

January 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 25TH TO JANUARY 31ST 2016

ENVIRONMENTAL SAFEGUARDS URGED FOR COAL-BASED POWER PLANTS

Dawn, January 25th, 2016

QUETTA: Partially endorsing the stance of a former speaker of the Balochistan Assembly on proposed coal-based power plants in Gadani area, the ministry of climate change has asked the Balochistan High Court (BHC) that effective safeguards should be ensured for protection of environment.

In a petition filed before the BHC, former speaker Aslam Bhootani had said that the plants, once put into operation, would badly affect the environment and endanger human and marine life.

He said that transportation of coal from the jetty to the plants would lead to degradation of environment already hit by rapid industrialisation of Hub town.

The federal ministry of climate change, senior member of the Board of Revenue, Balochistan, environment secretary, and chief executive of Hubco power company were cited as respondents in the petition.

Mr Bhootani said that coal-based power plants were fast becoming obsolete throughout the world and use of coal for generating electricity by the United States, China, Canada, France, Germany and other developed countries was being reduced.

The ministry in its reply said that “there is a need of a detailed environmental impact assessment report”.

It said the court might ask the proponent of the development project to fulfil all mandatory requirements under the Provincial Environmental Protection Act before seeking approval for those plants.

“This may include safeguards, sensitivity mapping, risk assessment by a third party and a robust environmental monitoring plan, pre-shipment inspection of coal with acceptable specifications, post-shipment inspection of all the coal duly carried out by (the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority) PNRA/third party, certifying the permissible radioactivity levels in the shipment and heavy metals,” the court was told.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1235212>

DIRTY BUSINESS: WINTER BRINGS SEWAGE OUT ON CITY'S STREETS

The Express Tribune, January 25th, 2016.

Oonib Azam

KARACHI: In most of the world, winter brings with it snow, fog or just pleasant weather but in Karachi, the season is synonymous with overflowing sewage.

Since the last two months, residents have been left with no choice but to grapple with waste-filled roads on a daily basis. The Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB), responsible for keeping the city clean, has conveniently blamed cold weather to be behind the mess.

KWSB's deputy managing director (technical services), Iftikhar Ahmed Khan, told The Express Tribune that the self-cleaning velocity of sewerage reduces during winter. He said the accumulated silt in the lines usually sweeps away due to water pressure during the summer, but as the use of water decreases during winter, silt accumulates causing the pipes to overflow.

This argument did not sit well with Amber Alibhai, the general secretary of Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment. The member of the pro-environment NGO said KWSB's claim was completely nonsensical. "They don't repair the broken sewers and come up with such lame excuses," she said.

Meanwhile, NED's architecture and planning department head, Dr Noman Ahmed, believes winter is the best time for KWSB to repair the sewage infrastructure. "KWSB should fix the water and sewage pipes as pressure is low these days," he suggested.

Listing reasons for overflow of waste, Ahmed said sewers are either completely uncovered or semi-covered, adding that connections between houses and sewers are also broken, due to which dust and solid waste starts depositing. "The overflow is not because of winter, but due to the lack of a regular maintenance programme," he claimed.

The life of the trunk sewer – the main sewage line – has almost ended in the city, whereas sewers have increased, he explained, saying that is why pipes are unable to bear the load and joints have been disfigured. According to him, there should be comprehensive maintenance and rehabilitation of the sewers after every 10 years.

The expert also blamed solid food waste including disposed of greasy leftovers as the cause of overflowing gutters. However, he said in developed cities there are filters which absorb grease and do not let solid waste enter the pipes.

To all this, KWSB's Ahmed responded by saying the population which was supposed to be increasing by three per cent is now increasing by six per cent. "The designs of the sewage lines are not according to the development taking place in the city," he said further, adding that due to the construction of high-rise buildings the discharges in sewage lines have increased while the infrastructure is the same.

Superintendent engineers of most of the city's districts failed to divulge how often they clean the sewage lines. District East's superintendent engineer, Wajid Iqbal Siddiqui, said they did not have any specific timetable for cleaning the sewers. "Wherever we find overflowing gutters, we clean them," he said.

His counterpart in District West, Muhammad Ovais Malik, repeated the same. However, he claimed most sewers in the area fell under the administrative domain of the District Municipal Corporation and thus they did not clean them.

District Central's superintendent engineer, Muhammad Ali Shaikh, also said they only clean gutters when they start overflowing.

KWSB's chief engineer of water and sewerage, Muhammad Jamil Akhtar, complained of lack of manpower. "We need at least 3,000 sweepers to clean sewers and yet only have half the number," he said, adding that 275 sweepers were also recently sacked.

He explained that KWSB has a 350km-long sewage line and 250,000 manholes in the city under its watch. "How can we monitor all of that with such limited resources," he asked.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1033524/dirty-business-winter-brings-sewage-out-on-citys-streets/>

RS100 BN NEEDED TO PLANT 1.2 BILLION TREES IN KP

The News, January 25, 2016

Tariq Butt

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan requires at least Rs100 billion to plant 1.2 billion trees in his party ruled Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) for which he launched a campaign last year, estimates, given by reputed forest conservators, show.

Whether or not the cash-starved KP government will be able to spare or mobilise such massive money for three years' drive is an open question. It has often complained of lack of funds. Imran Khan is not known to have launched a public appeal for donations to finance this otherwise encouraging but ambitious campaign.

If the cost per tree is slightly more than Rs80, according to conservators, around Rs100 billion would be needed to fund the drive. However, the cost of plantation of every pine tree runs between Rs100 and Rs150 because this is expensive compared to others. Thus, the overall cost would go beyond the estimated one.

For such a huge number of plants, 1.2 billion, a minimum area of 2.75 million acres will be required if 436 trees, as recommended by conservators, are planted in one acre with each plant occupying 100 square feet space. However, the KP has sufficient area, some 18.4 million acres or 74,521 kilometers, to accommodate such a phenomenal tally of trees. Among the provinces, it is worst hit by deforestation by the timber mafia, which has earned billions of rupees through the illegality over the past without any check or balance.

Of this extraordinary number of trees, Imran Khan has so far planted 10 million trees as per his claim. At the very outset, he had announced to plant these trees in one year while he recently extended the period to three years.

A conservator, who has done doctorate in forestry, told The News on condition of anonymity that hundreds if not thousands of nurseries would be required to provide such a colossal number of plants for the drive.

He said the nurseries can't produce such a gigantic number of plants instantly but would take quite a long time to prepare them. Every tree to be purchased from them will cost around Rs30. It will be a big challenge for the KP government to have such a large number of nurseries to provide 1.2 billion trees in three years.

The total area of 2.75 million acres required for 436 trees per acre at the rate of 100 square feet space for every plant will go up considerably if pine trees will be planted because they require more area.

Some trees planted too close engage in a competition to get maximum sunlight, and in the process some become weaker and die, meaning they don't grow for having been outsmarted by the others.

The 'thinning operation' has also to be done after a few years to take out the weak plant, which will strengthen the growth of other trees. This operation is also carried out to provide space for strong trees.

The trees, which are planted afresh, have a big "mortality rate" of 30pc. If 60-70pc survives, it becomes a big achievement.

The conservator said that apart from the expenses incurred on planting the tree, they will have to be looked after later as well.

The job doesn't come to end by just planting a tree. It has to be saved from the animals and other hazards later. In the mountainous areas, the new plants have no problem in getting water due to rainfalls.

Trees like mangoes and kinnow take more space, usually occupy nearly 200 square feet space. Same is the case with poplar plants.

In KP, conservators said that areas of Dir, Swat, Haripur and Mansehra are suitable for pine tree plantation. They said that it was generally advised that somewhat grown trees should be planted as their growth rate was better.

They said that the KP government has held meetings with the official forestry experts of Punjab and others to have more plants to make the campaign a success.

Farmers in irrigated areas like Mardan, which produce sugarcane and tobacco, the two costly crops that bring instant massive money and are in great demand, are unlikely to encourage any major tree plantation because they want to get maximum yield from their fields.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/93560-Rs100-bn-needed-to-plant-12-billion-trees-in-KP>

WILDLIFE BREEDING ON THE CARDS FOR K-P

The Express Tribune, January 26th, 2016.

Riaz Ahmad

PESHAWAR: The wildlife department has proposed legislation to allow rearing native and as yet undetermined wildlife species in farms in the province. If implemented, the move is meant to encourage breeding and protect species from going extinct.

Talking to The Express Tribune, Divisional Wildlife Officer Muhammad Niaz says the farming of species is possible under the recently passed Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife and Biodiversity (Protection, Preservation, Conservation and Management) Act, 2015. He adds that was why officials were actively considering legislation to regulate the process.

“Animal farming in the province will have a very positive impact,” Niaz says. The official states it will be decided which species will be included in the list and the department will also provide animals to the farm owners for breeding.

“If handled correctly, it will have a great impact on wildlife, but farmers will have to get a licence from the department,” he adds. The official reveals law has been proposed to allow these farmers to exchange animals with each other for breeding.

“The public will be able to buy these animals from the farms and keep them as pets at homes.” Niaz believes this will nurture love for wild animals among the public which is generally apathetic towards most animals.

He says the farming of some species was already taking place and new legislation would help regulate it. “Rules and regulations have been proposed. These will be sent for final approval, vetting and then be implemented. It is a part of what is allowed in the newly passed wildlife act,” he explains.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1034074/animal-farm-wildlife-breeding-on-the-cards-for-k-p/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 18TH TO JANURAY 24TH 2016

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING: FACILITY DORMANT DUE TO FUNDS SHORTAGE

The Express Tribune, January 18th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Climate Change has sought Rs18.8 million for revival of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s central monitoring facility.

EPA Central Laboratory for Environmental Analysis and Networking, which was established with the financial assistance of the government of Japan, has been non-functional since 2010 due to shortage of funds and dearth of technical staff.

The climate change ministry has sent a letter to the finance ministry seeking immediate release of the funds to activate the environmental monitoring systems (EMS).

The EMS project was launched with the support of the JICA in 2007, with an aim to establish the basis for a nationwide analysis of environmental pollution and to enhance technical capacity of watchdogs.

The facility consisted of a main lab, an air and water lab, a data centre and a micro-biological lab with equipment capable of testing industrial and municipal waste and air pollution.

The equipment has been rusting away at the EPA's head office and the provincial stations. It has not been used ever since the devolution of the ministry of environment to provinces in 2010.

EPA Deputy Director Laboratories Farzana Altaf told The Express Tribune that the EMS needed calibration after every two weeks and millions of rupees were required to reactivate the system. She said last year the EPA submitted a proposal to the Planning Commission for allocation of Rs18 million to make the system functional but to no avail.

“Laboratories have stopped functioning and expensive chemicals have expired due to non-availability of funds and inattention,” she said.

The project was completed at a cost of Rs713.3705 million. Atomic absorption spectrometer (AAS), high performance liquid chromatography, gas chromatography — which cost millions of rupees — have turned inoperative due to non-use.

EPA has also not trained workforce to run all these equipment and other laboratory operations. Only four member staff is available with the agency including a lab director, deputy director, a lab inspector and a lab assistant. When this project was started, around 26 staff members were hired on contract basis and were laid off when the project was completed.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1029553/environmental-monitoring-facility-dormant-due-to-funds-shortage/>

PLASTICS IN OCEANS TO OUTWEIGH FISH BY 2050

Dawn, January 20th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: In the first study of the mass of plastic waste polluting world oceans, a report published on Tuesday expresses apprehensions that at the current rate of the waste flowing into the oceans it will outweigh fish and other maritime creatures by 2050. The report says that 95pc of the value of packaging material, worth \$80 billion to \$120bn, is being lost to the oceans after a short first use.

By 2025, the ratio of plastic to fish in the ocean may rise to one to three, with the waste growing to 250 million tons.

The report, ‘New Plastics Economy’ by World Economic Forum, says that at least 8 million tons of plastics leak into the ocean each year. This is equivalent to dumping the contents of one garbage truck into the ocean per minute. If no action is taken, this will rise to two per minute by 2030 and four by 2050, the report warns.

Plastics, the report says, cause an annual estimated damage of \$13bn to marine ecosystems. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation estimates that the damage caused by ocean plastics to tourism, fishing and shipping industries is \$1.3bn in that region alone.

Even in Europe, where leakage is relatively limited, the potential cost of coastal and beach cleaning could rise to \$695mn per year. In addition to the direct economic costs, there are potential adverse impacts on human livelihood and health, food chains and other essential economic and societal systems.

The plastics industry is highly reliant on finite stocks of oil and gas, which make up more than 90pc of its feedstock. For plastic packaging, the figure is even higher, as recycling of plastics into packaging applications is limited. If the use of plastics continues to grow at the same rate, oil consumption by the sector will account for 20pc of total consumption by 2050.

More than 40 years after the launch of the first universal recycling system, only 14pc of plastic packaging is collected for the purpose. When additional value losses in sorting and reprocessing are factored in, only 5pc of material value is retained for subsequent use.

The report cautions that if the use of plastics continues to grow at the current rate, the sector will account for 15pc of the global annual carbon budget by 2050. This is the budget that must be adhered to in order to achieve the internationally accepted goal to remain below a 2°C increase in global warming.

The new plastic economy outlined in the report envisages a fundamental rethink for plastic packaging and plastics in general – a new model based on creating effective after-use pathways for plastics; drastically reducing leakage of plastics into natural systems, particularly in oceans and finding alternatives to crude oil and natural gas as raw materials for plastic production.

The report provides a vision for the global economy in which plastics never become waste, outlining steps to achieve the required systemic shift.

Today's plastics economy is highly fragmented and the lack of standards and coordination across the value chain has allowed a proliferation of materials, formats, labelling, collection schemes and sorting and reprocessing systems, which collectively hamper the development of effective markets.

Current plastic packaging offers great functional benefits but it has an inherent design flaw: its intended useful life is typically less than one year.

The material, however, persists for centuries, which is particularly damaging if it leaks outside collection systems, as happens today with 32pc of plastic packaging.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1234194>

SUPREME COURT LIFTS HUNTING BAN ON RARE HOUBARA BUSTARD

Dawn, January 23th, 2016

ABDUL SHAKOOR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday lifted a ban on the hunting of houbara bustard, a rare desert bird whose meat is prized among Arab sheikhs as an aphrodisiac.

A five-member larger bench of the apex court headed by Justice Mian Saqib Nisar announced the verdict on the review petitions filed by the federal and provincial governments against the ban.

In a 4-1 majority ruling, the court lifted the ban on hunting of the endangered bird however, Justice Qazi Faez Isa wrote a dissenting note opposing the bench's order.

The court held that there was "apparent error on the face of record" and set aside its Aug 19 judgment.

In its 16-page judgement, the top court said the "role of the judiciary is to interpret the laws and not to legislate".

"Examination of the laws clearly shows that permanent ban on hunting of houbara bustard is not envisaged."

"Hunting of protected animals is prohibited whereas licence is required to hunt game animals," the verdict said, adding that provincial governments exercise the discretionary power to classify animals as 'protected' or 'game' species.

Balochistan Act, 2014 places houbara bustard both in protected and game animal categories, the court noted.

The Red List of International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) places houbara bustard in the category of “vulnerable” below “near threatened” and “least concern” categories and above “endangered”, “critically endangered”, “extinct in the wild” and “extinct” categories, the court said, adding that IUCN considers hunting primarily using falconry as a principal threat to its conservation.

“Even IUCN recognizes sustainable use of the natural resources,” the court said, maintaining that “considering the economic backwardness of the areas where these migratory species land, it is very hard for conservation efforts to be successful without uplifting the economic well-being of those areas.”

The Wildlife Department should take steps for the conservation of all threatened animals, the court said.

A three-judge bench of the apex court headed by then chief justice Jawwad S. Khawaja had on August 19 banned hunting of the houbara bustard in a decision welcomed by wildlife campaigners and conservationists. The court also ordered the cancellation of all existing permits in this regard.

The ban had resulted from a petition that recalled that Pakistan had imposed a permanent ban on the hunting of houbara bustards under the Third Schedule of the Pakistan Wildlife Ordinance 1971, after declaring the species a protected bird. But despite the ban, licenses or permits were being issued to VIP dignitaries of Gulf states for hunting the species.

In October, the federal government and governments of Punjab, Balochistan and Sindh asked the court to review its decision, with federal government terming the invitations to Arabs for houbara hunting a “cornerstone of [Pakistan’s] foreign policy”.

The government of Sindh earlier this month had informed the Supreme Court that its order of imposing a ban on the hunting of houbara bustard was not implementable.

Sindh government’s counsel Farooq H. Naek had said that hunting of the bird was permitted for 10 days only.

Balochistan High Court in November 2014 cancelled all permits for hunting in the province, but its order has now been quashed by today’s SC ruling.

As the federal government concluded its arguments in the houbara bustard case earlier this month, the attorney general (AG) asked the Supreme Court to allow “sustainable hunting” of the bird.

The government did not want the order set aside in its entirety, just that the ban should not be perpetual, AG Salman Butt told SC at the time.

Wealthy hunting parties from the Gulf travel to Balochistan province every winter to kill the houbara bustard using hunting falcons, a practice that has sparked controversy in recent years because of the bird’s dwindling numbers.

The issue has also cast a spotlight on traditionally close ties between Pakistan and its allies in the Arab world, particularly Saudi Arabia.

Pakistan’s soil is regarded as an attractive wintering ground and milieu for the migratory birds which is also an attractive destination for hunters every year at the onset of winter. Consequently, a large number of vulnerable species like the houbara bustard from atrocious freezing regions of Siberia migrate to Pakistan and other countries.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1234663>

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE: ‘NO CLEAR DIRECTION ON INCREASING FOREST COVER’

The Express Tribune, January 23rd, 2016.

Shahzad Anwar

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentarians expressed serious reservations on Friday over the performance of the Ministry of Climate Change (MOCC).

Members of National Assembly Standing Committee on Climate Change said Pakistan's vulnerability to the challenge was increasing with deforestation. They said the ground reality contrasted with the rosy picture painted by ministry officials.

MNA Mussarat Ahmadzeb said the country was directionless about increasing its forest cover. She said water resources were shrinking and dozens of natural streams have dried up. She said MOCC should play a leadership role in bringing all provinces at one platform instead of shifting its responsibilities to provinces.

The ministry officials were not able to properly respond to questions of parliamentarians but Minister for Climate Change Zahid Hamid intervened and tried to rescue officials, defusing the heating discussion. He said a comprehensive plan 'Green Pakistan' was being devised to promote forestry across the country.

"Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has directed the ministry to prepare a comprehensive strategy for this purpose and we have started work on it," he apprised. He said consultation process with concerned provincial secretaries had already been initiated as "the national plan, which is in its advanced stage, has to be implemented at the provincial level."

Under the strategy, the minister said, trees of special species including juniper, deodar, Sheesham and pine would be planted in different forest pockets to tackle adverse effects of climate change.

Hamid also informed the committee that he had floated an idea to the prime minister for setting up a climate change inter-ministerial authority.

While briefing the committee members on the recent climate change conference in Paris, the minister said it discussed all possible ways and means to mitigate negative impacts of climate change and global warming across the world. He said the conference reached an agreement that every country would be responsible as per its capacity to tackle environmental issues. The conference agreed on a 'differentiated responsibility' on every participant country, he said, elaborating that developed countries would have more responsibility than developing nations.

The Inspector General Forests also briefed the standing committee about the steps taken by the ministry to stop deforestation.

The committee members expressed dissatisfaction over the role of the forest department, saying that precious trees were chopped for the monetary benefit of individuals in connivance with some influentials. They blamed that in some forests of Swat-Buner (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Ziarat (Balochistan) rare and precious trees were cut by the mafia. "Even, their roots are burnt to remove any sign of trees there," they said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1032515/tackling-climate-change-no-clear-direction-on-increasing-forest-cover/>

CHOPPED DOWN TREES: DHA RESIDENTS ROUGHED UP FOR TAKING A STAND

The Express Tribune, January 24th, 2016.

Rabia Ali

KARACHI: Officials of the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) manhandled residents and journalists on Saturday when they gathered at West Avenue in Phase I to inquire about the 50-year-old trees recently chopped down by the authority.

DHA is in the process of widening the main road when it reportedly chopped down the trees, much to the dismay of nearby residents.

On Saturday, a group of residents gathered at the site where the authorities had chopped off at least five trees. The group was complaining about the chopped down trees when an unidentified man clad in brown shalwar kameez mistreated a female complainant, Nighat Mir, who is also one of the founder of Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture.

The DHA security officials, also present on the spot, damaged the camera of a private news channel covering the event and temporarily detained its cameraman. The authority's head office lies just across the site.

Mir recalled how the unidentified man shoved her before shouting at the cameraman to shut off his camera. "We were standing peacefully. Why did they do this?" asked the visibly shaken woman.

An construction worker, employed by the company hired to widen the road, said they were given permission by the DHA to cut down the trees. He said that they have cut down three trees. Mir insisted, however, that at least five trees, including Neem, Lignum, Acacia have been axed, which were 50 years old.

Earlier, the residents had gathered at Mir's house to decide their next course of action after learning about the tree-chopping incident. They decided to go to West Avenue to hold a silent protest of sorts and assess the damage en masse. They pointed out the spots where the aged trees once stood and remembered how a Neem tree once hung over the roundabout, and a green median which has now disappeared.

While the dozen or so residents were reminiscing, DHA officials arrived and manhandled them. The residents then walked up to the DHA head office to register their complaint but the security guards closed the gates and called for backup. They also seized recording equipment of the cameraman from Business Plus. By the time this report was filed, residents were still at the DHA office waiting to meet the security head to demand return of the recording equipment, which contains footage of the manhandling.

