eyes were fixated on an expected outcome that would provide clarity on a formal approach to transition away from fossil fuels — a decision taken at COP28. Unfortunately, this did not happen. COP30 president André Corrêa do Lago acknowledged that expectations on this count were not met. As a compromise, he announced plans to design a voluntary roadmap to transition away from fossil fuels "in a just, orderly and equitable manner". The proposed roadmap to be developed with input from scientists and industry will be sent back to the COP process.

A just transition: Global climate goals cannot be attained without a level playing field. To ensure a just transition to low-carbon and environmentally sustainable economies that safeguards the rights of poor nations and vulnerable communities, COP30 established a 'just transition mechanism' to be operationalised at the next COP.

The outcome of COP30 might not have satisfied all, but it did reflect an international resolve to combat climate change collectively. This resolve must be matched by implementing the Belém Package, fulfilling climate finance pledges, and meeting all other commitments.

(By Jamil Ahmad Dawn, 07, 31/12/2025)