Trees in DHA Phase I were planted by the authority itself in the 1960s, recall residents. However, today the authority does not water a single tree or deal with the termite-infested ones, they complained.

At Mir's house earlier, options of filing a petition in court and registering an FIR were also discussed but the residents agreed to use social media to further their cause.

Architect Tariq Qaiser, a Phase-I resident for 18 years, said he moved into the locality only because of the trees. "The bottom line is that there are very few trees left in Karachi. There was a record heat wave last year and concrete steps [to aid forestation and stop deforestation] should be taken now," said another resident.

Amra Javed of Shehri, a pro-environment NGO, suggested replicating the 'Chipko Movement' of India where people cling to the trees to save them from being chopped down.

DHA spokesperson Lt Col (retd) Rafat Naqvi denied that any mishandling took place near their head office on Saturday afternoon. "We respect our residents. How can our vigilance staff mishandle anyone?" He explained that residents were stopped from making a video as permission is required for making a video.

Regarding the chopping of trees, he said DHA is committed to development, and for that, there are compromises that have to be made. "If DHA has chopped one or two trees, it will plant twice and thrice as many," he claimed.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1033085/chopped-down-trees-dha-residents-roughed-up-for-taking-a-stand/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD JANUARY 4TH TO JANUARY 10TH, 2016

ECO-UNFRIENDLY: ONLY 918 INDUS DOLPHINS LEFT

The Express Tribune, January 4th, 2016.

SUKKUR: Initially, the Indus dolphins were not blind but muddy the water and pollution in the river proved hazardous, turning the mammal blind, said Indus Dolphin Conservation Centre Sukkur incharge, Mir Akhtar Talpur, while speaking at an Indus River dolphin awareness event on Sunday.

After the dolphins lost their sight, Mother Nature's gift of an in-built sonar system proved useful for them to find their way using sound waves, claimed Talpur. This is the same system used by bats and the same technology is being used in submarines, he said. Talpur, quoting the last survey of the Indus dolphin population, said its number from the Jinnah Barrage to the Kotri Barrage is 918 but its population is growing at a slow pace.

The ever rising pollution and release of domestic and industrial waste into the river is causing damage to the marine life, said Talpur, adding that overfishing and using poisonous chemicals is also harming to the marine life.

"Many people know nothing about our wildlife and therefore kill wild animals without any discrimination," he said, adding that earlier people were afraid of dolphins but due to awareness campaigns, people now know their importance.

"Fishermen catch different kinds of fish and even turtles and sell them to make money, which is wrong," he explained. According to him, turtles serve as sweepers in fresh water bodies by eating dead fish and other animals, thus keep the water clean. Similarly, vultures used to keep the environment clean by eating dead animals but now are nearing extinction, which is quite alarming, lamented Talpur.

Earlier Indus dolphins were found throughout the river's 3,500 kilometre (km) area but due to the construction of dams and barrages the dolphins have been confined to a 1,000 km area from Jinnah Barrage to Kotri Barrage, said WWF Sukkur's senior project officer Imran Malik. The Indus dolphin lives in slow-flowing deep water and its life span is between 25 to 30 years, he explained.

The dolphin gives birth to one calf a year, which is fed by its mother's milk for three months, after which it starts hunting on its own, he explained. During floods water spreads to many areas and when it starts receding it leaves lakes, where dolphins can be trapped, he said.

Sometimes, especially at the time of the closure of Sukkur barrage's canals, the water level goes down and fishermen often add poisonous chemicals to the water to catch more fish in one go, he explained, adding that this practice not only harms marine life but also affects the humans who eat the fish.

"Domestic and industrial waste released into the river and canals also poses a threat to the marine life and therefore we have urged factories to install treatment plants, as are being used by some multi-national companies," said Malik.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1021376/eco-unfriendly-only-918-indus-dolphins-left/>

LARGER SC BENCH TO HEAR REVIEW PLEA AGAINST HOUBARA HUNTING BAN

Hasnaat Malik, the Express Tribune, January 6th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: The top judge has formed a five-member larger bench to hear the government's review petition against the apex court's decision to ban hunting of the endangered houbara bustard in Pakistan. The case will be taken up today (Wednesday).

The Supreme Court chief justice will head the bench himself. The other members are justices Mian Saqib Nisar, Iqbal Hameedur Rehman, Umar Ata Bandial and Qazi Faez Isa.

The judge, who authored the August 19 verdict on banning houbara hunting, had opposed the formation of a larger bench to hear the review pleas filed by the federal and provincial governments.

Houbara bustard, an endangered migratory bird prized by hunters from the Gulf states, once flourished in the Arabian peninsula but has been hunted almost to extinction there.

Every winter, hundreds of Arab dignitaries flock to Pakistan on, what locally is termed, a killing spree of the bird, which is about the size of a large chicken.

The International Union of the Conservation of Nature estimates the global population of houbaras between 50,000 and 100,000 and has included them on its “red list” of threatened species.

Although Pakistan has banned its hunting, every year the government grants special permits for Middle Eastern sheikhs on “diplomatic grounds” as they bring “investment in the social sector”.

In August last year however, the top court ordered a complete ban on houbara hunting in response to petitions challenging a 2014 Sindh government order allowing hunting under special permits.

On December 10, a three-judge bench comprising justices Nisar, Isa and Sheikh Azmat Saeed of the apex court recommended the chief justice constitute a larger bench to hear appeals against the ban. Justice Isa objected to the majority judges’ suggestion and wrote a five-page note of dissent.

Opposing the constitution of a larger bench, he stated that no reason was given for recommending the formation of a larger bench. The matter, he added, was relatively simple and there was hardly any justification for forming a larger bench.

The judge wrote that neither an application was submitted nor a verbal request was made for the constitution of a larger bench. “I cannot bring myself to agree with the recommendation for the constitution of a larger bench,” he stated.

Referring to Supreme Court rules of 1980, Justice Isa said the application for review should be posted before the same bench which announced the judgment. “With utmost respect, the matters to be considered in these review petitions are not of a nature that may have required a departure from the rules and the longstanding continuous practice of this court.

“I humbly request the chief justice to let these matters be heard by the same number of judges, who had earlier heard the case,” he wrote.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1022632/houbara-hunting-larger-sc-bench-to-hear-review-plea-against-ban/>

FOUR MORE CHILDREN DIE IN DROUGHT-HIT THAR

Dawn, January 6th, 2016

MITHI: The outbreak of waterborne diseases in Thar claimed the lives of four more children on Tuesday, all in the Civil Hospital Mithi (CHM). The death toll in the drought-hit area during the past five days thus rose to 12.

During a visit to the CHM this correspondent saw parents of patients criticise the health functionaries for their “indifferent attitude” to the plight of their children.

Mohammad Hassan Kapri, whose four-year-old daughter, Shahzadi, died soon after her arrival from Dhani Bux Rind, a remote village, said that they were not being provided with an ambulance to take back the body to their village.

Sindh health secretary Saeed Ahmed Mangejo, who visited the CHM and other health units, told journalists that the Sindh government had taken notice of the deaths of the children in Thar and was focusing on providing the health units with medicines and other facilities so that the spread of the diseases was curbed.

He announced that the annual CHM budget would be doubled, from Rs14 million to Rs28m, adding that he had increased funds of other health units, which would be released within the next six months. He said staff would be posted soon in the 185 non-functioning dispensaries with all necessary facilities.

He claimed that the situation was under control in Thar and that children were falling ill owing to consumption of brackish and polluted water of wells. He said women in Thar were getting proper nutrition.

He praised the media for highlighting issues of the area.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1230966/four-more-children-die-in-drought-hit-thar>

February 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 22nd TO FEBRUARY 28th 2016

KARACHI'S GARBAGE IS A RESOURCE — NOT KACHRA!

The Express Tribune, February 22nd, 2016.

Farhan Anwar

If we look around the city, a crisis unfolds. Breakdown of civic services and the resulting complications are not hidden from anyone.

Many citizens would agree that the most visible form of urban decay is reflected in the piles of unattended garbage dotting the streets, parks, playgrounds, waterways, and the coast.

The main problem with solid waste management is the fact that we still continue to consider solid waste as a 'waste' – kachra! Solid waste in fact needs to be considered a resource.

There are several ways in which urban solid waste can contribute to the environment's betterment and create financial incentives.

Urban solid waste can be broadly categorised as 'organic' and 'inorganic'. Organic waste has a biological origin, like for example food and kitchen waste. Inorganic waste is composed of elements like paper, plastic, metal. In developing nations like Pakistan, where levels of consumerism are less, the percentage of organic waste is higher.

Organic waste can be converted via composting into fertiliser. The organic fertiliser can then be used to promote activities like green gardening. Both ornamental and edible gardens can be grown. This way of gardening can be carried out in multiple spatial contexts.

From the household, street, neighbourhood to a city-wide scale in order to form part of a coordinated urban agricultural drive, the benefits are many.

There is a general improvement in the environment and aesthetics. Green spaces act as carbon sinks, thus limiting the load of greenhouse gases. They reduce impacts of heat events, while green spaces such as parks and playgrounds act as infiltration basins limiting the adverse impacts of urban flooding. Urban agricultural practices contribute to improve health and food security. Innovative public spaces can be created by implementing rooftop gardening and farming.

In France, it has been legislated that the roofs of all houses should either be housing solar panels or gardens. In Melbourne, Australia, an exercise was conducted to map all the spaces available on rooftops to work out the potential of utilising them as green spaces.

Activities and spaces related with urban farming serve as catalysts for promoting social inclusion and integration. Countless benefits can be achieved, if we can focus on converting our organic waste into fertiliser and linking it with a coordinated urban gardening and agricultural program. No rocket science or huge finances are necessary, however the benefits are multi-dimensional. In addition, if only about half of our waste gets recycled and reused, that much less waste has to be disposed.

Let's consider another option: utilising solid waste for harnessing energy. This can be done in a number of ways. In well-functioning city management systems of larger cities, it is regular practice to couple the ultimate waste disposal sites with co-generation plants to recover energy. Methane is one of the worst greenhouse gases and therefore a huge environmental concern. However, methane released at the landfill sites can be recovered and converted into energy. The scale of this energy footprint can be significant.

For example, half of Paris and the whole Louvre Museum are powered by energy generated from solid waste. A careful analysis of the calorific value of waste can determine the potential of this option. Organic waste can also be converted into bio-gas energy.

The most efficient usage of this option can come if we are dealing with agricultural waste of agricultural products and livestock. Karachi has a vast rural hinterland and if the waste from agricultural activities can be converted into bio-gas by setting up bio-gas plants, the outcome will be highly significant, financial, environmental and social.

Many things that we throw away as garbage can be recovered and converted into value-added products. In many cases, old tires are commonly used to prepare a number of decorative and functional products.

These are just a few options that are opening doors, not only for the obvious environmental benefits but for significant financial dividends as well. Not only will the city government benefit but small scale community-based entrepreneurship models can take shape. It is a matter of changing the lens we are wearing while looking at our garbage!

The writer is an urban planner and runs a non-profit organisation based in Karachi city focusing on urban sustainability issues. He can be reached at fanwar@sustainableinitiatives.org.pk

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1051565/karachis-garbage-is-a-resource-not-kachra/>

ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE ON THE RISE, WORKSHOP TOLD

Dawn, February 24th, 2016

FAIZA ILYAS

KARACHI: Pakistan has seen a massive increase in the scale of illegal wildlife trade over the past few years, which can be gauged from the fact that the country reported seizures of 5,717 turtles last year alone.

The situation is the result of multiple factors that include ineffective implementation of legislation and low penalties, inadequate inter-agency coordination and cooperation, serious funding constraints and capacity gaps provincial wildlife departments have been facing for a long time.

These were some important observations made during the inaugural session of a four-day consultative and capacity building workshop which opened at a local hotel on Tuesday.

Part of a USAID-funded project being implemented by the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan, the workshop is the last of a series of such events conducted in different cities to seek recommendations from relevant stakeholders to develop a national level strategy to combat wildlife crimes in the country.

Welcoming the guests, senior director-biodiversity at the WWF-P Rab Nawaz said the illegal wildlife trade had been recognised as an organised crime last year by the United Nations, which believed that illegal wildlife trade should have the same enforcement tools, techniques and penalties as other illegal practices.

“It is the fourth most lucrative illegal trade falling closely behind drugs, counterfeiting and human trafficking and generates an estimated \$19 billion annually,” he told the audience.

An assessment of 102 web portals and social network platforms and individual Facebook pages, he pointed out, had showed that an online wildlife market existed in Pakistan and the scale of e-crime was on the rise.

He also shared the data based on the reported cases relating to illegal turtle and falcon trade according to which 41 falcons were seized in Hyderabad and Karachi while 5,717 turtles were confiscated last year in Lahore and Karachi. The latter were valued about Rs143 million (per their international market price).

Highlighting some key feature of the 11-month project titled Combating Illegal Wildlife Trade by Establishing a National Monitoring Network that Benefits Local Communities and Environment, he said the organisation planned to bring all relevant stakeholders on board to formulate a national level action plan to control illegal wildlife trade in the country. It was said during the programme that although wildlife trade involved both flora and fauna and the country had huge asset of medicinal plants, the government seemed to lack a mechanism to protect indigenous plants.

Taking up this issue, director general of Directorate of Research and Training (Customs) Ghulam Ahmad, the chief guest, said herbal species were missing out (in the subject of illegal trade) and it’s time that native flora, as an essential part of ecosystems and national heritage, was accorded due importance and protected.

He acknowledged that enhanced capacity of Pakistan customs officials and other departments on various aspects of illegal wildlife trade would be an important step to ensure improved surveillance of wildlife traffickers.

Conservator of wildlife at the ministry of climate change Umeed Khalid gave an overview of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species regulation, its implementation at the national level and various aspects of the Pakistan Trade Control Act of Wild Flora and Fauna 2012.

Replying to a question, he said rules and regulations under the new act were yet to be made.

“It’s vital that law enforcement agencies take help from new technologies as wildlife traffickers are adopting new strategies to transport wildlife,” he said.

“Given the massive scale of wildlife crimes, departmental and regional collaboration is gaining more importance.”

Regarding hunting of houbara bustard, concerns were raised over the role of the federal government and it was pointed out that provincial wildlife staff had no access to check activities of ‘foreign guests’, who were issued hunting permits by the federal government and it was important that the ministry of climate change took up this matter to combat illegal hunting.

Balochistan forest and wildlife conservator Sharifuddin Baloch highlighted efforts of his department in combating illegal wildlife trade and said public awareness and community involvement were important in addressing the challenge.

Chief conservator of Sindh Saeed Akhtar Baloch, assistant secretary wildlife at ministry of climate change Samar Hussain Khan and head of the wildlife department’s marine turtle conservation unit Adnan Hamid Khan also spoke.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1241478>

1.8 MILLION TREES TO BE PLANTED IN CHARSADDA

The Express Tribune, February 27th, 2016

Around 1.8 million trees is the plantation target for Charsadda as part of the Billion Tree Tsunami Project, stated Sub-divisional Officer for Forest Faizur Rehman.

He issued this statement after a tree was planted at a civil court in Shabqadar by additional sessions judge Asad Ali.

Rehman said plantation would take place over 1,800 hectares of land in the district. He added a farmer with a hectare of land would be provided trees free of cost and Rs10 for the plantation of each one.

If the plant survives to see the forest department's survey in December 2016, an additional Rs15 will be awarded to the farmer for each one. In 2017, another Rs20 will be provided for each surviving plant as part of the Billion Tree Tsunami project.

The officer said such incentives could see the trees surviving for as long a period as possible. Rehman said authorities would also plant trees on barren lands and provide all help to interested property owners.

He appealed to locals to be part of the plantation programme. "We will be planting 5,000 trees a day in the district which will bear fruit later," the officer said. He added the district administration is launching a media campaign for the project to raise awareness about the campaign.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1055142/tsunami-cometh-1-8-million-trees-to-be-planted-in-charsadda/>

BUS PROJECT MAY REDUCE 21 PERCENT CARBON EMISSIONS: WWF-PAKISTAN

Business Recorder, February 27, 2016

The WWF-Pakistan on Friday said the proposed Green Line BRT project would help scale down 21 percent carbon emission in the city. In this connection, WWF-Pakistan organised a consultative workshop on findings of a study conducted on Carbon Emissions Reduction from Karachi Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project and potential Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which Pakistan Sustainable Transport Project (Pakstran), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at a local hotel.

Speaking at the workshop, Director Planning and Co-ordination Karachi Mass Transit Cell, Sindh government, Fazal Karim Khatri said that the bus project would help reduce greenhouse effects and energy use. The project will also help improve environment of the city.

He said that the project would enshrine five corridors to help run rapid mass transit including Green, Orange, Red, Blue and Yellow Lines. He said that Green Line was stretched over 18 kilometres from Surjani Town to Jama Cloth Market, costing Rs 16 billion with 80 buses. This Line will provide ridership to around 400,000 passengers each day.

The Orange Line route with total length of 2.2 kilometres will start from TMA to Jinnah University and will join Green Line, he said, adding that the Yellow one would operate from Dawood Chowrangi to Numaish Chowrangi following to Regal Chowk through 8000 roads, Korangi Road and FTC.

"This Line, with 70 buses, would spread over 26.5 kilometres and will cost around 14 billion rupees," he said. This Line will have 22 pedestrian bridges, 24 stations and 18 parks. He said that it would provide ridership to 150000 people. The Red Line will cover 21.5 kilometres from Model Colony to Mazar-e-Quaid to serve 350000 commuters a day with a luxurious ridership, costing Rs 15 billion, he added.

Fazal Karim said that the Blue Line was the largest one striding over 54 kilometres with a capacity of 357, 000 passengers daily. "This project is being implemented in public-private mode as BRT that would be converted to MRT in future.

The total cost of the Line is estimated to be 67,280 million rupees,” he said. Component Manager Pakstran, UNDP, Yar Muhammad said that the BRT would have a huge impact in term of reducing Green House Gases (GHG) besides saving travel time and cost. The UNDP is supporting government and other organisations who are working on improvement of transport environment in country, he said.

Senior Manager, WWF-Pakistan Ali Dehlavi discussed the study findings, saying that the BRT would reduce 21 percent of vehicular emissions relative to baseline year of 2015. Chairman Department of Urban and Infrastructure Engineering, NED University, Professor Dr Mir Shabbar Ali said that the project should have been initiated earlier so that it could have reduced more carbon emissions, which affected the environment.

The project will require a close co-ordination of different departments so the government should formulate an authority to integrate them on one platform. He appreciated WWF-Pakistan’s efforts especially the mathematical modelling and detailed scientific analysis of carbon emissions.

M Ali Rasheed, Executive Member, Shehri-Citizen for Better Environment, a civil society organisation said that there is a need to create awareness among Karachiites to use this transport facility so that people may know about environmental and other benefits of this transport system.

Assistant Chief of Transport and Communication, Planning and Development Department, Sikander Ali Shaikh observed that the sustainability of mega projects Operation and Maintenance (O and M) cost was instrumental, which was mostly overlooked. He suggested that for success of the BRT project this cost must be reviewed if it is not sufficiently allocated otherwise, this could lead to a failure.

Muhammad Saleem Jalbani, Assistant Chief, Planning and Development Department said that Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) was a vital tool to assess the feasibility of such projects therefore it was indispensable to go ahead on the project without the findings of EIA. He was of the view that strong institutional mechanism should also be in place to run this project effectively. Tayyib Aftab, Assistant Manager, Corporate Affairs, Atlas Honda Limited said that citizens would prefer BRT as local transport was not safe.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/20454/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 15th TO FEBRUARY 21st 2016

ARSENIC IN RICE

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, February 15th, 2016

AMIN AHMED

A UNIDO-funded study on the assessment of arsenic in rice growing areas of Pakistan finds that the levels of arsenic in the investigated varieties do not currently seem to be a risk.

Findings have proved that arsenic in rice crops relatively a newfangled issue in Pakistan and its direct linkages with irrigation water may not be clearly visible.

However, the study stresses more attention be given to the use of irrigation water as drinking water, arsenic accumulation in topsoil and arsenic uptake capacity of rice varieties in order to safeguard public health and foreign exchange earnings through rice export.

The study, carried out by the Pakistan Council for Research in Water Resources and released last week, recommends development of new irrigation strategies, adoption of modern irrigation system with due consideration of water quality, preference to surface water irrigation systems (since surface water is arsenic-free), growing of arsenic resistant varieties and monitoring of irrigation water and rice grains.

Pakistan is one of the world's largest producers of rice with an average annual output of six million tonnes and together with the rest of the South Asian region, the country is responsible for supplying 25pc of the world's paddy output.

Human exposure to arsenic via rice consumption is of increasing concern. Rice is one of the most important food crops around the world and feeds over half of the global population. Studies have shown that high concentrations of arsenic in soil and irrigation water often lead to high levels of arsenic in crops and are posing an increased food safety risk.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission Committee on Contaminants, which sets a maximum limit to arsenic in rice, at its last meeting held in the Netherlands, supported the participation of the National Animal Plant Health Inspection Services (NAPHIS) at the committee's meeting, and as a prerequisite for the meeting, the baseline assessment of arsenic in a number of rice varieties grown in Pakistan.

To quantify the distribution of arsenic in various varieties grown in different areas of Pakistan — Gujranwala, Gujrat, Hafizabad, Kasur, Lahore, Mandi Bahauddin, Narowal, Okara, Sheikhpura and Sialkot — samples were collected from rice processing mills, storages, whole-sellers and open market.

The maximum levels of arsenic of all the samples were found in the range of 84.75 to 356.20 ppb (0.084 to 0.356 mg/kg). None of the sample was found exceeding the 1.00 mg/kg, the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended permissible limit for arsenic.

The assessment study observes that the irrigation development is foreseen to rely largely on ground water abstraction. There is a high risk, if proper control measures are not taken and the ground water resources are not managed properly, that the use of arsenic contaminated ground water may turn out to be hazardous in the future.

This situation does not seem alarming yet but needs to be taken very seriously and proper measures need to be taken to deal with the possible threat posed by arsenic contamination, while implementing irrigation practices.

The study also recommends that the water quality of any new irrigation scheme be assessed prior to approving it. In addition, farmers should be educated for arsenic testing of their irrigation water, rice and other crops yield.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1239680>

VIEW FROM ABROAD: EATING THE WORLD

Dawn, February 15th, 2016

THE Indian swiftlet is not a very distinguished bird among the many spectacular species that flourish in Sri Lanka. But it featured in a recent full page newspaper report that informed readers about a smuggling racket involving the swiftlet's nests. Dead chicks and broken eggs were discovered near a cave where the birds had built their nests, using their saliva to bind twigs and grass together.

As it is a crime in Sri Lanka to kill birds and destroy their nests, the police were called in; their top official in the area has promised tighter security. Apparently, these nests had been earlier subjected to similar trafficking in the early '90s before a government crackdown had halted the illegal trade.

So who is buying these nests? I had read references to 'bird's nest soup' in various Chinese cookbooks, but had never really focused on the type of nests used in the dish. It seems that the saliva of swiftlets imparts a delicate flavour to the soup. Now that I know that eggs are destroyed and chicks killed in the process, I don't think I'll ever taste the dish even though I seldom have much inhibition about what I eat, as long as it tastes good.

Sadly, swiftlets are not the only species to fall victim to China's voracious appetite for anything that walks, swims, flies or crawls. But many animals are not killed just for food: several species are now facing extinction because of the

demand created by traditional Chinese medicine. The average price of tiger bones, for instance, is around \$300 per kilo. A bowl of tiger penis soup can set you back \$320 in Taiwan, while a pair of tiger eyes cost \$170. Tiger meat is served at private banquets in China by newly rich businessmen wishing to flaunt their wealth.

All this despite a complete ban on trafficking tiger parts imposed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Although China is a signatory, it has made little effort to halt this trade, giving gangs of poachers every incentive to hunt the animals to near extinction from Siberia to Indonesia. The remaining tigers in Bangladesh, India and Nepal are under grave threat.

Another endangered species is the rhinoceros. A kilo of the animal's horn can sell for \$100,000, making it more valuable than gold. Despite a plethora of scientific evidence, many in East Asia remain convinced of its curative properties. However, this time it is Vietnam, not China, that has pushed horn prices to their present level. For some reason, people there have become convinced that rhino horn can cure cancer, and this ignorance can doom the magnificent animal.

As incomes in countries like China, Vietnam and Taiwan have grown these last few decades, and a new class of nouveau riche has emerged, the means to indulge every gastronomic whim has become available. Thus, shark's fins, pangolins, yak penis, cobra heart and many other exotic items find themselves being served in expensive restaurants and in rich people's homes. China, having virtually eliminated several species at home, is now paying hefty prices to import these delicacies.

Elephants are another noble species being decimated to feed China's appetite for ivory. Every year, around 35,000 are killed in Africa, and the price of their tusks had gone up to around \$2,500 per kilo. However, China's recent efforts to reduce the sale of ivory have had an impact on prices which have fallen by half over the last year. Nevertheless, gangs of poachers are active across Africa, slaughtering elephants and threatening the species with extinction.

Ironically, China claims it is unable to halt this traffic in banned animals despite being a highly autocratic state. It routinely jails citizens for the smallest infraction of the laws and has gagged virtually all dissent. So if it can shut down websites and lock up political opponents at will, why can't it put an end to the slaughter of many endangered species?

Then we have the Japanese with their insistence on continuing to hunt whales on the pretext of 'research'. Despite a worldwide ban, Japanese whaling ships sail out to kill these highly intelligent cetaceans every year. Opposed by environmental groups like Greenpeace, the Japanese have continued to hunt and eat whales. But the ban on commercial whaling brokered by the International Whaling Commission in 1986 has at least put a brake on the rapid decline in the numbers of these giants of the oceans.

As it is, many animals are under threat due to the exponential increase in the size of human communities. Farming and spreading cities have deprived thousands of species of their natural habitat, pushing them into ever-shrinking spaces. And when they try and return to the land that was once their home, they are shot and trapped. Elephants, requiring a lot of food, are especially vulnerable, often coming into conflict with farmers.

Fish stocks are under great pressure, with fishing fleets scouring the oceans with huge nets and modern sonar equipment. These fleets, often accompanied by factory ships, are emptying the seas by the use of illegal fine-meshed nets that allow nothing to escape. Once the nets are hauled in, the fish that are not required are dumped back, long after they have died.

In European waters, there are quotas that aim at sustainable catches. In Asia, however, there is a free for all, with long-range fishing fleets from China, Japan and Taiwan extending their search to the East African and South Asian coasts. Local fishermen often complain that their catches have fallen as a result of this competition from these well-equipped vessels.

The rapidly increasing demand for fish is the result of rising incomes, and the knowledge of the health benefits of fish as compared with meat. And while fish farming is becoming increasingly popular, the inexorable rise in the world's population ensures that mankind will continue taking a toll on wildlife everywhere.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1239499/view-from-abroad-eating-the-world>

‘NEW CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS THREAT TO CITY’S EXISTING GREEN SPACES’

Dawn, February 17th, 2016

FAIZA ILYAS

KARACHI: Describing the last year's human loss due to the heatwave as appalling, speakers at a ceremony held on Tuesday at Sandspit said there was a desperate need to create more and conserve the existing green spaces to lower city temperatures especially in summers.

They were speaking at the launch of a tree plantation campaign organised by the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWF-P) in collaboration with the K-Electric (KE) at the Wetland Centre.

The programme started off with the plantation of 500 mangrove saplings by officials representing both organisations.

Highlighting national challenges in the face of climate change, director general of WWF-P Hammad Naqi Khan said Pakistan had the highest annual deforestation rate in Asia while its forest cover was estimated to be only 2.5 per cent of its total land area.

There was an urgent need for initiating a massive plantation drive in the metropolitan cities like Karachi which witnessed death of more than 1,000 people due to intense heatwave last year, he added.

The lack of green belts and increased concrete cover, he pointed out, had led to elevated temperature in Karachi. The situation, he said, was getting worse due to new developmental projects and housing colonies, which, he said, were threatening the existing greenery and plantation. Felling of trees would not only heighten the process of green house gas emissions but raise temperature levels and make the city more vulnerable to extreme weather events.

“Better urban planning can save life. This holds more importance in Pakistan's case since the country is among the 10 top most vulnerable countries exposed to the adverse impacts of climate change,” he said while pointing it out that the country was not a major polluting country.

He emphasised the need for public-private partnership to promote the cause of environment in the country and said the plantation campaign was in line with last year's agreement between the two organisations under the ‘City Challenge’ aimed at increasing green footprint of Karachi.

Chief supply chain officer at KE Eram Hasan said global warming was a serious challenge and it was about time that every individual in society played a part in coping with the issue and came up with initiatives to reduce the impact of climate change.

“In this regard, the partnership of K-Electric with the WWF is a step in the right direction. The power utility has kept its emphasis on renewable energy and is committed to lower carbon footprint through tree plantation and other such campaigns that would follow,” he said.

The KE, he told the audience, would soon hold an energy conference to support utilisation of renewable energy. ‘We hope that Karachi emerges as a major participant in this Earth Hour City Challenge and KE will provide support to this cause,’ he added.

Zehra Mehdi representing the KE said her organisation would be planting 20,000 trees in the city and exploring solar and other renewable energy opportunities for energy conservation.

Head of corporate partnerships and fundraising department at WWF-P Sania Rauf Khan also spoke.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1239941/new-construction-projects-threat-to-citys-existing-green-spaces>

SEPA SHUTS SIX FACTORIES

Dawn, February 20th, 2016

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) shut down three factories in Hyderabad site on Wednesday as they had been working without waste water treatment plants and committing other violations of the Sindh Environmental Protection Act 2014.

An agency team led by its Hyderabad regional office head Muneer Ahmed Abbasi along with police took action against Haji Shafi Paper Mill, Haji Ismail Paper Mill and Standard Pharma.

Mr Abbasi told Dawn that Sepa also shut another three factories, including Sakhi Shahbaz Industry (flour mill and oil plant), Dawn Bread and Rajput Industry (bread) on Tuesday in Hyderabad site because of violations. He said that all the six factories were working without waste water treatment and solid waste management plants.

Mr Abbasi said the agency issued notices, including environmental protection orders, under provisions of the Sindh Environmental Protection Act 2014 to 25 factories of Hyderabad SITE on Feb 4, but factories were reluctant to abide by the laws.

Actions would also be taken against the rest of the factories, he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1240163/sepa-shuts-six-factories>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 8th TO FEBRUARY 14th 2016

RECOVERING TROPICAL FORESTS A SPONGE FOR CO₂: STUDY

Business Recorder, February 08, 2016

Tropical forests reclaiming land cleared for agriculture or livestock not only grow quickly, but absorb far more CO₂ from the atmosphere than old-growth trees, according to a study.

The research, published in the journal Nature, challenges long-standing assumptions that virgin tropical forests untouched by logging or industry do a better job of sopping up carbon dioxide and, in so doing, slowing the pace of global warming.

It is also good news because it means regenerating tropic forests could play a even greater role in fighting climate change than previously suspected.

“Carbon uptake is surprisingly fast in these young forests that regrow on abandoned pastures or abandoned agricultural fields,” said Lourens Poorter, lead author of the study and a professor at Wageningen University in the Netherlands.

After only two decades, recovering tropical forests in Latin America built up, on average, more than 120 tonnes of biomass per hectare (2.5 acres), and were able to remove three tonnes of carbon per hectare per year from the atmosphere.

“That is 11 times the uptake rate of old-growth forests,” Poorter said in a statement.

Forests are a major bulkhead against climate change because plants — mostly in the tropics — soak up nearly 30 percent of the heat-trapping carbon dioxide humans pour into the air.

Oceans are another so-called “sink” for CO₂, with the rest remaining in the atmosphere.

Deforestation is a double threat: Trees release stored-up CO₂ when cut down, and reducing the surface area covered by forests means fewer plants are left to absorb it in the first place.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/recovering-tropical-forests-a-sponge-for-co2-study-116020400718_1.html#

MILLIONS DIE FROM AIR POLLUTION, MAINLY IN CHINA, INDIA

The Express Tribune, February 13, 2016

WASHINGTON: Air pollution kills more than 5.5 million people around the world each year, with over half of those deaths occurring in fast-growing China and India, researchers said Friday.

And the number of premature deaths will continue to climb in the years ahead unless more aggressive measures against pollution are adopted, scientists warned the American Association for the Advancement of Science conference in the US capital.

“Air pollution is the fourth highest risk factor for death globally and by far the leading environmental risk factor for disease,” said Michael Brauer, a professor at the University of British Columbia’s School of Population and Public Health in Vancouver, Canada.

Air pollution ranks behind high blood pressure, diet and smoking as the fourth greatest risk factor for fatalities worldwide, according to the Global Burden of Disease study, done by the Institute for Health Metrics.

“Reducing air pollution is an incredibly efficient way to improve the health of a population,” said Brauer.

China and India account for 55 percent of yearly global deaths from air pollution.

Some 1.6 million people died of air pollution in China in 2013, while India saw 1.4 million deaths.

In China, burning coal is the biggest contributor to poor air quality — and pollution from coal was found to have caused 366,000 deaths in 2013, said Qiao Ma, a PhD student at the School of Environment at Tsinghua University in Beijing, China.

She projected that air pollution will cause anywhere from 990,000 to 1.3 million premature deaths in 2030 unless more ambitious targets are introduced.

“Our study highlights the urgent need for even more aggressive strategies to reduce emissions from coal and from other sectors,” said Ma.

In India, the main culprit was burning wood, dung and biomass for cooking and heating.

“India needs a three-pronged mitigation approach to address industrial coal burning, open burning for agriculture, and household air pollution sources,” said Chandra Venkataraman, professor of Chemical Engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, in Mumbai, India.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) air quality guidelines, pollution should be restricted to a daily particulate matter of 25 micrograms per cubic meter.

In February, Beijing and New Delhi typically see daily levels at or above 300 micrograms per cubic meter — or 1,200 percent higher than WHO guidelines, researchers said.

More than 85 percent of the global population lives in areas where the World Health Organization Air Quality Guideline is exceeded

[/http://tribune.com.pk/story/1045986/millions-die-from-air-pollution-mainly-in-china-india](http://tribune.com.pk/story/1045986/millions-die-from-air-pollution-mainly-in-china-india)

ENVIRONMENT: SMOG — CURTAIN OVER THE CITIES

Dawn, Sunday Magazine, February 14th, 2016

GEORGE SADIQ

Every winter, the cities in upper and central part of Pakistan wear a blanket of fog; which is primarily due to a particular climate zoning, but the problem is getting worse with each passing year. This is because the smoke emitting from the surface adds to the fog and thickens it — creating something called ‘smog’. In other words, it is a kind of air pollution named for being a mixture of smoke and fog in the air.

The problem has intensified as during the past few decades due to rapid and sustained industrialisation and addition of millions of vehicles which emit smoke in the air. Some experts blame the coal-based industry in India located close to the border, the smoke of which is carried by wind into Pakistan.

According to Dr Badar M. Ghauri, of the Institute of Space Technology, through the satellite data on haze, smog and fog it has been revealed that the haze density increases after rice harvesting (October-November) when agricultural waste is burnt in India close to the Pakistani border. The fog / haze cover during this period ranged from 155,000 – 354,500 sqkm in Pakistan and India which is double from that during 2006-2010.

In Pakistan billions of rupees have been spent on building motorways for speedy movement of agricultural and industrial products, but during December and January due to smog everything slows down and on some occasions come to a complete standstill. An elderly resident of Narowal, Emmanuel Das said that the fog has decreased the daylight hours over the years.

Punjab is a densely populated province and in terms of ‘human productivity loss’ one can calculate the negative impact on the financial health of the country if a large proportion of the population is rendered unproductive. Lahore also falls amongst the worst smog affected cities in the world. According to the World Bank statistics the cost of urban air pollution in Pakistan was Rs65 billion in 2006.

Of late, the flights and land carriers’ cancellation frequency increased tremendously, which not only caused loss to the transport industry, but catapulted an array of other sequential effects, i.e. road accidents and loss of human lives due to delay in transporting serious patients to the hospitals owing to low visibility.

According to Mushtaq Ahmed Gill, President, South Asian Agriculture Conservation Network Foundation, the residue from cotton, wheat and rice crops is burnt on both sides of the border after the harvesting season during winter. In this season, while flying over this route at night one can see swaths of burning fire and smoke emitting from these fields.

Gill says that the residue contains nutrients worth billions of rupees that are essential for soil enrichment. Besides, agriculture-friendly insects and pests that help in the growth of plants are also destroyed along with the residue.

Pakistan is an agriculture-based economy and cannot afford this luxury for a very long time. For their own petty savings, the farmers make others liable to pay huge amounts in terms of losses to businesses, trade, crops, and human health and productivity.

In the recent past kino crop suffered losses estimated to be in millions when the fruit started falling due to frost. Experts blamed the cold weather and very dense fog during this season.

We can learn from the Europeans who faced the worst smog situation in the '60s and '70s. Their corrective measures and legislations prompted technological developments that helped improve air quality.

Standards have been set for cars and heavy duty vehicles' engines for better fuel efficiency. Industries are using efficient pollution reduction technology. Switching from coal to natural gas has also helped in improving the overall air quality.

Beijing is already going through heavy air pollution presently, and the surrounding cities and provinces have raised their alert levels as northern China is facing the worst smog of the year. Looking at the worsening situation in China and Delhi, one can cautiously predict that Pakistan will face a similar situation in the days to come.

Environmental experts suggest that since smog is a common threat to the environment and economies of both India and Pakistan, they need to come together to deal with it through mutual cooperation. Both the countries strictly need to implement environmental laws and keep proper checks on burning of fossil fuels, crop residue and garbage, and application of latest technology in the transport and coal-based industry for carbon emission reduction. They further warn that without practical measures on both sides of the border, the genie of smog can never be brought back into the bottle.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1239224/environment-smog-curtain-over-the-cities>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 1ST TO FEBRUARY 7TH 2016
GRID STATION IN F-9 PARK: OMBUDSMAN SUMMONS MINISTRY SECY, EPA OFFICIALS
The Express Tribune, February 2nd, 2016.

Shahzad Anwar

ISLAMABAD: Federal Ombudsman has summoned climate change ministry and environment protection agency officials for allowing construction of a grid station in the capital's largest public park.

The ombudsman issued notices to the climate change ministry and Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) top officials on a complaint filed by a citizen, Arif Karim, saying that the environmental watchdog gave permission to IESCO for installation of a 132KV grid station in Fatima Jinnah Park without the approval of a permanent head of the agency, as required by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act, 1997.

Former Pak-EPA Director General Dr Muhammad Khurshid had, in January 2015, barred the power utility to install the grid station in the park saying that the Capital Development Authority (CDA) could not allot a park land without denotifying the land from the park area.

The Supreme Court had also ordered that a public park could not be used for other purposes.

However, after Khurshid's retirement, the civic agency colluded with some "corrupt" officials of EPA and obtained an NOC, a source in the ministry told The Express Tribune.

MoCC Director General Environment Irfan Tariq was given the additional charge of heading the EPA on January 26 this year but the NOC was issued on December 28 last year.

The complainant has questioned legality of Tariq's signature on the NOC, signed before he was officially notified as EPA head.

Tariq, however, claimed that the piece of land where the grid station has been planned to be built was not part of the park and its construction was part of the initial master plan.

To a question on how an NOC could be issued in absence of a permanent EPA head, he said it had been decided that once a DG was appointed, he would formally approve the NOC.

He also claimed there was no need to de-notify the park land for construction of the grid station, in contrast to what his predecessor had ruled.

MoCC Secretary Arif Ahmed Khan, on his part, said that the ministry had sought EPA's advice in the issue, to which, "EPA said there was no harm in carrying out the project at F-9 Park land."

The civic authority claims that the entire land in F-9 Park is not allocated for the park area.

IESCO had started work on the grid station last year but the environmental watchdog, led by then director general, had told CDA and IESCO to stop building the grid station in the park.

The CDA had allocated 10 kanals of parkland to IESCO for the project. Once completed, an additional 25 megawatts (MW) of electricity will be added to the main transmission line, 16 MW of which will be diverted to Centaurus Mall, while the rest would be provided to Blue Area, and sectors F-8, F-9, G-8 and G-9. The CDA had already paid Rs270.725 million as construction costs to IESCO.

The ombudsman has summoned MoCC secretary and Pak-EPA representatives to appear before the court today (Tuesday).

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1038495/grid-station-in-f-9-park-ombudsman-summons-ministry-secy-epa-officials/>

March 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 28th TO APRIL 3rd 2016

WHY PAKISTAN CONTINUES TO SUFFER

The Express Tribune, March 28th, 2016.

Faran Mahmood

ISLAMABAD: In the past decade, we have witnessed a series of floods that affected parts of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) periodically, causing catastrophic damages to infrastructure, property and hence, economy. Then, there were droughts for most of rural Sindh and a severe heatwave last year.

At present, floods, droughts and their management is costing the government around \$1 billion indirectly each year.

One may question, that despite adopting the so called 'sustainable practices' to minimise carbon footprint, why are these measures completely ineffective when it comes to changing climate patterns?

The answer to this question is explained by the 'Gaian theory' i.e. these cataclysmic damages happen due to lack of nature conservation and consistent despoliation of countryside.

Today, the worldwide global warming has become a real and bigger threat compared to that of the nuclear world war.

For the first time in history, we now see ice-free water at the poles in summer due to accelerated melting of glaciers in Greenland. It is certain that the exact consequences of this global warming phenomenon shall be far worse than the scientific realistic predictions, which have been ignored by interfering bureaucrats for the sake of dirty politics.

To make matters worse, our model capital is no longer the green capital: a major chunk of 'greenfields' around Margalla hills have been 'brown-ified.'

The Gaian organism has had self-regulated global temperature, atmospheric content, ocean salinity, and other factors in an "automatic" manner for millions of years but now the intervention from man has reached a point that this feedback system is on the verge of a breakage.

The element of vagueness dominates in the government's guidance, as found in our national climate / environment policy.

It is due to this abstraction of regulations that many projects pass the test of compliance by conducting a flawed survey related to biodiversity practices.

This also reflects government position that all conservation areas are of least importance and the short term socio-economic activity is preferred over the long-term benefits of nature conservation.

According to our conservation policies, any development which results in the deterioration of greenbelts should be refused save in the most 'exceptional circumstances'.

However we see consistent encroachments and clearing of Margalla greenbelts in Islamabad – not to mention other cities. Mature trees are associated with some of the field boundaries and a proportion of the trees around Margalla hills have been shown to support a valuable terrestrial invertebrate assemblage.

However, as anticipated, the government has no regard for its own self-made policies and uses diplomatic ways to deviate from the rules such as quoting 'exceptional circumstances'. The establishment tends to manipulate the directives in these acts by using a 'fluffy language.'

This paints a really dark picture in the chapter of nature conservation.

Furthermore, the scheme contradicts or fails to support development plan environmental policy. If the encroachment and the development of Margalla greenbelts is given a green signal, then it will severely damage the balance of ecosystems in this region. It is also sad that such plans tend to weight the value of nature degradation in 'monetary terms' and use fancy terms such as balance sheets and Net Present Value (NPVs) to show that it does not really matter.

The present weather calamities and catastrophes are not happening by chance; neither is our present unsustainable and wasteful lifestyle.

It has been created by a rapacious system of unfettered capitalism driven by greed, with the enthusiastic collusion of short sighted venal politicians.

It was created with scant regard for the environmental ravages unleashed. George Monbiot once wrote that "if you talk about the problems of global warming, people call you a Saint, but if you talk about the solutions to global warming, people call you a communist."

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1073940/damaging-ecosystem-why-pakistan-continues-to-suffer/>

'GOING GREEN IS GREAT FOR ENVIRONMENT, PROPERTY VALUE'

Business Recorder March 31, 2016

LAHORE: Today, the positive effect of a healthy environment on the quality of our everyday lives should be extremely apparent to everyone. Global warming, air pollution, toxic drinking water and a corrupted food supply are global and local issues that affect each one of us.

Reducing our carbon footprint by building parks and green spaces addresses many of these problems. In Karachi, for example, where average temperatures have risen greatly in recent years, citizens are calling for the creation of more green spaces to combat the intense heat.

For real estate investors and owners, going green has the added benefit of increasing property values.

It has been reported that cities with a high percentage of green, natural spaces like parks and gardens have a better quality of life. More than 50 percent of the world's population lives in cities today. In 30 years, that number is projected to grow to around 70 percent. This means that green spaces are more crucial than ever.

A Lamudi research says Pakistanis are intensely aware of these issues. In a recently conducted survey, the vast majority of respondents said they believe that sustainable and environmentally friendly properties are extremely important to them.

It is surprising that some people have not caught on and continually deny the issues that we are facing as a global population. If increasing the quality of life in our cities is not compelling enough, perhaps looking at it from a financial perspective will help. As previously mentioned, it has been reported that the value of properties with access to parks and green spaces are higher than those without.

And as we have seen in New York City's Chelsea neighbourhood with the construction of the High Line Park, even expensive real estate can increase in value with newly constructed green spaces.

Reports from the United States city of Chicago claim that real estate prices increased by about 7.1 percent in the six months leading up to the grand opening of the Bloomingdale Trail, a park similar to New York City's High Line.

And if that's still not convincing enough, consider the mental health benefits of having access to green spaces. Parks and gardens benefit us all, but they do not benefit all of us equally. For poorer communities, the benefits are relatively greater. Mental health services are out of reach for many of our cities' poor.

Since the affluent already have access to mental health services, the positive effect of parks and gardens on them is smaller. As such, green spaces are also a way of fighting class inequality.

Going green should be a forgone conclusion at this point. It benefits our minds, our bodies and our pockets. And more importantly, it is a path to justice for our poorer communities.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/03/31/5-page/745995-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 21st TO MARCH 27th 2016

100,000 SAPLINGS PLANTED IN PESHAWAR

Dawn, March 22nd, 2016

PESHAWAR: About 100,000 saplings were planted by the youth during a plantation drive entitled 'one tree, one life' inaugurated by PTI chairman Imran Khan in Regi Model Township here on Monday.

One student would be planting one sapling under the initiative, said Imran Khan. He said that it was a great initiative of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and it should be implemented by the federal government in the entire country.

Mr Khan said that planting and growing more trees would bring a better environmental impact in the country. He said that it was alarming that Pakistan was ranked 8th in the global warming index. Planting trees could help to solve the issue, he added.

“Pakistan can become a desert if we don’t plant trees. We need to make a green Pakistan for our children,” said the PTI chief.

Officials of forest department said on the occasion that by Dec 2017, the province would achieve the target of planting one billion saplings. The forest department would plant 160 million saplings by the end of the year and thus the number of planted trees would reach 500 million by the year’s end in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, they said.

Adviser to Chief Minister on Environment Ishtiaq Urmer said that daily 700,000 saplings were being planted and so far 110,000 saplings were planted in that one location, which looked like a record in the history of the country.

Students of various schools participated in the plantation drive.

Meanwhile, the volunteers, who had been painting walls starting from Hayatabad, successfully concluded the first phase of “Rang De Peshawar” beautification initiative by making colourful designs on the walls near Board Bazaar.

Youth including university girls and boys had been painting colourful slogans, designs and images on walls under ‘Rang De Peshawar’ drive, launched about two weeks ago.

The young artists had caught attention of the people and motorists passing by but failed to get attention of Imran Khan, who was supposed to come to the concluding phase of the drive at University Road near Board Bazaar.

Imran Khan did not stop by on his way back from the plantation campaign in Regi Model Township, according to the officials, due to security reasons.

However, girls and boys, who had been facing a bit of harassment, did not mind what was going on around them as they kept doing their amazing colourful work passionately as the convoy of the PTI chairman passed by.

The students kept painting the walls as the cultural music played on and smoke-emitting wagons, rickshaws and cars moved slowly on the road.

“Some people had been calling us white-wash people and an elderly guy even expressed his displeasure at girls, who were painting walls,” said Tariq, a young volunteer.

He said that such criticism did not dent their spirits as they were actually out to do some good work for their city.

“I have covered my face due to the pollution but mostly due to the people, who stop and stare. I have proved that veil doesn’t stop us from coming out to do something good,” said Qainaat, a student of University of Peshawar, who volunteered for ‘Rang De Peshawar’ drive.

Her classmate Habiba Hayat said that Peshawar used to be a city of flowers but its walls were dirty and ugly. “We want to restore some of its past beauty by brining colour on walls around the city,” she said.

Amir Farooq, another volunteer, said that all he wanted was for Peshawar to look beautiful so he had volunteered for ‘Rang De Peshawar’.

Amjad Khan said that the designs were approved and around 20 to 30 students of Iqra Univerisity and University of Peshawar had volunteered for it. People appreciate how dreary looking walls have been made colourful with little effort of the youth.

Abdul Basit, director of culture department, said that in the next phase walls near Aman Chowk would be painted with beautiful colours and designs but he said that residents of the city also needed to look after and keep the walls and city clean.

The youth had painted on the walls slogans like “Pakhair Raghlay” (Welcome to Peshawar), ‘Unity, Faith and Discipline’, designs from historic Sethi House, some sports images and other depicting the culture and beauty of the city.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1247255>

THE FOLLIES OF FINISHING OFF KARACHI’S FOLIAGE

The Express Tribune, March 27th, 2016.

KARACHI: It will take many, many years to bring back the pleasant weather and rainfall Karachi once enjoyed, said environmentalist Tofiq Pasha.

Experts gave advice and suggestions to improve the greenery of the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) and the kinds of trees that should be planted at the ‘Greener DHA’ seminar on Friday, jointly organised by DHA and the Institute of Architects Pakistan’s Karachi Chapter at the Defence Authority Country and Golf Club.

Pasha explained that planting trees today would not change the climate overnight nor would the heat we created go away easily. “It takes 15 to 20 years for a tree to mature and it takes years, decades, to change the climate of a region. To bring back rainfall in the city and decrease heat may take years,” he warned.

It was decided to hold the seminar in January after DHA officials chopped down trees in Phase I, which led to a protest by residents. During the demonstration, residents were manhandled by DHA vigilance officers and, after negotiations, the DHA officials and the aggrieved residents decided to hold an awareness seminar on the importance of trees.

At the seminar, Pasha spoke of a time in Karachi when one could traverse the entire city in shade due to the multitude of trees. He reminisced about the trees in Old Clifton and on Club Road, near the Karachi Gymkhana, which are no more.

About climate change, he said that it is raining in places like Dubai as it has become greener and in areas where it used to rain, it has stopped raining.

Talking about the heatwave where more than 1,000 people died in Karachi alone, he said that several groups got together and planted trees. “It was hogwash and a photo session. Not a single tree planted is present today. Last June, they planted lignum near Hill Park, they stopped giving them water and they died.”

“No one goes to the parks in DHA in the afternoon as there is neither shade nor trees in the parks,” said Pasha, suggesting that trees should be planted according to the space one has and peepal cannot be planted in the narrow lanes of DHA. He advised residents to cover the boundary walls of their homes with creepers.

In an emotional plea, he implored, “It takes five minutes with a chainsaw or an hour with kulhari to cut a 60- to 70-year-old tree. Please don’t cut trees.”

Head of University of Karachi’s visual studies department, Durriya Kazi gave an informative presentation and compared Karachi with Singapore, giving suggestions on how DHA officials could take tips from Singapore. She said that in 1963 Singapore’s prime minister started a tree-planting campaign and today the country has large green belt and several parks.

Speaking on DHA, Kazi pointed out that mature trees are missing in the area. She said that lignum has been massacred all over Karachi to make space for conocarpus, which is not suitable for roadside planting.

She said that the space under underpasses, such as Gizri, should be utilised for green spaces. “Why not declare Gulmohar the national tree of Karachi?” she suggested.

DHA administrator Brigadier Zubair Ahmed said that ideas and suggestion would be taken in consideration. “Last year, 50,000 trees were planted in collaboration with Cantonment Board Clifton in DHA and 25,000 planted in the DHA city,” he said. “On a lighter note, if there were no trees cut in DHA, there would have been no seminar,” he quipped.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1073414/environmental-issue-the-follies-of-finishing-off-karachis-foliage/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 14th TO MARCH 20th 2016

KP GOVT FAILS TO BUY LAND FOR GARBAGE DUMPING SITE

Dawn, March 14th, 2016

Mohammad Ashfaq

PESHAWAR: The provincial government has failed to purchase land for a dumping site to scientifically dispose of over 800 tonnes garbage, daily collected from urban areas of the provincial capital.

Sources said that an amount of Rs174.28 million was allocated for the purpose in the Annual Development Programme for the fiscal year 2014-15. “As successive provincial governments have never bothered to arrange land for the proper dumping of the garbage, the Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar has been throwing it in the area adjacent to provincial capital, having negative impacts on environment,” they added.

Talking to Dawn, officials in WSSP and district administration held each other responsible for delay in purchase of land in Maryamzai area, located on Kohat Road, and subsequent establishment of the dumping site there.

“All ponds of the non-functional water waste treatment plant established over 100-kanal more than two decades on Ring Road near Gulbahar area have been filled with the garbage,” said an official of WSSP said.

He said that it seemed that a city of garbage had been established there as thousands of crows were visiting the site on daily basis in search of food.

Sources said that as all the ponds and the land around those had been filled during the last two years. “Now WSSP is using heavy machinery to press the dumped garbage and create space for more waste,” they said.

Officials said that normally garbage should be dumped 12 kilometres away from the populated area to ward off its negative impacts but currently WSSP was throwing it near the city.

Taimur Ahmed Shah, the WSSP manager of communication and media, when contacted, said that WSSP had identified a 536-kanal piece of land in Maryamzai area for establishment of dumping site. However, the land couldn't be bought owing to the slow process of fund release by the finance department and not acquiring the land by the district administration, he added.

Sources said that WSSP also flouted tenders for awarding contract of environmental impact assessment of the land in Maryamzai area. Several firms have applied for conducting the assessment but it couldn't be launched as the land has not acquired so far.

Deputy Commissioner Riaz Khan Mehsud, when contacted, said that district administration imposed Section 4 of the Land Acquisition Act on the identified land which was the first step for land purchase by the government.

“My staff has also calculated average yearly rate of the identified land and sent the demand for the required amount to WSSP,” he said.

The deputy commissioner said that WSSP was yet to release amount to the district administration to pay to the owners of the land. The acquiring of land was not possible for the district administration without release of fund to it by WSSP, he added. The deputy commissioner said that two reminders were also issued to WSSP for release of fund but in vain. “Acquiring land is not pending on our part,” he added.

An environmentalist said that throwing garbage near the city was hazardous for the population. “WSSP has not been dumping the garbage rather it is throwing it because dumping means covering the garbage with mud and spraying insecticides on it to eliminate breeding site of mosquitoes, which causes several diseases,” he added.

The expert said that sheet of special plastic should be laid on the ground prior to dumping of the garbage to stop waste leakage otherwise it would contaminate the ground water after few years. “Unfortunately, such measures were not taken when garbage dumping was started near the city,” he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1245579>

SC STAYS CONSTRUCTION OF GRID STATION AT F-9 PARK

The Express Tribune, March 16th, 2016.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed construction of a grid station in Fatima Jinnah Park popularly known as the F-9 Park.

The apex court issued the order on a petition filed by Anwar Ali Butt, a resident of F-8, requesting the apex court to ask the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to stop the construction of the grid station immediately.

The petition was heard by a two-judge bench headed by Justice Mian Saqib Nisar.

The court ordered the CDA to maintain status quo while giving its remarks about the construction of the grid station in the capital's biggest Park.

Justice Nisar also remarked that commercial activities were being carried out in the public park.

Abdur Rehman Siddiqi, counsel for the CDA, said that of the total area of around 5,600 kanals, grid station would be constructed over an area of only six kanals.

At this, Justice Nisar said that dangerous rays emitted from grid stations, so the construction could not be allowed in the park.

He observed that if the CDA was allowed construction of grid station in the public park, after this, the civic agency would come back seeking permission for other commercial activities.

The court also sought a report from the Pakistan-Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) and adjourned the case for an indefinite period.

In December 2015, the Pak-EPA issued a no objection certificate (NOC) to the Islamabad Electric Supply Company (Iesco) for the construction of a grid station in a public park, in violation of a previous Supreme Court's decision that public park land could not be used for any other purpose.

Interestingly, in January 2015, the Pak-EPA had barred the civic agency and the Iesco from constructing a grid station in F-9 Park, arguing that the CDA could not allot a land without “denotifying” it from the park area.

The apex court, in its order, has confirmed that public park land cannot be used for other purposes.

However, former DG Pak-EPA Dr Khurshid Khan was transferred in June 2015 and the CDA found the opportunity to make a nexus with some officials of Pak-EPA to embark on its unpopular plan of construction of a grid station in the F-9 Park claiming that the entire park land was not allocated for the park area.

The Pak-EPA issued the NOC when it was working without a permanent DG on December 28, 2015.

In January 2015, the Iesco had started initial construction work at the F-9 Park without following the rules and getting an NOC from the Pak-EPA, raising concern among residents of the capital.

Then DG Pak-EPA Dr Khurshid Khan upon receiving complaints summoned the Iesco officials for a personal hearing on gross violation of environmental rules by initiating construction work on grid station in F-9 Park illegally and without obtaining an NOC from the environment protection body.

At the time, Khan had personally visited the site where construction work was being carried out by the Iesco in violation of the warnings issued by EPA and a Supreme Court verdict.

The environmental watchdog, at that time, had told the CDA and the Iesco to stop building the grid station in the park.

The CDA had allocated 10 kanals of parkland to the Iesco for the project.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1066409/land-use-violation-sc-stays-construction-of-grid-station-at-f-9-park/>

HUBCO UPGRADING TO MEET ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS, GOVT TOLD

Dawn, March 19th, 2016

KARACHI: The upgrading of Hub Power Company's (Hubco) power plant would fully meet all the required limits set out by National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS), the company has informed the federal government.

A delegation of Hubco, comprising its Chief Executive Khalid Mansoor and China Power Hub Generation Company (CPHGC) Chairman Huang Yuntao among others, met with Federal Minister Water and Power Khwaja Asif and Secretary Water and Power Younus Dagha on Friday for a briefing on Hubco's two 660-megawatt coal project.

Mr Mansoor said Hubco was in advanced stages of a multi-billion dollar project to develop two 660MW plants based on imported coal and an ancillary jetty for coal transport near the existing Hub plant. The project will be a joint venture company named CPHGC Pvt Ltd, which has already been incorporated under the laws of Pakistan.

The project is part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It is the only power project in Balochistan that is being built under the corridor.

As an integral part of project development, Hubco has carried out an environmental and social impact assessment study. The environmental concerns of the project identified in the study included the recommended mitigation measures which would be fully complied by Hubco during various phases of the project, he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1246569/hubco-upgrading-to-meet-environmental-standards-govt-told>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 29th TO March 6th 2016

UNRESPONSIVE STATE

Dawn, February 29th, 2016

Hajrah Mumtaz

IT may have been an unconventional form of protest, but it certainly echoes the frustration and helplessness many in Pakistan feel, especially if they happen to be cursed with an honest nature which in this jungle can often prove to be a hindrance.

On Thursday, a man named Alamgir Khan filled a trolley with rotting garbage and was arrested (he was granted bail later) as he was attempting to dump it in front of the Chief Minister's House in Karachi's 'red zone'. This was his last-resort idea to try and attract the attention of the head of the provincial government to the unsanitary condition that plagues the city: the malodorous piles of waste in every locality, the inability of most citizens to walk down a street without being assailed by stench. Try and see how you like it, was no doubt his intention.

Had he succeeded in placing his consignment of filth at the city administration's doorstep, where the great and the good wouldn't help but trip over it, would such an extreme step have made someone take notice? Unfortunately enough, I doubt it. From some desk behind those high walls, a clean-up would have been decreed; and as those at the helm of affairs in administration zipped by in their cars with darkened windows, I don't think they would have been paying attention.

After all, this was not Mr Khan's first attempt to draw attention to the state of the city and its infrastructure. His earlier efforts under the #fixit banner gained a lot of publicity; he had taken the novel approach of stencilling an image of Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah next to piles of garbage and some of the innumerable open manholes and potholes in the city, with the demand that it should be fixed.

That caused enough of a stir in official circles for Mr Khan to allege police harassment, and the chief minister took enough notice to warn the relevant officials to 'fix it', but we're still waiting for the news that the slug of officialdom has finally been stirred into any sort of action.

So what does a person have to do to get the state to tune in and actually perform some of its duties?

Some traders in Karachi's Saddar area must have been pondering over the same question earlier this month when they organised a 'gutter fashion show' in the lanes inundated by sewage where their shops are located.

One of the shopkeepers told the media that it had been three months since the area had been flooded, and that "hundreds" of applications to the chief minister's office and the Karachi Water and Sewage Board had netted no response. Now, their customers had dried up and their incomes were badly affected. So they placed a commode in the filth, and a picture of the chief minister next to it, and people sashayed barefoot down the 'catwalk'.

There is truth to what the president of the Karachi Tajir Alliance Association of Bohri Bazaar told the media: that elected representatives "feel proud of going to the fashion shows of the elite class whereas slum residents do not have clothes to wear and are forced to live amid overflowing gutters. So I decided to arrange a fashion show featuring the misery of the common man".

After this became news, shopkeepers in the area did say that a sanitation team visited and the area has become less flooded. But elsewhere in the city, in other cities and towns, the problem of garbage and sewage accumulation remains. Does everybody have to resort to such humiliating inelegancies to get their administrations to do the work for which they were appointed?

In terms of Karachi specifically, part of the problem is that state inattention, and the civic status quo, have solidified into a long-term bad habit. The city administration doesn't care, and hasn't done so for so long that many citizens have even stopped expecting it to care. If, once in a while, by some miracle, something that benefits citizens in terms of city infrastructure does occur, the general feeling is that of surprise.

Surely there must be a limit past which it would not be possible for people to tolerate their filthy environs. But that limit has come and gone, it is possible to argue. The trouble is the old one: those who are in positions to force a

change — either those in positions of administrations or those who form a powerful lobby by virtue of their positions in society — aren't really affected.

That only leaves the option exercised by residents of Skardu on Friday: tired of waiting for the administration to fix potholes in major roads, about 50 people picked up pickaxes and got to work themselves. Again, people told the media that they had repeatedly called upon the authorities to do the needful, but in vain. Which leaves the honest amongst us thinking, yet again, what do we pay taxes for?

A placard held by one person there read: "The people will make roads, and will awaken the sleeping government." But I wouldn't hold my breath.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1242561/unresponsive-state>

GARBAGE COLLECTION: BIODEGRADABLE BAGS BEING INTRODUCED

The Express Tribune, March 1st, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has decided to introduce biodegradable bags for collecting household garbage.

The authority will distribute free of cost bags among the residents of Sector G-7. Later, the project will be extended to other municipality areas, said an official while sharing minutes of a meeting that reviewed the progress of the agency's civic management wing here on Monday.

The meeting was told that the private sector was also being approached to execute the project that aims to discourage use of plastic bags which is the main cause of environmental degradation, a spokesperson for the civic agency said.

The meeting, presided over by the CDA chairman, Maroof Afzal, was also informed that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has also been taken on board to seek technical assistance in this regard.

The spokesperson said that the biodegradable bags decompose when exposed to natural environment and wastes from decomposed biodegradable plastic do not harm the environment and rather they could be reused in various ways due to its organic nature.

As a pilot project, 15 biodegradable plastic bags with each having capacity of 10 kilograms, will be distributed among each house in Sector G-7 every month.

The residents would be asked to package household garbage in the bags, which would later be disposed of scientifically after its collection, the official said.

The CDA chairman said that the authority was committed to making Islamabad more clean and green and introduction biodegradable plastic bags would help reduce environmental pollution in the city which will eventually help provide healthier environment to the residents.

He directed the environment wing to carry out an awareness campaign before launching the scheme so that the desired results could be achieved.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1056771/garbage-collection-biodegradable-bags-being-introduced/>

PM APPROVES LAUNCHING OF 'GREEN PAKISTAN PROGRAMME' TO ADD 100 MILLION PLANTS OVER NEXT FIVE YEARS

Dawn, March 5th, 2016

Khawar Ghumman

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has approved launching of the 'Green Pakistan Programme' whereby over 100 million trees will be planted in the country.

The idea, according to a press statement released by the PM Office on Friday, is based on the 'Great Green Wall Programme' of China.

Whether it's the ongoing one billion tree Tsunami campaign of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or the 'Green Pakistan Programme' of the PML-N's federal government, people across the board are of the view that the initiatives are a good omen for the country.

They said political ownership of such efforts would help check fast depleting flora and fauna of the country.

"Even if somebody thinks in this case we are following the PTI the end result should benefit the people of Pakistan. All across environmentalists are recommending the country needs emergency measures to check wastage of fresh water resources and such measures will be helpful in preservation of water," commented a senior government official involved in the preparation of the programme.

The programme targets to add 100 million plants over the next five years all over the country. This includes one thousand avenue miles of Canal Side & Roadside Plantations in Punjab, KP and Sindh, plantations in Changa Manga, Darphar, Bahawalpur and Chichawatni. Mangroves forests in Karachi and Badin along with hill forests of Khirthar Range in Sindh, Juniper forests of Ziarat and Chilghoza forest in Suleiman Ranges of Balochistan and areas in GB, AJK, Muree, Hazara, Kotli Sattian, Malakand, Fata (Orakzai, North Waziristan, etc) are some of the locations for plantations.

The prime minister has approved the launch of 'Green Pakistan Programme' to improve forestry and wildlife sectors. Protection and management of wildlife and reclaiming and developing forest areas are the main aspects of the programme, the statement said.

Preservation and management of forest and wildlife resources of the country need to be adequately developed in line with the best international practices.

All relevant federal and provincial ministries and agencies will be facilitated to fulfil the task so that the desired objectives of forests preservation and wildlife protection is achieved, the statement quoted the prime minister as saying.

The Ministry of Climate Change has already consulted the federating units, including provinces, GB, AJK and Fata, prior to development of the roadmap. The initiative will ensure far-reaching reform in forestry and wildlife sectors of the country. Assessment of forest resource depletion, use of modern technology, and development of immediate and long-term forest resource expansion plans are some of the salient features of the programme.

The prime minister has asked the climate ministry to develop a proposal for strengthening Zoological Survey of Pakistan to immediately undertake inventory of endangered wildlife species and habitats across Pakistan. He issued directions for the revival and management of internationally recognised wildlife habitats, including Khunjab National Park (GB), Khirthar National Park (Sindh), Hingol National Park (Balochistan), Chitral Gol National Park (KP), Lal Suhanara National Park and Salt Range area (Punjab), Machiara National Park (AJK) and Margalla Hills National Park (Islamabad). The institutional and administrative steps for protection of habitat and inventory for endangered wildlife species will help a great deal to achieve the desired goals.

The ministries of climate change and science & technology will lead the regular stock-taking of deforestation and forest degradation on periodic basis for producing "Report on State of Forestry in Pakistan". The GIS laboratory in Punjab and the Forest Inventory in KP Environment will help in maintaining the report while Suparco (Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission) will extend technical support in the form of provision of images.

April 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 25th TO MAY 1st 2016

161 SEIZED TURTLES RELEASED INTO HALEJI LAKE

Dawn, April 29th, 2016

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: The Sindh wildlife department on Thursday released 161 freshwater turtles of the 17 species confiscated a day earlier into the Haleji Lake.

Nine other turtles had died before they could be released into the wildlife sanctuary in Thatta district.

The turtles, all adult females weighing between one and six kilograms, were identified as black pond turtles (also called black spotted turtles), an endangered species protected under the provincial wildlife law.

According to wildlife officials, the department team acting on a tip-off headed to the Superhighway and found some people loading boxes into two cars near the Northern Bypass Bridge.

“We were told that turtles are being transported to Karachi from Punjab. As we arrived there, the four people, two of them seated in the car, managed to escape,” said Adnan Hamid Khan, head of the wildlife department’s marine turtle conservation unit, adding that a case had been registered.

According to him, some female turtles also laid eggs in the wildlife office where they had been kept before their release.

During the past one year, there have been a number of incidents in which freshwater turtles were either found abandoned at different places in the city or confiscated while being transported.

Sources said international trade of freshwater turtles was a lucrative business and causing severe pressure on the population of these species across the country. The population of freshwater turtles (the country has eight species) was fast declining due to their illegal poaching, they said.

Sindh and Punjab provinces were considered major hotspots for illegal turtle trade, the sources added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1255070/161-seized-turtles-released-into-haleji-lake>

START OF SUMMER: FIRE BREAKS OUT ON MARGALLAS

The Express Tribune, April 30th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: With the onset of summer, first forest fire of the season broke out at the Margalla Hills National Park on Friday afternoon.

“The fire erupted in the Kalinjar village area of the hills. The exact reason behind the fire could not be ascertained immediately,” said Capital Development Authority (CDA) member environment Sanaullah Aman. He said that the fire broke out at around 3:30pm and it was put out after a struggle of almost two hours.

Every summer, a number of fire incidents take place on the hills, stretching over 12,605 hectares.

The area witnesses an average of 31 small and large scale fires every year mostly between May and July, according to the available CDA record.

Following fire incident, the CDA issued standard operating procedures (SOPs) detailing fire prevention measures, establishment of fire control sub stations, fire control rooms and pickets, ground and aerial surveillance of vulnerable pockets, patrolling and deployment of fire-fighters and fire fighting equipment and post-fire operations.

The fire measures include cleaning of fire lines, trails and paths, fixing and repairing of cautionary sign boards, and result-oriented coordination with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab forest departments and the Himalayan Wildlife Foundation besides making village committees functional for timely sharing of information on fires.

According to the SOPs, the CDA fire department would regularly inspect popular tourist spots on the hills such as Daman-e-Koh, Pir Sohawa, jogging trails and other picnic spots.

The department will install cautionary boards reminding visitors to avoid throwing away cigarettes, matches or inflammable materials.

A dedicated control room will coordinate with other provincial fire departments and report to conservator and divisional forest officer about any fire incident. Besides the main control room, a fire substation will also be established at Dara Jangla.

A fire truck with a six-member crew will remain on duty round-the-clock at the fire control room.

A squad of 50 firemen from the Directorate of Emergency and Disaster Management will be available at the fire headquarters to assist the deployed staff as and when required.

A fire hotline – 051-2855513 –at the fire control room will also remain operative round-the-clock.

As many as 33 fire pickets, connected with the main control room, have also been established at different locations of the hills. Four vehicles will remain at the disposal of the forest duty officer for intensive patrolling.

From 2000 to 2010, a total of 2,040.25 acres of the forest area was burnt to ashes in 309 fire incidents.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1094400/start-of-summer-fire-breaks-out-on-margallas/>

FOR A HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENT: ‘PEOPLE LACK KNOWLEDGE ABOUT PLANTING TREES’
The Express Tribune, May 1st, 2016.

KARACHI: The reason why most people fail in obtaining the desired results while planting trees is because they lack proper knowledge about plantation, said renowned ecologist Rafiul Haq on Saturday.

He was addressing audience at the event ‘Trees for Earth’ by the Horticulture Society of Pakistan (HSP) at The Garden Centre on the occasion of Earth Day, observed globally on April 22.

Rafi believes when people plant trees, they usually expect the tree to fully grow in a short time, adding that people take gardening as an activity and do not consider it a part of their routine. He explained that gardening requires patience and technical guidance.

He shared how important it is to plant specific trees compatible with the surroundings.

Haq encouraged the audience to plant Parkinsonia, Neem, Gulmohar, Ficus and Barna. He warned that many people are planting Conocarpus erectus across the city, which is a source of pollen that causes several kinds of illnesses. Haq added that although Conocarpus trees grow very fast, but they have fewer benefits for the environment as compared to other kinds of trees.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1094871/for-a-healthier-environment-people-lack-knowledge-about-planting-trees/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 18th TO APRIL 24th 2016

LNG TERMINAL NOT TO RUIN ENVIRONMENT OF GWADAR, SAYS MINISTER

Dawn, April 21st, 2016

Behram Baloch

GWADAR: Balochistan Minister for Environment and Forest, Obaidullah Babat said on Wednesday that installation of an LNG terminal would not threaten the ecology of Gwadar.

Speaking at a public hearing arranged by the Balochistan Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over installation of the proposed terminal in Gwadar, he said that energy problem of the country would be resolved with the installation of the terminal.

Secretary Environment Dr Shoaib Ahmed Gola, Chairman District Council Babu Gulab and district president of BNP-Mengal Khuda-i-Dad also took part in the deliberations.

Mr Babat and the secretary environment informed the participants of the hearing that the terminal would be set up in Sur-Bandan area of Gwadar district which would be hooked up with ships loaded with LNG.

“The proposed terminal would not be detrimental to the ecology of Gwadar,” Dr Shoaib said.

The proposed LNG terminal, according to the minister, would help create ample job opportunities for the people of the coastal town.

“Every house would get a gas connection,” he said, adding that commercial connections would also be available to Gwadar after completion of the project.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1253463/lng-terminal-not-to-ruin-environment-of-gwadar-says-minister>

PLASTIC POLLUTION BECOMES SERIOUS THREAT TO MARINE BIODIVERSITY

Business Recorder, April 21, 2016

KARACHI: Uncontrolled dumping of plastic products in the terrestrial and marine environment has become a serious threat to the animals and plant inhabiting in the coastal and offshore waters of Pakistan. According to WWF-Pakistan solid garbage from cities and towns along the coastline makes its way to the ocean. An estimated 14 billion pounds of trash, much of it plastic is dumped in the world's oceans every year.

Plastic bags, bottles, toys, packaging material, if not disposed of correctly, can reach the sea. Plastic waste, which decomposes very slowly, therefore, remain either floating in the open sea or piled up on the beaches. Fishermen also contribute in this pollution by dumping an estimated 150,000 tons of plastic into the ocean each year, including packaging, plastic nets, lines, and buoys.

According to another estimate about 8,000 tons of solid waste mainly consisting of plastic is unaccounted for in Karachi; most of it ending up in the sea around Karachi.

According to Moazzam Khan, Technical Advisor (Marine Fisheries), WWF-Pakistan, plastic pollution is becoming serious threat. Even in remote beaches along Pakistan coast including Kund Malir is now littered with plastic pollution.

Commercial boats and merchant ships plying in Pakistan waters also contribute plastic through flotsam and jetsam. Floating plastic is mistaken as food item and many animals engulf them, in most cases, having serious and deadly consequences.

High concentrations of plastic material, particularly plastic bags, have been found blocking the breathing passages and stomachs of many marine species, including whales, dolphins, seals, puffins, and turtles.

In a recent incident, tuna fishing boat operating about 180 nautical miles from Karachi, spotted a floating polypropylene (PP) woven bag which was possibly jetsam by some merchant ship. From the distance, it seems that the bag was moving in the waters.

Amir Rahim who is a WWF-trained observer, decided to retrieve the bag and to his utter surprise, found an Olive ridley turtle fully entangled in this PP bag. The crew tried to release the turtle in the waters but since it was fully entangled, therefore the crew brought the animal onboard and then carefully cut to free the animal, after which it was released properly in the sea.

According to Amir Rahim, he has seen many turtles entangled in the floating fishing nets but this is the first time he saw a marine turtle entrapped in a floating bag. He urged fellow fishermen and other seafarers not to throw plastic bags and other similar material overboard as these will kill marine animals.

Rab Nawaz, Senior Director – Biodiversity WWF-Pakistan appreciated the efforts of fishermen for releasing Olive ridley turtle from a floating plastic as this will set an example for other fishermen not to dump discarded fishing nets and other plastic material and would help in conservation of non-target species such as marine turtles.—PR

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/04/21/12-page/752879-news.html>

CHOPPING OF 1,200 TREES IN KARACHI: SC ASKS RESPONDENTS TO REPLY

Dawn, April 22nd, 2016

Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered the federal and Sindh governments to explain whether pedestrian bridge over Sharaf Faisal on Karsaz Road in Karachi falls within cantonment area where 1,200 trees have been chopped for advertisement billboards.

A three-judge bench headed by Justice Mian Saqib Nisar had taken up a petition moved by the Pakhar Welfare Association, Karachi – an organisation working for improvement of environment.

The petitioner had sought an order from the apex court requiring the federal and provincial governments to take immediate steps for protecting trees and plants in the city.

The court direction came when Deputy Attorney General Sohail Mehmood argued before the bench that the matter was a provincial subject and the federal government had nothing to do with it.

The court asked the respondents to submit a detailed answer to the points raised in the petition.

The respondents are the federal, Sindh and Karachi district governments, the Karachi commissioner, the Cantonment Board Faisal executive officer, the senior director, transport and communication, KMC, the director advertisement KMC, the naval commander Karachi, the naval commander Johar and advertising agency Nexttier.

The petitioner pleads that scores of trees have been cut down from the green belt of Karsaz/Sharae Faisal, opposite the PNS Karsaz, only to erect the pedestrian bridge that too in the same vicinity where two overhead bridges already exist.

Unfortunately, the old pedestrian bridges are not open for public use because of security concerns. Thus erecting the third overhead bridge at the same point was an obvious act of causing loss to the national exchequer only to allegedly facilitate the advertisement company for affixing hoardings on both sides of the overhead bridge, the petitioner regretted.

The petitioner reminded that the naval commander Karachi and naval commander Johar have already erected boundary walls around PNS Karsaz on the green belt of Karsaz road because of terrorist incidents, so developing a new overhead bridge was not only an unnecessary burden on the exchequer but also against the public interest and, therefore, should be restricted.

The petitioner alleged that some of the respondents were backing elements responsible for spoiling the environment of the city by cutting down the trees from the bank of the roads and to discourage the benefits of trees which not only combat climate changes but also provide oxygen and keep the air clean as well as make the atmosphere cool.

The petitioner claimed that the advertising company was illegally being facilitated to install hoardings/billboards in violation of rules and regulations enumerated in the Advertisement Rules and Regulation Act, 2003.

The petitioner sought explanation through the court from the respondents why the overhead bridge was being constructed at a security-risk point causing loss to the exchequer.

The petitioner also requested the court to declare that the healthy green trees have been cut down illegally in contravention of the Environmental Protection Act, 1997.

The petitioner asked the federal and provincial governments to take immediate steps for the protection of trees and plants and prohibit unnecessary building of overhead bridges at the security-risk points.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1253667>

‘BIO-TERRORISM’ POSES SERIOUS THREAT TO EARTH, WARN ENVIRONMENTALISTS
Dawn, April 23rd, 2016

Hyderabad: Environmentalists and academicians warn ‘bio-terrorism’ poses a serious threat to earth today and urge people to plant more and more trees to make cities green and control industrial pollution in order to leave a greener atmosphere for future generations.

They were speaking at different programmes held to mark the International Mother Earth Day in Hyderabad and Khairpur on Friday.

At a seminar at Sindh Museum, Sindh Agriculture University’s vice chancellor, Dr Mujeebuddin Sahrai, urged people to plant more saplings to mitigate effects of rising heat level and environmental changes.

He said that minimum consumption of energy could bring down level of carbon dioxide and rise oxygen level. Towns and cities must be turned into green and treatment plants must be installed in industrial units to treat wastewater before releasing it into the environment, he said.

Environmental expert Nasir Ali Panhwar expressed grave concern over shrinking forest land to clear area for farmland and said the trend must be stopped immediately.

Prof Dr Sarfaraz Hussain Solangi of the University of Sindh said that sea level was rising because of climate change. It was necessary to ensure release of water up to delta to control rise in sea level, he said.

He said that forests were being destroyed and level of salinity was rising in delta. Appropriate action must be taken to save coastal areas of Thatta, Badin and Karachi from climate change impact, he said.

The director general of Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Karachi, Naeem Ahmad Mughal, said the theme of the day this year was 'Trees for the Earth' and the goal had been set to plant 7.8 billion trees over the next five years around the globe. He stressed the need for creating awareness among people to make collective efforts and take responsibility for promotion of sustainable development.

Deputy Inspector General of Police Khadim Hussain Rind said that he and his team had planted around 100,000 saplings at various police training centres and police stations. He said that police were always ready to provide help to SEPA and said that stern action would be taken against those who were found violating environmental laws.

At a walk organised by the department of geography of the University of Sindh from Old Campus to the press club, assistant professor Sujo Mal said the walk was aimed at creating awareness among people to take collective responsibility for the protection of nature.

Social worker Hafeez Qureshi, assistant professor Shaista and Prof Manthar Ali Brohi said that 'bio-terrorism' posed a serious threat to earth, which could be averted through awareness programmes.

KHAIRPUR: For the third consecutive time, Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET) Z.A Bhutto campus of Khairpur held a seminar on Friday to mark the World Earth Day to spread awareness among people and students for creating clean atmosphere, pleasant air and healthy activities on earth.

The event was held in collaboration with the Sindh Environment Protection Agency, Sukkur.

Dr Kaniya Lal, Aslam Parvez Shaikh, district forest officer Ziadullah Leghari were chief guests on the occasion.

Speaking at the seminar, engineer Sajjad Mangi said the World Earth Day was marked on April 22 throughout the world every year. He said the earth was enriched naturally with many features and blessings and if "we increase tree plantation, we will observe so many positive changes in our lifestyle as a result of it".

Ziadullah Leghari said the earth was in itself a blessing, but pollution, less oxygen in air and hot weather created many problems. He stressed the need to create awareness among the masses and students for planting more and more trees and to take full responsibility of their growth.

He said there was need for keeping earth clean, controlling unnecessary usage of water and using alternate sources of energy.

Tasleem Ahmed Abbasi, Ameer Gul Sumbal and Shafiulla also stressed on the importance of tree plantation, saying that trees not only produced oxygen, but also absorbed carbon dioxide.

Later, shields were distributed among the speakers and saplings were planted in the lawn of the university.

Meanwhile, the department of geography of the Shah Abdul Latif University organised a walk to mark the International Mother Earth Day.

Prof Dr Mumtaz Hussain Mahar who led the walk said that drastic measures should be taken to prevent global warming and protect environment.

Noor Hassan Chandio, in-charge of the department of geography, said that all stakeholders must play their role to control pollution and plant trees. More than 25 per cent area should be allocated for forests in the country, he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1253811/bio-terrorism-poses-serious-threat-to-earth-warn-environmentalists>

EARTH DAY: PUNJAB'S TREE REPLACEMENT POLICY SEEN AS INADEQUATE

The Express Tribune, April 23rd, 2016.

LAHORE: Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif has introduced a policy under which one percent of the funds allocated for any development project should be spent on plantation of trees, Environment Protection Department Deputy Director Nasimur Rehman Shah said on Friday.

He was speaking to The Express Tribune on the occasion of the Earth Day (observed across the globe to raise awareness about the need to protect environment from degradation).

Shah said the EPD was ensuring that enough trees were planted in the vicinity of industrial areas to mitigate the effect of air pollution caused by factories.

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Pakistan vice president Malik Amin Aslam stressed the need for preserving existing forests and trees. He said this was especially important in major cities where green spaces were vulnerable to mega-infrastructure development schemes.

Aslam, also the head of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government's Billion Tree Tsunami Initiative, said the Punjab government's policy of planting 100 saplings for every tree cut as a result of its development projects was inadequate. He said it would take the saplings a while to grow into trees. "How will the government compensate for the lost time?" he asked.

Aslam said Pakistan had one of the highest deforestation rates in the world. Referring to the KPK government's plantation drive, he said it was not just concerned with tree plantation but also with changing people's mindset about the environment.

Aslam said deforestation in the KPK was a problem in rural areas where people encroaching on forest land and clearing it for private use. He said influential people involved in timber trade were responsible for high rates for deforestation. He said that in its plantation drive the government was not introducing any alien species. Only trees indigenous to the region were being planted. He said private sector was taking interest in tree plantation. He said private landowners were planting varieties known for rapid growth.

Leadership for Environment and Development chief executive officer Ali Tauqeer Sheikh agreed with Aslam that the Punjab government's plantation policy was not up to the task. "We need to develop our cities as livable spaces.

Development projects need to be sustainable and resilient to challenges posed by climate change," he said. Sheikh said Lahore used to be known as the city of gardens. He said the city's green spaces had given way to concrete structures like overhead bridges and underpasses.

"It is distressing to see thoughtless widening of city's major roads," he said. He said the growth model followed by the authorities concerned was resulting in a horizontal expansion of the city. He said the city was fast encroaching upon fertile farmland in its peripheral areas.

Referring to a World Bank report from 2005, he said the per day cost of environment degradation had then been recorded at Rs1 billion.

Several events were held in the city to mark Earth Day on Friday.

Speaking at one such event, Environment Minister Zakia Shahnawaz stressed the need to check the pace of deforestation. She said the government and environmentalists needed to collaborate to tackle the challenges posed by climate change.

Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) Pakistan organised an event at a private school in Johar Town. It featured a puppet show to raise awareness about environment protection measures and exhibition of products made by students using recycled material. Students also planted saplings and vowed to work for reducing their ecological footprint on the earth's environment.

Several other education institutes part of the WWF-Pakistan's Green School and International Eco-Internship Programmes held plantation drives to mark the day.

The United States-Pakistan Youth Council held an awareness raising event at the Forman Christian College University.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1090105/earth-day-punjab-tree-replacement-policy-seen-as-inadequate/>

WWF-PAKISTAN CELEBRATES EARTH DAY

Business Recorder, 23 April, 2016

WWF-Pakistan celebrated Earth Day across the country by carrying out tree plantation drives to raise environmental awareness while symbolically tackling deforestation. Hammad Naqi Khan, Director General, WWF-Pakistan said, 'The theme for Earth Day this year is Trees for the Earth, which stresses the need for every individual, business or policymaker to take action to protect the natural assets and resources of our beautiful country. This movement is celebrated in more than 192 countries to raise awareness and highlight critical environmental issues facing us today.

Taking this opportunity, WWF seeks your support to mitigate pollution, curb deforestation and manage our water resources on priority to enable us live in harmony with nature.' A mangrove plantation drive organised by Defence Housing Authority, Karachi, in collaboration with WWF-Pakistan was held at Defence Authority Creek Club. Commander 5 Crops, Lieutenant General Naveed Mukhtar, was the chief guest on the occasion.

Appreciating WWF-Pakistan and DHA efforts in rehabilitating the depleting mangroves forest area he said, 'Promoting plantation, greenery and the natural environment is essential for a vibrant and healthy society.' Brigadier Mukhtar Ahmed (R), Vice President Emeritus, WWF-Pakistan; Hammad Naqi Khan, DG WWF-Pakistan; and Agha Tahir Hussain, PD & Conservator Mangroves, Government of Sindh, were also present on the occasion.

In connection with the theme of Earth Day 2016, WWF-Pakistan organised a debating competition at DungaGali, Ayubia National Park, on 'The importance of plants for life on Earth.' A total of 22 students from nine schools participated in the event. Participant from Government Girls High School Khanispur won the competition whereas Government High School, Kari Raiki, and Government High School, Samandar Katha, secured second and third position respectively.

Praising the efforts of WWF-Pakistan, Sardar Muhammad Nawaz, Sub-Division Forest Officer (SDFO/Wildlife), Abbottabad, said 'This is a great initiative by WWF-Pakistan to sensitise children about nature conservation. I'm sure these children will become custodian of our natural resources in the near future.'

WWF-Pakistan for the past 19 years has been imparting environmental awareness and education in various schools around the Ayubia National Park under conservation research projects and believes that natural resources of the area can only be conserved with the help of custodian communities' awareness.

An event was also organised in collaboration with Beaconhouse School System Johar Town Junior Campus (BSS JT Jr), Lahore, where Earth Day was celebrated through a thematic environmental puppet show. Exhibits were also made by students from recycled material as a gesture to reduce their ecological footprint.

All the students of the school pledged to protect the Earth and planted saplings at the occasion. Tree plantation drives aim to sensitise students to reduce their carbon footprint and burden on the environment.

Various other schools, colleges and universities that have partnered with WWF-Pakistan's Green School Programme and International Eco-Internship Programme also participated in the Earth Day tree plantation drive. Similarly, an awareness raising activity in collaboration with the US-Pakistan Youth Council was arranged at Forman Christian College, Lahore.

Due to increasing environmental awareness and education, the positive role of the media and decision-makers, the annual deforestation rate in Pakistan has decreased to 1.6 percent per annum, according to a 2012 report by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), as compared to 2.1 percent per annum (once the highest in Asia) according to a 2009 report by the FAO.

Earth Day is celebrated every year on 22 April, where events are organised across the world to show support for conservation of the environment and to highlight critical environmental issues. It was first celebrated in 1970.-PR

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/39207/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 11th TO APRIL 17th 2016

RIGHTS ACTIVISTS PLAN TO MOVE SC AGAINST NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS PROJECT

Published in Dawn, April 15th, 2016

Saher Baloch

KARACHI: After taking the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) to court against the construction of two nuclear power plants in October 2014 and for not conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), rights activists have planned to approach the Supreme Court of Pakistan on the same issue, it emerged on Thursday.

Barrister Salahuddin Ahmad, who is currently preparing the draft of a petition, confirmed the development. "We are still working on the draft that is going to be based on basic questions such as safety guidelines and evacuation process in case of an accident at the site; the site's proximity to the city. Any pre-planning the PAEC has done in this regard would help us understand the situation on ground," added Barrister Ahmad.

He, however, didn't mention the names of his client as the case is still being drafted.

With assistance coming largely from the Chinese government, the \$10 billion project was given a green light by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in December 2013. The project includes the construction of two power plants, K-II and K-III, at Paradise Point. The reactors will be provided by China National Nuclear Corporation on a design known as ACP-1000.

The rights activists said the design had not been experimented in China or anywhere else in the world and showed their concern over its sustainability and maintenance.

In response to the objections, the PAEC last year argued that Kanupp, where the two nuclear power plants were under construction, was a "gift from Canada to Pakistan in the 1970s and was never tried before as well".

For the past two and a half years, a debate over the construction of the two plants in Karachi resulted in multiple meetings and pressers called by the civil rights groups and the PAEC against and in favour of the project.

The SHC earlier restrained the PAEC from carrying out construction work at the site without adhering to environmental laws and rejected the EIA report provided by Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) in October 2014. Last year, the SHC ruled in favour of the petitioners but provided a concession to the PAEC to continue

with the Non-Essential Construction (NEC) such as the construction of roads near the site and workers' housing, added one of the petitioners, Architect Arif Bilgaumi.

On April 11, 2015, Sepa placed an advertisement in dailies about a public hearing on the project, he said, adding that the hearing was held at the Kanupp site on April 27. "Their general argument revolved around the claim that they reviewed the issues raised by civil rights groups and found no problems at all," said Mr Bilgaumi. Soon after the hearing, Sepa announced the formation of a review committee.

Shehri, an advocacy group focused on environment and infrastructural issues in Karachi, wrote a letter to Sepa asking them to name the experts who were part of the committee constituted by it. But, he said, Sepa didn't share details of the meeting, while the committee met, reviewed the case and passed the project without providing a "rationale for their decision".

He added that the activists didn't challenge the case on technical grounds rather pushed for an EIA and public hearing. Although the EIA and public hearing were done eventually, rights activists were not satisfied with the explanations given and decided to pursue the case in the SC.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1252125/rights-activists-plan-to-move-sc-against-nuclear-power-plants-project>

BARNA TREES VANISH AS EXPERTS CALL FOR DIVERSITY IN PLANTATION DRIVES

Dawn, April 15th, 2016

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: The beautiful barna trees — among the many indigenous plants that seldom receive government attention during its plantation campaigns — can be an excellent choice for a city like Karachi experiencing a rise in temperature as well as a loss of faunal diversity, experts suggested on Thursday.

The trees in bloom these days attracted many insects including butterflies and their seeds were eaten by birds, they said. Its botanic name, according to the Flora of Pakistan, is *Crataeva adansonii*.

"They have a tremendous aesthetic appeal when they flower as they have abundant white to violet petals with a large number of long stamens. That's why they are grown along streets and avenues," said Prof Zafar Iqbal Shams, a senior Karachi University (KU) teacher with a doctorate in environmental sciences.

Although studies had shown the many benefits of growing indigenous plants, they were generally ignored in our plantation campaigns, which targeted exotic species, he regretted. Neem was perhaps the only local tree that had received state attention and had been planted in significant numbers, he said.

"But the practice of monoculture is not a healthy trend and experts are of the opinion that there should be diversity in plantation as it brings more resilience and sustainability."

Plantation drives should be a combination of indigenous and local trees and needed to be done scientifically, keeping in view land conditions, plant requirements, its growth, especially penetration of its roots that could affect water and sewerage lines and the maximum height the plant could attain, he added.

"The best location for barna is a park where it could receive water according to its requirements, though it can also be grown in the wide median running along the roads. Unlike other global cities where tree initiatives are spread over years, for instance the million-tree campaign of Los Angeles which will complete in 2017, our practice is to plant hundreds of saplings in a day or two and that's the end of the matter," he lamented.

According to him, some of the local trees that should be given preference in plantation campaigns are banyan tree, peepal, tamarind, amaltas (*Cassia fistula*), moringa and acacia trees.

A KU study conducted last year to assess the diversity, density and composition of street trees in the 18 towns of Karachi showed that Barna plant existed only in three towns: Liaquatabad town, Gulshan town and Jamshed town (the sampling technique covered about 10 per cent of the streets of each town).

“These plants are still seen in the city but their number has drastically come down thanks to the local authorities that preferred the exotic *Conocarpus erectus* and *Guaiacum officinale* (lignum) species in their plantation drives, which have naturally reduced their number over the past few decades,” he said.

Increasing pollution had badly affected flowering and leaf emergence in plants growing along city roads, he pointed out.

On the distribution of the barna tree, he said it was naturally distributed from the Indian subcontinent to the Far East, where it was found in open forests or scrub jungles, except in the humid hill states of North-east India and Kashmir.

“Its wood is used to make agricultural tools while other parts have been found to have many medicinal (anti-inflammatory, diuretic, lithontriptic and demulcent) properties. Fresh leaves and bark have been found to be effective in treating rheumatic and urinary complaints,” he said.

On the nature of barna tree also called sacred garlic pear and temple plant, Dr Farhat Agha, a senior botany teacher, also representing the Horticultural Society of Pakistan (HSP), said the plants shed their leaves during winters, which started appearing during February just before the flowering seasons.

“There are many places in the city where barna trees are still found but I have no idea how old they are. We have four trees in the HSP garden centre, there are some in DHA phases 1 and 4, along Kashmir Road and M.A. Jinnah Road and in the Gurumandir and Patel Para areas.

“However, perhaps, the most beautiful ones are grown along Governor House which were planted by the late A. K. Khan sahib and his team,” she said.

The plant, she said, didn’t disturb neighbouring plants. “It’s leafless from November till March and then starts blooming but usually flowers are more than leaves. Blooming stays till April depending how windy Karachi is in those days.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1252123>

30 BRICK KILNS CLOSED DOWN IN SEPA OPERATION

Dawn, April 15th, 2016

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) closed down 30 brick kilns in the Tando Hyder area of Hyderabad district on Thursday.

The action was taken on an order issued by Sepa director general Naeem Mughal, who supervised the operation along with the agency’s Hyderabad region chief Muneer Ahmed Abbasi.

According to Mr Mughal, the kilns were functioning within the residential area and their owners were using hazardous material, crude oil, coal, solid waste, old tyres, garbage, poultry waste, etc as fuel which was causing emission of poisonous gases and dangerously polluting the environment in the area.

He said that the gases were the cause of various health problems and diseases including tuberculosis, skin and eye infection, lung cancer and multiple respiratory problems.

He said that the kilns were continuing with their production process in violation of Sections 11, 14, 17, 21 of the Sindh Environmental Protection Act, 2014 and did not fulfil the guidelines of the environmental impact assessment and the independent environmental evaluation.

Mr Abbasi said that some of the kilns were located within the prohibited proximity of farmlands.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1252122/30-brick-kilns-closed-down-in-sepa-operation>

QAUMI KOHISTAN: JIRGA REJECTS FOREST ORDINANCE 2002

Business Recorder, April 15, 2016

Members of Quami Kohistan Jirga, a local community council, have rejected the forest ordinance 2002, and warned that they didn't accept government unilateral policy, relating to forest covered Kohistan region, and vowed to continue their agitation campaign and resistance against the ordinance.

Addressing at a news conference at press club here on Thursday, Convenor of Muttahida Action Council for Protection of various tribes of Kohistan, Hazrat Syed Gujr said that the two separate rules have been implemented in same divisions, which was aimed to create rift among people of Kohistan. He demanded that the government should suspend the forest ordinance 2002 and make a Kohistan-friendly policy on forests in consultation with the local residents

For which, he blamed the District Forest Officer is responsible for creating differences among the tribe. He said the forest owners in Malakand division are getting 80 per cent royalty on forests, but in Kohistan 60 per cent, which he termed sheer unjust with the people of the district. He blamed government unlawfully seized the forests and meadows owned by Kohistan residents and imposed the 2002 ordinance without taking them into confidence.

The Action council office bearers, including Khan Muhamamd Roghani, Hazra Bilal Kohistani, Malik Sher Azam Gujr, Khaista Muhamamd Roghani, Bawar Khan, Bahadur Khan Afghani, and Taj Muhammad along with elders of Gujr tribe were present during the press conference.

Hazrat Hussain said the discrimination was carried with Kohistan, since implementation of Forest Ordinance in 2002, which was tantamount to exploit the right of the people of the district. He demanded of the provincial government immediate withdraw the policy, and increase the forest royalty from 60 to 80 per cent forthwith.

“The Forest Ordinance 2002 is against the interests of Kohistani people. Under this unjustified order, 70 percent of our forests, meadows and vales have been grabbed by the government. The ordinance is meant to deprive us of our livelihood,” Gujr said. He said the forests, meadows and vales were the people's property and not the government's.

Khan Muhamamd Roghani said Kohistanis were united to protect their rights and would take every possible step for it. “The government is bound by the law to grant due rights to the people but our government is seizing the people's rights. We will go to every extreme against the forest ordinance,” he said.

Under the ordinance, he said authorities had imposed complete ban on cutting of forests, which was making difficult to fulfil their daily household needs of firewood. He said the government should evaluate the gravity of the situation, and immediate lift the ban and withdraw the vicious ordinance in Kohistan. He said policy should be evolved with consultation of the elders of the area, and provide them their due rights and share.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/35772/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 4th TO APRIL 10th 2016

VERGE OF EXTINCTION: VULTURES HATCHED IN CAPTIVITY IN GOOD HEALTH

The Express Tribune, April 8th, 2016.

KARACHI/LAHORE: Two healthy chicks of oriental white-backed vultures, declared critically endangered, that were hatched at the WWF-Pakistan's Changa Manga Vulture Conservation Centre in February this year, are now over six weeks old and in good health. This is the first successful breeding of the species in captivity in Pakistan.

The population of the oriental white-backed vulture has been on a decline and more than 90 per cent of its historic geographic range in Pakistan, India and Nepal has been lost since the early 1990s. The drastic fall is attributed to the use of diclofenac sodium, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), in livestock. Other harmful NSAIDs include ketoprofen, aceclofenac, and flunixin.

The WWF-Pakistan launched a captive breeding programme in Changa Manga Forest Reserve in 2005, to enhance understanding of the vulture lifecycle. Land for the centre was provided by the Punjab Wildlife and Parks Department with a seed grant from the Environment Agency of Abu Dhabi.

The Hawk Conservancy Trust (HCT) supported the construction of aviaries and has regularly extended financial and technical support to vulture conservation work.

The facility currently houses 15 white-backed vultures, of which two pairs bred successfully this year, while two other pairs have shown encouraging signs of breeding behaviour. These chicks are being monitored and cared for by WWF-Pakistan trained staff at the Centre.

WWF-Pakistan director general Hammad Naqi Khan congratulated those involved in the breeding programme. "The survival of these chicks is a significant achievement in bringing this critically endangered species back from the verge of extinction." He said it would contribute in achieving a viable population, once released into the wild. This indicates the high standards of husbandry and care protocols in place for these birds at the Conservation Centre, he said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1080637/verge-of-extinction-vultures-hatched-in-captivity-in-good-health/>

1,300 TREES TO BE CUT FOR CANAL ROAD WIDENING

Dawn, April 8th, 2016

LAHORE: The city to lose over 1,300 grown-up trees in the wake of canal road widening project at three sections—Thokar Niaz Beg to Doctors' Hospital, Mall Road to Dharmapura underpass/intersections and Dharmapura to Harbanspura.

According to Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) spokesman, a plan to cut trees and plant new saplings/trees has been finalised.

"From Canal View gate to Doctors' Hospital to Sunflower Society (section-1, both sides), 657 trees will be cut/uprooted. Here we plan to plant 3,250 trees after completion of the construction work," a PHA spokesman said in a statement on Thursday.

At section-2 (both sides) from Dharmapura to Mall Road, 69 trees will be cut. In replacement, the PHA will plant 345 new saplings/trees.

At section-3 (from Dharmapura to Harbanspura, there is a plan to cut 575 trees, the spokesman said and claimed: "In replacement we will plant 2,875 new trees/saplings."

Talking to Dawn, an LDA official said the work on the canal road widening would be taken in hand by May-end.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1250673>

WITH 100 SAPLINGS PLANTED AT MAZAR-E-QUAID, SHEHRI KICKS OFF MILLION TREES CAMPAIGN

The Express Tribune, April 10th, 2016.

KARACHI: As green cover continues to dwindle in Karachi, non-governmental organisation Shehri – Citizens for a Better Environment kicked off its Million Trees Campaign at Mazar-e-Quaid on Saturday in a bid to increase the number of trees in the city.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, Shehri member Sameer Hamid Dodhy says the environment in Karachi is under threat from the creeping concrete. In such times, he says, the citizens of Karachi, under the banner of Shehri, are trying to make a change. “Everybody expects the government to do something but we are requesting the people to take action,” he says. “Our challenge to each citizen of this city is to plant or take care of one tree at least.”

Recalling last year’s deadly heatwave, Dodhy says had there been enough trees in Karachi, hundreds of lives could have been saved. “Our request to all citizens is to take care of trees and trees, in return, will take care of them,” he says.

As volunteers of all age groups plant one tree after another, Dodhy hopes more people will join the cause as the word gets around. “We want citizens to make an effort and start planting trees in their houses and neighbourhoods,” he stresses.

Accompanying school-going children, housewife and volunteer Soheba Mohammad says she and her family are here early in the morning as they want to make Karachi a cleaner and greener city. “We want to bring the temperature down and we want to invite the rains,” she says.

While managing a small army of gardeners at the mausoleum, gardening chief Mushtaq Ahmed appreciates the efforts of the volunteers. “We ourselves plant trees here but this space was left out because of some ongoing construction work,” he says. “Now, because of the campaign, even this area will be greener.”

As part of the campaign, Dodhy says members and volunteers will keep tabs on how the 100 trees planted at the mausoleum are taken care of. He says all residents of Karachi should do the same in the areas they live and work in. “If someone plants a tree, they should monitor it and also see if other existing plants are doing well or not,” he says.

Volunteer Mohammad agrees. “As with everything in Karachi, follow-ups are very important,” she stresses, adding that she will come back to check on the trees planted here. “We are committed to the tree movement and we absolutely plan to come back and see how our plant is doing.”

Chief gardener Ahmed also assures his team members will take care of the trees. “Two people are dedicated to watering these trees regularly and others are responsible for maintenance work,” he says. “This is our job.”

For eager volunteers who wish to see their trees grow up, Ahmed says the species planted today, which include imli [tamarind] and Neem, will be fully grown in three to five years’ time.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1081824/greener-karachi-with-100-saplings-planted-at-mazar-e-quaid-shehri-kicks-off-million-trees-campaign/>

May 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 23rd TO MAY 29th 2016

CALL FOR MEASURES TO ENSURE SAFE, AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Business Recorder, May 28, 2016

Speakers at a seminar on Thursday urged the government to take necessary measures to ensure safe, secure and healthy environment to people of the country. They also demanded of the government to make handsome allocations in the forthcoming budget to improve the environment, education and health conditions. "Health and safety are among the most neglected sectors in Pakistan.

Emission of carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide from industries/vehicles etc, garbage dumps and frequent fire explosions negatively impact on both the environment and peoples' lives," said Executive Director, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) Brigadier Rashid Siddiqi (Retd) in his keynote speech at 2nd International Environment Health Safety and Security Summit (EHS&S) at a local hotel.

"Inexistence of effective authorities to regulate these sectors as per international standards is compounding the problems," he said. "Safety protocols are not being implemented in almost every working place. Health provision in hospitals is not at a desirable level. You see scores of patients lying on the roads with no hope of being cured," he said. The day-long event was organised by Professional Network in collaboration of Fire Protection Association of Pakistan (FPAP).

The PNSC director stressed upon the need of establishment of health division at every industrial zone to entertain people. Elaborating he said situation of people working at industries was poor as majority of them were not aware of their rights and duties. Mehmood Tareen, Founder and CEO of the Professional Network, in his welcome speech said that the purpose of the event was to bring the people from corporate sector, financial institutions, and public department together to discuss the issues aimed at finding better solutions.

"We have to play our social responsibility to ensure better health, and safe environment to the citizens. For us, it's time to play a balanced social role to create a sustainable business and commercial atmosphere and knowledge drive economy." The event organiser Atiq-ur-Rehman, who is also a CSR activist, urged the government to allocate handsome budget in the health, education public safety, and environment.

He said majority of people in the country are forced to live below poverty line. Provision of clean drinking water, fresh air, education and health are the fundamental rights of the citizens which the government should ensure on priority basis. Farhat Hussain, president of FPAP, also spoke on this occasion.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/50464/>

MINISTRY LACKS FIGURES AS ENVIRONMENT MONITORING SYSTEM NON-FUNCTIONAL
Dawn, May 29th, 2016

Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: With more vehicles and industrial units, air pollution is on the rise in the federal capital.

"From colourless, odourless carbon dioxide to oxides of nitrogen to hazardous air pollutant, formdehyde, mostly emitted from vehicles, is what the residents breathe every day," said a reply prepared by the climate change ministry to a question raised in the National Assembly.

The response was based on studies conducted by the Pakistan Environment Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) and Japan International Cooperation Agency five years ago.

"The ministry has no updated figures since 2011 after its environment monitoring system (EMS) became non-functional. It also has no mechanism to calculate the increase in suspended particulate matter and emissions from vehicles and factories in the air over Islamabad," said an environment expert in the ministry.

The Rs1.2 billion EMS purchased with assistance from the Japanese government has been non-functional since 2011.

“It was one of the most ambitious projects of Pak-EPA. For the last five years, the machine has only gathered dust and its parts have deteriorated,” the official said.

According to a source, rising numbers of vehicles were a major cause of emissions and smoke. “In Islamabad, the number of registered vehicles in 1998 was just 60,000.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the number of the registered vehicles increased to 15.2 million in 2013-14,” the expert said.

Last week, in response to a question raised in the National Assembly, the ministry said the suspended particulate matter in the air in all major cities, including Lahore, Karachi and Faisalabad, was six to seven times higher than the acceptable level set by the World Health Organisation. It said 40pc pollution was from the increasing vehicle traffic and the rest from industries.

The ministry added that the estimated cost of environmental and natural resource damages was about Rs365 billion a year. Urban air pollution was likely to cause around 22,000 premature deaths among adults and 77 deaths among children, putting the estimated costs of health at about Rs62 billion to Rs65 billion.

However, despite the release of Rs1.8 million to fix the EMS, Pak-EPA has failed to revive the air quality monitoring machine installed on its premises in Sector H-8.

When contacted, the secretary of the ministry of climate change, Syed Abu Ahmed Akif, said: “Funds have been released to make the machine operational. The equipment should be up and running in about ten or 12 days.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1261362>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 16TH TO MAY 22 ND 2016

ENVIRONMENTALLY UNFRIENDLY : ACTIVISTS OPPOSE GOVERNMENT PLAN TO GENERATE POWER USING COAL

The Express Tribune, May 17th, 2016.

HYDERABAD: Coal power generation methodology has been globally declared as destructive for humans, nature, earth and may affect the water sources close to these plants, said Jamil Junejo, a graduate of human rights and environment.

He was speaking at a forum organised to mark the ‘Global Day of Action against Coal Power’. The event was jointly organised by Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum on Sunday evening.

The speakers at the forum opposed the government’s plan to harness coal energy for power generation. They cited adverse impacts on the human health and environment of coal to press the government to adopt environment friendly means of electricity production.

HRCP Sindh Taskforce coordinator Dr Ashothama Lohano pointed out that the coal power plant in Jamshoro, whose expansion plan is underway, continues to contaminate Indus river. He claimed that the waste generated from the plant, which is located on the Indus Highway a few kilometers away from Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences, is also dumped in the river.

Coal exploitation and burning will destroy Tharparkar’s grazing fields, sully the subsoil water and harm the desert’s wildlife, remarked rights activist from Tharparkar, Abbas Khuhro.

The other speakers emphasised that protection of ecology and environment should be given precedence in all the development projects.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1104456/environmentally-unfriendly-activists-oppose-government-plan-to-generate-power-using-coal>

PU'S RS1BN ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT PROJECT APPROVED

Business Recorder, May 21 2016

LAHORE: Federal Planning Commission has approved a project of Punjab University worth around Rs 1 billion to cope with energy crisis and environmental pollution being faced by the country.

According to Punjab University spokesman, project would be completed in three years and it would produce thousands of trained professionals, engineers and scientists in energy and environment sector in order to meet shortage of experts in the both fields in Pakistan.

He said various laboratories would also be established at Punjab University's New Campus and high quality research will be conducted on different energy resources including solar and coal while the experts will also do research to reduce environmental pollution.

He said the project would focus on Energy Engineering, Petroleum Engineering, Gas Engineering, Environmental Engineering, Energy Economics and Policy, Energy Auditing and Conservation, International Disputes Settlement, Industrial Environmental Auditing, Energy and Environmental Engineering and other related sectors.

While approving the project, Federal Minister for Planning Development and Reforms, Prof Ahsan Iqbal said that Punjab University had completed all approved projects before time which is a proof that PU is not only forward in academics but in administrative affairs as well.

PU faculty members have congratulated Punjab University Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Mujahid Kamran on this landmark achievement. Director Planning and Development, Engineer Tariq Majeed Qureshi, Director Centre for Coal Technology, Dr Shahid Munir and Additional Registrar and Assistant, Prof PUCIT, Dr Kamran Abid have played important role in this project. Dr Mujahid Kamran thanked Federal Minister for Planning Development and Reforms Prof Ahsan Iqbal on his extraordinary support to the universities.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/05/21/5-page/761173-news.html>

KP SET TO BAN NON-DEGRADABLE PLASTIC PRODUCTS

Dawn, May 22nd, 2016

Mohammad Ashfaq

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Environmental Protection Agency has planned to ban the production, sale and use of non-degradable plastic products in the province for being a major cause of environmental pollution.

The ban will be enforced after the KPEPA addresses few objections raised by the law department about the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Non-degradable Plastic Products (Manufacturing, Sale and Usage) Rules 2016.

The relevant officials feel the ban's enforcement will happen 'very soon'.

Under the proposed rules, a copy of which is available with Dawn, the manufacturing of non-biodegradable black shopping bags will be strictly banned.

Once the rules are approved, the manufacturers will have to dispose of the stock of black shopping bags in three months and retailers in six months.

The law department vetted the proposed rules of late before sending them back to the KPEPA with minor objections to address.

Now, the authority will rectify objections and send the relevant rules to the law department for approval, which will lead to the enforcement of the ban.

The rules will apply to all disposable plastic products, which are made of wholly or substantially of polyethylene, polypropylene or polystyrene.

Among such products are carrier bags or shopping bags used to carry provisions, bread bags, food packaging, including frozen food packaging, garbage bags, shrink-wrap, pallet-wrap, buddle-wrap, agriculture mulching film, woven plastic bags, milk and water packaging etc.

“In exercise of powers conferred by Section 7 of the law and subject to the time frame specified in the schedule (I) no person shall import, manufacture, stockpile, trade, supply, distribute, sell or use any scheduled plastic product which is non-degradable”, reads the rules.

The rules states that no pro-degradant additive shall be sold, distributed or imported by any company or manufacturer of scheduled plastic product without registration with the environmental protection agency.

“The applicant shall submit, inter alia, several documents including test certificates of additive from independent third party laboratory that is accredited in accordance with the International Standard Organisation.”

According to the rules, test would be carried out in accordance with the test methods prescribed by Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority or any other well reputed international standard and quality authority duly recognized by government and the reports must clearly state the percentage of pro-degradant additive which must be consistent for all the tests namely degradation, bio-degradation and eco-toxicity. The applicant is also required to have certificate of membership of national or international oxo-biodegradable plastics association.

The rules states that oxo-biodegradable carry-bags, shopping-bags and containers made of virgin plastic shall be transparent on in a natural shade or whereas such items used for purposes other than storing packing foodstuffs shall be manufactured using pigments and colorants as per ISO.

It further states that no schedule plastic product except for garbage sacks shall be made in black colour while no oxo-biodegradable plastic carry-bags, shopping-bags will be less than 50 microns thick.

The rules insist that the recycled scheduled plastic products must be marked as “Recycled plastic, unsafe for contact with food.

Under the rules, the KPEPA director general or any officer authorised may, by notice in writing, require a person to submit him certificates, records and information as he may reasonably require for the purpose of ascertaining whether that person is complying with the provisions of these rules.

The person served with such notice shall submit the requisite documents or information etc within 15 days positively.

A grievance committee has to be established to look into any grievance related to implementation of the rules and make suitable recommendations (if needed) for approval of the government.

An official authorised by the authority will proceed against the people found guilty of contravening, infringing or violating rules.

The proposed punishment for rule violators is Rs50,000 fine extendable to Rs5 million and two years imprisonment.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1259965>

MONTREAL PROTOCOL: MULTILATERAL FUND APPROVES \$5.68 M FOR PAKISTAN

The Express Tribune, May 22nd, 2016.

Shahzad Anwar

ISLAMABAD: The successful conversion of five foam manufacturing industries to cleaner technologies has led the Multilateral Fund of the Montreal Protocol to approve US\$5.68 million for the second phase.

The funding was approved by the fund's executive committee two weeks ago.

It will help Pakistan reduce its consumption of hydro chlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) by 50 per cent in 2020, and with full implementation of the plan, it will prevent the emissions equivalent of 685,000 tonnes of CO₂.

Pakistan has successfully reduced use of various Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS), including chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) and carbon tetrachloride (CTC).

The Ministry of Climate Change (MoCC) has been working on the second phase-out programme of HCFCs since 2011.

“Pakistan has no indigenous production of HCFCs, but it imports ODS to meet the needs of domestic industries,” MoCC Media and Communication Deputy Director Saleem Shaikh told The Express Tribune.

He said HCFCs were mostly used in refrigeration and air conditioning, along with polyurethane foam manufacturing.

The phasing-out of HCFCs from Pakistan is ascertained through Hydro chlorofluorocarbon Phase-out Management Plan (HPMP).

In the first phase of the plan, the five foam manufacturing industries were converted to ozone friendly technology by 2015; and the MoCC mobilised international financing for its implementation.

“The plan is very ambitious and will enable Pakistan to reduce its consumption of HCFCs by 50% by 2020,” the Ministry of Climate Change said in a statement.

Ministry source said that alternative technologies had been carefully selected to carry out the HCFC phase-out and to maximize the climate benefit. After successful completion of the first phase last year, Ministry of Climate Change prepared the phase two document in consultation with stakeholders.

The plan will be implemented by the government in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The Montreal Protocol, under the UN's patronage, was signed in 1987 to curb the use of ozone layer-depleting substances.

Pakistan ratified the Montreal Protocol in 1992 and has been working towards implementing the protocol since then.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1107770/montreal-protocol-multilateral-fund-approves-5-68m-pakistan/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 9TH TO MAY 15TH 2016

10 MORE PEAFOWLS DIE IN THAR

Dawn, May 10th, 2016

MITHI: At least 10 more peacocks died on Monday in different villages of Thar, raising the toll to 190 during the past four weeks in the drought-hit area.

No team of experts as announced by Sindh Chief Minister Sindh Syed Qaim Ali Shah on Saturday reached Thar to assess the situation there in the wake of media reports.

When contacted, district game and wildlife officer Ashfaq Ahmed Memon said he was not informed officially of any team being sent to Thar.

Holding the media responsible for misreporting, Mr Memon said that just 10 fowls had died and that too naturally.

Talking to local reporters on Monday after meetings with officials of the wildlife and poultry departments, Tharparkar Deputy Commissioner Dr Shahzad Tahir Thaheem said teams of the veterinary staff were sent to different villages to treat the ailing birds.

Water tankers were being sent to the villages from where reports of the deaths of peacocks were pouring in, he said, adding that strategies were being devised to protect beautiful birds from different diseases.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1257366/10-more-peafowls-die-in-thar>

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS: THREE YEARS ON, CAPITAL ADMINISTRATION FAIL TO CURB USE OF POLYTHENE BAGS

The Express Tribune, May 10th, 2016.

Shahzad Anwar

ISLAMABAD: The environmental watchdog and city administration have failed to curb the use of non-degradable plastic products in the federal capital.

The increasing use of polythene bags is not only causing environmental hazards but also adding to the municipal waste of the city as the regulatory body has failed to enforce its laws, officials and citizens say.

On April 1, 2013, the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) notified a regulation prohibiting the manufacture, import, sale and use of non-degradable plastic products across the country and Islamabad.

However, due to a weak enforcement mechanism, sale and use of non-degradable plastic products — carry bags, bread, and frozen food packaging, mulching films, garbage bags and shrink wraps — is on the rise.

On February 9, a decision was taken at a meeting at the Ministry of Climate Change that the capital city administration will provide a list of plastic manufacturing units operating in its limits in a week to enforce regulations in the capital city while the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was supposed to check their status.

It was also decided in the meeting that the civic agency in collaboration with various trade organisations and owners of shopping malls will reintroduce a campaign to switch over to oxo-degradable plastic bags and other environment-friendly materials.

The CDA, however, could neither confirm the status of the plastic manufacturing units nor launched the much-touted drive despite a lapse of three months.

Last week, the EPA renewed licences of three units selling additives to ensure their availability for producing oxo-degradable plastics. After the renewal of the licences, the business community showed concern saying that the regulations were discriminatory which favour a few companies to keep their monopoly and accused EPA officials of complicity.

The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industries and the Pakistan Business Council have also raised concerns about the applicability of regulations on the certain type of packaging materials including oxo-degradable plastic material for food packaging.

“The Ministry of Climate Change had directed the Pak-EPA to address concerns of the industries and consumers of plastic packaging material and amendment to the regulations was notified back while keeping their concerns in view,” an official at the Pak-EPA claimed.

On paper, the regulation aims to control the increasing production and use of non-degradable plastic materials and to enable importers and exporters to comply with environment-friendly packaging demand in the local and international market, but on ground, it is almost un-implemented. Companies continue to manufacture and sell polythene plastic products across the country.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1100237/environmental-hazards-three-years-on-capital-administration-fail-to-curb-use-of-polythene-bags/>

WWF-PAKISTAN HOSTS EVENTS ON ILLEGAL TRADE OF MIGRATORY BIRDS

Business Recorder May 11, 2016

The WWF-Pakistan has hosted events nation-wide to mark this year’s World Migratory Bird Day. The theme of this year was “... and when the skies fall silent? Stop the illegal killing, taking and trade!” highlighting the importance of international efforts to ensure sustainability of migratory birds by restricting or prohibiting their exploitation through international agreements, laws, treaties and collaborations.

On Tuesday, the WWF-Pakistan and the Virtual University arranged a seminar to create public awareness on the illegal trade of migratory birds and their conservation.

Speakers talked about the need for the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats. Different migratory patterns of various bird species were also discussed alongside the anthropogenic pressures these birds face during their seasonal movement.

In his address, Professor Doctor Muhammad Sharif Mughal emphasised lack of public awareness about the importance of migratory birds for the various ecosystems of Pakistan, saying such events were helpful in spreading awareness.

He also thanked the WWF-Pakistan’s efforts for the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources of the country. Later, a documentary on migratory waterfowls was screened.

In another event, an awareness-raising session was organised at Guddu Barrage in Sukkur in collaboration with the Fauji Fertiliser Company. Participants of the event included representatives of the local community, Sindh Wildlife Department and Sindh Irrigation Department.

Imran Malik, WWF-Pakistan’s Senior Conservation Officer, gave an overview of the efforts taken by the organisation for the protection of migratory birds and also highlighted the illegal trappings and poaching of waterfowl within the wetlands of Sindh.

Pakistan lies at a crossroads for bird migration with its wetlands, attracting high numbers of migratory bird annually in the winter season. Birds arrive through the international migration route known as the Indus Flyway, from Siberia and over the Karakorum, Hindu Kush, and Suleiman Ranges along the Indus River down to the delta.

This includes a wide variety of ducks and waders, houbara bustard, cranes, teals, pintail, mallard, geese, spoon bills, raptors, and passerines such as warblers, pipits and buntings. Some species including common and Demoiselle cranes, snipe and pelican enter via the Kurram Agency of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan.

Rab Nawaz, the Senior Director of the Biodiversity of WWF-Pakistan in his message, said, “Because of its unique geographic location the Indus Flyway is one of the most diverse flyways in the world which witnesses an annual rush of 400 different kinds of migratory birds.”

Pakistan is also a party to the Convention on Migratory Species, the Bonn Convention this treaty provides a platform for the multinational co-ordinated conservation of migratory species in their range as well as migratory routes and flyways.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172:pakistan/44774:wwf-pakistan-hosts-events-on-illegal-trade-of-migratory-birds/?date=2016-05-11>

FIFTH OF WORLD’S PLANTS UNDER THREAT, WARNS KEW GARDENS

Business Recorder, May 14, 2016

A fifth of the world’s plant species are at risk of extinction, British researchers warned Tuesday in an unprecedented global census of the plant kingdom. The survey by Britain’s Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, London, said 21 percent of species are under threat. The report, the first of its kind, is intended to become a global reference point for the study of plants.

The study, which estimates there are a total of 390,900 plants known to science, found farming to be the biggest extinction threat, representing 31 percent of the total risk to plants. Logging and the gathering of plants followed at 21.3 percent, with construction work attributing for 12.8 percent of the risk.

The threat of climate change and severe weather was estimated at making up 3.96 percent, although scientists said it may be too early to measure the long-term effects.

Other threats came from invasive species, dam-building and fires. “There has never been a State of the World’s Plants,” said Kathy Willis, director of science at Kew, which has one of the world’s largest plant collections in its sprawling greenhouses and gardens.

“Given how absolutely fundamental plants are for human wellbeing, for food, fuel, climate regulation, it’s pretty important we know what’s going on.

“Unless we look at this information – the knowledge gaps – and then do something about it, we are in a very perilous situation, if we ignore the thing that underpins all our human wellbeing,” she warned.

The report said that some 1,771 areas of the world have been identified as “important plant areas” but very few have conservation protection measures in place.

It also said that 2,034 vascular plants – which exclude mosses and algae – were discovered last year alone, including an insect-eating sundew, a new type of onion and a giant slipper orchid.

Most new finds are in Australia, Brazil or China. Some 17,810 plant species have a medical use, 5,538 are eaten, 3,649 become animal feed and 1,621 are used for fuels, the report said.

The report will be published annually and Kew Gardens hopes it will allow for comparisons on preserving the world’s plants.

“This has been a huge undertaking,” said Steve Bachman, one of the report’s authors.

“We engaged with more than 80 scientists to pull this together.”

He said it was a “huge step forward, pulling together existing knowledge in a condensed and readable version so we can really spread the message about the importance of plants to a much wider audience”.

But raising public awareness can be more complicated than warning about threats to African elephants or Bengal tigers.

“I do find it extraordinary we worry about the state of the world’s birds but we don’t worry about the state of the world’s plants,” Willis said.

The report stressed the importance of collecting samples of “crop wild relatives”, cousins of plants used as common crops with traits that could make food plants more resilient to climate change and diseases.

Willis said it may take until 2030 before the impact of climate change can really be measured. “For most of the major groups of plants we’re talking about, it takes at least 10, 20, 30 years before the next generation starts to produce flowers and pollen,” she said.

<http://www.brecorder.com/weekend-magazine/0/45791/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 2nd TO MAY 8th 2016

1,700 MORE TREES TO FACE THE AXE IN LAHORE

Dawn, May 3rd, 2016

Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: The provincial capital which has lost over 2,200 trees due to various infrastructure development projects within a short span of last two years, is set to lose 1,700 more trees due to another mega project to be launched within this year.

According to documents, the city lost over 2,100 trees due to three projects since August last. The projects are Rs2 billion Signal-Free Corridor Project (from Gulberg’s Liberty roundabout to Shadman via Jail Road), over Rs160 billion Lahore Orange Line Metro Train Project and about Rs1.5 billion Canal Road Widening Project.

The Signal Free Project consumed 196 trees along the route from Liberty roundabout to Shadman’s Fawara Chowk. For the ongoing Lahore Orange Line Metro Train Project, 620 grown-up trees were felled on its 27.1km long route from Dera Gujran to Ali Town. The authorities have also started uprooting about 1,300 trees for Canal Road widening project at three stretches.

For the Link Canal Road from Punjab University land Via Kareem Block, completed about two years ago, 120 trees, a majority of them of mango, were removed.

Likewise, another mega project — Elevated Expressway Project from Gulberg to Motorway — which is also likely to be launched in coming months will also cause uprooting of over 1,700 trees. This project will start from Babu Sabu (Motorway M2) and end at Zafar Ali Road/Main Boulevard, Gulberg, along the Cantt drain. It consists of three packages, Package-I, Package-II and Package-III. The amended EIA of the project contains satellite imagery of the project route measuring 10.7km while elevated road would have width of 31 metres.

“The project is located in urban settings which has a variety of trees along the existing road and drain. For the construction of this project, almost 1,715 trees will be removed,” reads the project’s EIA report.

The local names of trees cut in the wake of various projects include Bakain, Jammin, Lemon, Mulberry, Shareen, Sheesham, Kikar, Rubber Plant, Simal, Berry, Guava, Neem, eucalyptus, Katha/Khair, Phulai, Evergreen and White Siris.

Keeping in view the situation, the civil society activists have already demanded an independent tree care authority. “Since the issue is very important, Lahore needs an independent tree care authority that should have complete record of all trees,” Prof Dr Ajaz Ahmad, Lahore Conservation Society’s secretary information, said. He also sought audit of all planted and cut trees.

According to Prof Dr Ghulam Abbas Anjum, the government must ensure an effective monitoring of the trees pledged to be planted against the uprooted ones. “Everyone knows well the importance of trees. It is a dire need of the hour to thoroughly check that whether the departments/officials concerned are planting five or 10 times more trees against the felled trees,” he said.

Talking to Dawn, Mr Naseemur Rehman (Director Environment) said the department is against cutting of even one tree. “But some unavoidable circumstances, such as development projects, force us to take such steps (cutting of trees). We also admit that the set standard/parameters of pollution in city is on higher side due to various projects these days—mainly the orange line,” he explained. But the environment situation would improve soon after completion of the projects, he hoped.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1255932/1700-more-trees-to-face-the-axe-in-lahore>

DISAPPEARING FORESTS

The Express Tribune, May 3rd, 2016.

The forests of Pakistan are disappearing faster than you can say ‘matchstick.’ The National Assembly has roused itself from its perennial torpor regarding matters environmental and assorted members have poked sharp sticks at the forest wing of the Climate Change Ministry, saying that it has failed to control deforestation at provincial level. At a meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Climate Change, parliamentarians said that the illegal logging that was widespread in all afforested areas of the country was simply impossible without the active collusion of forestry department officials.

The lawmakers rejected the claims by forestry officials that the logging was all controlled by “mafias” along with local politicians and described the evidence presented as “unconvincing”. It is a racing certainty that ‘mafias’ and local politicians are involved, but it is the central role in illegal logging played by those supposedly there to conserve and protect our trees that concerned the parliamentarians.

Any regular visitor to the forests of Pakistan over the last 20 years will have not failed to notice the loss of trees. Noticed the increased sliding in areas of bare slopes that regularly block the roads in periods of heavy rain. Noticed the silted rivers and streams. Noticed the increase in urban flooding and land erosion generally. The damage done to the natural environment is valued at countless billions of rupees, there is no quick fix and accelerating effects of climate change nationally are only going to get worse.

The buck stops for this one at the ministry for climate change, and it is up to the ministry to intervene hard and fast if the brakes are to be put on what is turning into a national disaster. Trees are not replaced overnight, and even the ambitious planting programme in Khybher-Pakhtunkhwa can take up to two generations — fifty years — to reach its full potential even if it is comprehensively implemented. Deforestation is yet another self-inflicted wound.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1095785/disappearing-forests/>

LAHORE WITHOUT TREES

Dawn, May 4th, 2016

IN the name of development, the government of Punjab is turning the once beautiful city of Lahore into a concrete jungle.

The point therefore bears repeating in every possible forum: development does not mean more roads and highways.

It means a process that improves the quality of life of the people, starting with the poorest and most vulnerable, including those who do not possess vehicles. More than 2,200 trees have already been felled to make way for the widening of key roads and, hence, for the growing volume of vehicles on the streets.

Now we learn that another road project meant to provide an elevated expressway from Gulberg to the Motorway will result in another 1,715 trees being felled — on top of those that have already been ‘removed’ in the euphemistic jargon of the project’s environmental impact assessment.

Development of this sort will soon leave the city bereft of its precious greenery. Indeed, those who are opposing the projects until a proper environmental plan has been developed to compensate the city for its loss of tree cover are performing an invaluable civic function.

Perhaps the government of Punjab should learn a thing or two from its counterpart in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The PTI has made the protection and planting of trees a key part of its development agenda and has placed environmental concerns high on its list of priorities. This is not just bucolic regard for the picturesque.

The slash-and-burn model of urban development being followed by the Punjab government, with no regard for the environment or the city’s built heritage, is turning historical Lahore into a nightmare of highways.

The latter are more a barrier for movement — especially for those who don’t use automobiles. In addition, they create more traffic jams in the narrower capillaries of the city’s traffic system and lead to longer travel times for those on short hops.

These projects are not to be treated as favourite playthings; the kind of resources that the provincial government is spending on them can be better utilised to build parks, preserve heritage and provide for the transport needs of the masses in ways that do not call for chopping one’s way through the landscape with an axe.

The city authorities need to grow up and see their job through the eyes of the average city resident, rather than from the windows of their bullet-proof luxury cars.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1256107/lahore-without-trees>

COAL BEING DUMPED IN OPEN POSES HEALTH, SAFETY HAZARDS

Dawn, May 5th, 2016

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: Large quantities of coal being dumped on a tract of railway land along the main Mauripur Road poses serious threats to public health and safety, it emerged during a visit to the site on Wednesday.

The place is situated close to Mohammadi Colony, better known as Machhar Colony, one of the least developed settlements of the city, which is already facing a host of problems, including an acute lack of sanitation, water shortage and absence of a drainage system.

Residents of the colony spoke to Dawn, complaining that continued dumping of coal had aggravated the health crisis people had been facing.

“It has almost been a year. Initially, a small space was utilised for dumping coal but now, as you can see, a large area has been turned into mountains of coal,” said Noor Ahmed, an old fisherman and resident of Machhar Colony.

Mr Ahmed, a hepatitis patient, has also recently developed breathing problems, which he blames on the flying coal dust. “It’s not that we have become used to living in garbage. We are also part of this city, contributing our bit to its development, and deserve better treatment. Some of us want to complain about this but we don’t know who to contact,” he said.

Residents regretted that their settlement, mainly inhabited by poor labourers, had not received government attention and, consequently, its civic issues had become grave with the increase in population.

Amidst the filth and piles of coal, some workers were also found drying trash fish and shrimps. The dried waste is used in poultry feed.

According to sources, the imported coal is apparently being dumped by companies which were earlier using Karachi Port Trust’s open storage facility in Keamari. Some of these companies are dumping their coal in the open in the Hawkesbay area.

“The KPT, along with other directives, was restricted by the Sindh Environment Protection Agency (Sepa) over a year ago to minimise their coal storage from 940,000 tonnes to 200,000 tonnes by maintaining the height of stockpiles up to five metres.

“The intervention was made after residents affected by coal handling in Keamari complained to the agency and took the case to court,” a Sepa official said.

Endorsing these points, a Karachi Port Trust (KPT) official said that the court had also directed the companies to have their vessels unload up to 5,000 tonnes of coal at the KPT and the remaining coal be taken to the Port Qasim.

“The court had also imposed a fine of Rs28 per tonne on violation of this condition, besides making court permission mandatory for unloading coal at the KPT,” he said, adding that some companies were dumping coal at other places to avoid the fine.

The railway department, according to him, had been using the Wazir Mansion Railway Station (the one along the Mauripur Road) to transport coal to other parts of the country for a long time. “There have always been some piles of coal in that area. But with a massive increase in demand, the coal piles have increased there,” he said.

On the impact of coal dust on health, Saquib Ejaz Hussain, an environmental specialist said that coal dust can cause a range of health problems, including respiratory illness, cardiovascular diseases and lung cancer.

“Fine particles penetrate deep into the lungs and are difficult for the body to expel. Over time these particles accumulate and do more damage. Epidemiological research suggests that there is no threshold at which health effects do not occur,” he said.

According to him, experts recognised PM2.5 [particulate matter] from the coal dust as a major air pollutant and health hazard. “People living far from the site are also at risk when large amount of coal dust is blown far and wide by the wind.”

Stockpiles of coal in hot weather conditions, he said, were also prone to spontaneous combustion that could lead to serious fires.

A railway official, however, rejected concerns related to public health and safety and said the coal was kept there for a short period and transported to its destination in a day or two.

“The export quality coal is covered when transported here from the port in trucks and then it is shifted up-country. The railway receives freight charges for coal transportation and fines the company in case of delay in lifting the coal,” he

said, adding that the department was never approached by Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) over this issue.

Director general Sepa said: “Stocking coal in the open especially in a residential area is a violation of the law. The department has recently been informed of this particular case and letters will soon be sent to the railway department and the Karachi Port Trust.”

The department, he said, would first identify the organisation/company involved in dumping coal and then take action.

“We need to get into the detail of this matter. Our first directive to the concerned party, however, will be the immediate removal of coal,” he pointed out.

The department, he said, had earlier taken notice of the havoc being caused by the KPT coal terminal and forced the organisation to restrict stocking coal to a certain limit.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1256288>

20-YEAR-OLD TREES CUT DOWN ALONG SHARAE FAISAL

The Express Tribune, May 6th, 2016.

KARACHI: Amanat Ali sits on a greenbelt at Sharae Faisal, amid chopped trees, which he planted with his hands around 20 years ago. Wearing a gloomy look, he remains oblivious to the fast flowing traffic around him; instead he stares at the half-chopped trees.

“I planted them,” he says, staring at the trimmed branches. “I used to water them every alternative day and even trim the branches. They were like my children.”

Even though a heatwave is predicted to hit the metropolis, trees across the city are being brutally chopped down. Around 13 trees were cut at Sharae Faisal, just in front of Metro supermarket, in the wee hours of Thursday, by unidentified men. The street lies under the jurisdiction of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC).

Ali is a gardener of the KMC who has been looking after a huge portion of the green belt at Sharae Faisal since the last 20 years. He says that it will take at least a year for the axed trees to grow back.

Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah, taking notice of the axed trees, directed commissioner Asif Hyder Shah to immediately arrest the culprits. He asked Shah to mobilise the police and submit a report to him.

“We are working hard to improve the environment and making efforts to plant trees, but some unscrupulous people are cutting trees,” he said, adding that the issue needs to be taken seriously.

An FIR has been registered under Sections 427 and 34 of the Pakistan Penal Code, read with Section 132 of the Sindh Local Government Act 2013, at the Airport police station, said KMC parks deputy director Tanveer Ahmed while speaking to The Express Tribune. Culprits will be imposed a fine of Rs0.2 million to Rs0.3 million for cutting a 20-year-old tree. However, the culprits cannot be imprisoned for the crime, he added.

When asked regarding the types of trees that were cut, he said they included lignum, conocarpus and neem.

Shehri-Citizens for Better Environment general secretary Amber Alibhai explained that it takes around 40 years for lignum and neem trees to become mature. It needs to be monitored if the trees that were chopped down are being replaced by billboards or not, she added.

The number plate of the truck in which the chopped down branches were taken away was noted as JZ-0468, said an official of the Airport Police Station, requesting anonymity.

According to the official, trees could have been chopped down by the Metro supermarket as they used to hide the façade of their superstore.

However, Metro supermarket floor in-charge denied the allegation and said that those trees have been present since a long time and why would the store chop them all of a sudden. “We also have several plants planted in our premises,” he pointed out.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1098031/paved-paradise-20-year-old-trees-cut-down-along-sharae-faisal/>

June 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 27TH TO JULY 2 ND 2016

SEWAGE ACCUMULATES IN GRAVEYARD, STREETS AND SCHOOL IN KASUR

Dawn, June 27th, 2016

KASUR: Non-functional drainage and sewerage system has resulted in accumulation of sewage in the streets of Rasoolpura locality here, while the waste water damaged a graveyard in Miakay Mor area.

According to residents of these localities, the Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA) has been turning a deaf ear to their repeated complaints regarding the lack of sanitation.

After sewage entered the graveyard in Miakey Mor locality on Multan Road, announcements were made through loudspeakers, asking area residents to take care of the graves of their near and dear ones.

According to locals, many graves were damaged because of the sewage.

Muhammad Saeed, a resident of the locality said the TMA officials concerned took no measures to save the graveyard despite area residents’ repeated complaints.

Conditions in Rasoolpura are no different where sewage has accumulated in streets and inside the Government High School.

The residents say, if immediate remedial steps were not taken, the situation could result in outbreak of epidemics. The said the sewage overflow was also damaging buildings in the locality.

They demanded the district coordination officer should personally visit the area and order measures to provide relief to the residents.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1267523>

CATTLE DIE

Dawn, June 27th, 2016

Nine cattle heads belonging to a farmer died, while five were in critical condition allegedly after poisonous intake on Sunday at Gaga village near Adda Sarai on Multan Road.

According to former UC nazim Mr Tariq, his 14 buffaloes entered a field that was sprayed with insecticide. After consuming green fodder from the field nine of the buffaloes died on the spot, while five fell critically ill and were being treated at a local veterinary facility.

According to a rough estimate, Tariq said, he suffered a loss of around Rs1.5 million because of the livestock deaths.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1267523>

TREE PLANTATION DRIVE TO START FROM AUG 14

Dawn, June 30th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: A national plantation campaign would kick off on Aug 14, said the federal Minister for Climate Change Zahid Hamid on Wednesday, adding that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif would launch the Green Pakistan Programme and inaugurate the Monsoon Tree Planting Campaign 2016. Mr Hamid said this while chairing an inter-provincial meeting on the tree plantation campaign and Green Pakistan Programme at the ministry of climate change.

The meeting decided that federal, provincial and local governments would make arrangements for planting trees in Islamabad and provincial, divisional, district and tehsil headquarters.

Suitable sites, they said, would be selected at each station while facilities to plant trees would be provided by government departments concerned.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1268098/tree-plantation-drive-to-start-from-aug-14>

PREVENTING SMUGGLING: WILDLIFE DEPT, WWF TO RAISE AWARENESS

The Express Tribune, June 30th, 2016.

LAHORE: The Wildlife Department and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) will together set up information desks at the Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore and the Benazir International Airport in Islamabad to raise awareness regarding the protection of wildlife and to discourage smuggling of endangered species.

This was announced at a meeting of the Wildlife and Parks Department on Wednesday. Khalid Ayaz Khan, the director general of the department, said the signature on an agreement between the Wildlife and Parks Department, the WWF and Civil Aviation will be obtained soon.

Khan said the department was taking steps to raise awareness among people regarding the protection of wildlife and the elimination of smuggling endangered wild species. He said in the first phase, the counters would be installed at the Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore and at the Benazir International Airport in Islamabad. In the second phase, an information desk will be set up at the Faisalabad Airport.

Khan said that the counters would not only help the department disseminate information regarding the importance of protection of wildlife but will also help them eliminate smuggling of wildlife.

He said a representative of the Wildlife Department, with powers equal to that of an inspector, will be present at the counter at all times along with a representative of the WWF. He said previously the Civil Aviation had only allowed the Wildlife Department limited access to cargo.

“This has not had a major impact on the crackdown against smuggling...the idea to set up counters is another way we can discourage the terrible trade.”

He said pamphlets and brochures will be available at the counters, along with other information regarding wildlife awareness. He said the focal person of the Wildlife Department at the Benazir International Airport Islamabad would be Deputy Director Muhammad Anwar Maan. Abdul Shakoor Manj will man the counter at the Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1133094/preventing-smuggling-wildlife-dept-wwf-raise-awareness/>

'COUNTRY CAN EARN UP TO \$2 BILLION PER ANNUM BY SELLING CARBON CREDITS'

Business Recorder, July 01, 2016

Aamir Saeed

Pakistan can earn from \$400 million to \$2 billion annually by selling carbon credits in the international market and the federal government is committed to completing a viable plan under Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) by 2018.

Talking to Business Recorder, Inspector General of Forests Syed Mahmood Nasir said that Ministry of Climate Change and his department have been working on setting up a comprehensive system to trade carbon credits in the international market. He said that a National Monitoring System and Grievances Redressal Mechanism for forests and relevant communities are being set up with the help of civil society and all four provincial forest departments.

"The role of forest communities is very important in protecting the forests; therefore we have arranged over 250 training workshops for them in different areas," he said, adding the technical training will help the forest communities become an effective part of the REDD+.

REDD is about getting dollars for the carbon saved in forests by not cutting trees. The carbon emitted from forests and agriculture in Pakistan is massive and for each ton saved the country can get an amount ranging from \$400 million to \$2 billion per annum if it performs well with the readiness grant, he said.

Pakistan won \$3.8 million Readiness Fund of Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) in December 2013 to combat climate change and tropical deforestation after a tough competition at Geneva, Switzerland. The FCPF is the World Bank administered facility that is set up to compensate developing countries for reductions in carbon dioxide emissions achieved by preserving their forests.

Nasir said that they are also working to amend the 100 year old laws related to forests as the existing laws and system do not recognise carbon credits as a commodity to be traded in the international market.

"We have to assimilate all our laws and systems with the global standards before we can trade carbon credits in the global market," he said. There are three major carbon credit markets in the world where a country can trade carbon credits like on a stock exchange and they include China Beijing Environment Exchange, Chicago Climate Exchange and Carbon TradeXchange Australia.

Nasir, however, said the international carbon market is currently faced with a setback as price of per ton carbon has come down to one dollar while it was around \$30 per ton four years ago. He said the global powers and the biggest emitters of carbon including China and America should help the international community to formulate a robust regulatory system to trade carbon credits.

Pakistan Forest Institute, Peshawar, is also preparing a carbon stock table and training government officials and civil society members on carbon sequestration to benefit from the REDD+. Riaz Muhammad Khan, President Sarhad Awami Forestry Ittehad, who has attended numerous local and international training workshops on the REDD+ and carbon credits, said the programme will offer direct cash incentives for forest communities across the country if it is implemented as per requirement of the World Bank and other international donors.

[http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172:pakistan/62091:country-can-earn-up-to-\\$2-billion-per-annum-by-selling-carbon-credits?date=2016-07-01](http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172:pakistan/62091:country-can-earn-up-to-$2-billion-per-annum-by-selling-carbon-credits?date=2016-07-01)

ALMOST ALL CITY STORM DRAINS CLOGGED, ENCROACHED

Dawn, July 2nd, 2016

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: All natural storm water drains of the city, over 40 in number, are encroached and clogged and there is an immediate need to clean them, secure the remaining space of these drains by erecting a wall, and develop a mechanism for proper disposal of solid waste and sewage.

These suggestions were presented by experts while speaking to Dawn on Friday after warnings of urban flooding were recently raised by the meteorological department for Karachi and Hyderabad, cities which are expected to receive more than average rainfall this monsoon.

The city has already experienced some heavy spells of rains over the past few days but, fortunately, the weather pattern has so far been erratic.

Expressing their disapproval over the prolonged official delay in cleaning these drains, they said that the administration, instead of waiting for a crisis, should have carried out this exercise at least two months earlier. As a standard practice, they pointed out, drains should be cleaned after every three months.

Highlighting important issues associated with the drainage system, Salim Alimuddin who has been working on the city's drainage system since the 1980s and represents the Orangi Pilot Project, said encroachment was a major issue and there was a need to secure the remaining space.

“All natural storm water drains of the city are encroached on a large-scale. It won't be fair to point fingers just at illegal settlements of the poor that have taken over a wide area of drains as whoever got the opportunity, including government agencies and private sector organisations, is involved in this business,” he said.

Since the issue had become political and it was difficult to remove these encroachments, what the government at least could do was secure the remaining space of these drains and line them which would increase water flow 10 times, he added.

Another important factor, he said, was to have a proper sewerage and solid waste disposal system and unless the city developed such a mechanism, flooding would always be a threat to the city.

“In most cases, sewerage lines have been connected with storm water drains that should only carry rainwater.

“Besides, these drains are also used as solid waste dumping grounds that not only choke their passage but have reduced their depth since their de-silting and cleaning is hardly carried out,” he observed, adding that only a small portion of sewage reached the treatment plants and most of it fell into the sea, untreated.

The lines of utility services running perpendicular to drains, he said, also caused obstruction to the water flow. These lines should either be above or underneath the drains.

“In addition, the backflow of sewage and their discharge in the open that follows an electricity breakdown during the rain contributed to flooding.

“This problem can only be addressed if the concerned department of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) has a backup power system which could be used in case of an electricity-breakdown to pump out sewage from the lines into collecting tanks,” he explained.

Mr Salim also underlined the need for coordination among the various government agencies to ensure improved planning and development.

Criticising the government that sprung into action to clean the drains only after parts of the city were flooded and dwellers had to suffer long traffic jams, Zahid Farooq, representing the Urban Resource Centre said: “There was complete chaos. In a few spells of heavy rain people saw roads being flooded and sewage entering streets and lanes

but there was no one to complain to. What if the rain had continued for some hours? Is this the way to manage a city of 20 million?"

Karachi, he said, was among the five biggest mega cities of the world and deserved better treatment.

"The work the government has started now should have been done in March-April. The city desperately needs long-term solutions."

The government, he believed, should have a monitoring body to supervise the civic agencies' performance.

Senior director municipal services KMC, Masud Alam admitted gaps in the system and said drains couldn't be cleaned for three years because of a funding crisis.

"The situation will improve as we have started work," he said.

He agreed with the opinion that cleaning should be carried out all year round and that the city should have proper disposal of solid waste and sewage.

"Drainage problem must not be seen in isolation as it is strongly associated with both these systems."

According to Alam, there are over 559 (small and large) drains in the city; all of them except for 12 drains, are connected to Lyari and Malir rivers which take sewage to the sea. The rest directly open into the sea.

"There was a big misconception about the quantity of rainwater reaching the drains. Very little water had reached the drains as most remained in the city (because of faulty sewerage system)."

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1268518>

THAR COAL PROJECT: DAM WILL DESTROY OUR LIVELIHOODS, CLAIM LOCALS

The Express Tribune, July 2nd, 2016.

HYDERABAD: A group of residents of Tharparkar district have challenged the construction of a storage dam for the Thar coal project in the Sindh High Court (SHC), which has issued notices to the respondents for July 4.

The petitioners, Lakho Bheel, Suleman Jurio, Misri Shah and eight others, claim that the proposed 2,700-acre dam will adversely affect their livelihood and damage the local ecosystem.

The dam, being established near Ghorano village in Islamkot taluka in Thar Block-II by Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC), will store highly saline subsoil water which will be pumped out from the aquifers to allow for the open-pit mining of coal.

The petitioners have maintained that they are small land growers in Shiv Jo Tar, Ghoarno, Ahsan Shah Jo Tar and Suleman Haja villages of Islamkot. They allege that 15 villages with a population of around 15,000 would be affected along with their agricultural land and around 20,000 livestock animals if the dam is constructed.

They also claimed that unlike most villages in Tharparkar desert, theirs are rich in agriculture with about 20,000 trees, 20 potable water wells and 10 natural ponds; all of which will be affected by the dam.

The petitioners allege that the government has stopped them from cultivating the land since the start of last month. "We have been threatened and warned to vacate our houses and land," the petition reads.

The farmers have termed the alleged land occupation as a violation of the Land Acquisition Act, 1984, and claim that the local police and administration are in league with the respondents.

The petitioners prayed the court declare the construction illegal, not feasible and environmentally hazardous, and stop the respondents from harassment and order the government to allow the farmers to continue cultivating their land.

Though the petitioners' plea for issuing a stay on the dam's construction till the judgment of the case was not granted, the SHC's Hyderabad Circuit Bench put the respondents on notice for July 4. The respondents include the provincial planning and development ministry, Sindh chief secretary, Thar Coal Energy Board, Thar Coal Authority, SECMC and Balochistan Construction Company.

The SECMC, a joint venture of the Sindh government and the Engro Powergen Limited, plans to produce 3,960 megawatt (MW) of electricity through four 330MW and four 660MW plants.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1134288/thar-coal-project-dam-will-destroy-livelihoods-claim-locals/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 20TH TO JUNE 26TH 2016

'SHIP BREAKING ACTIVITIES HARMING MARINE, COASTAL ECOSYSTEM'

Dawn, June 20th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Environmental experts and other stakeholders on Sunday pledged to combine their efforts to achieve sustainable ship breaking activities which will ensure the conservation and protection of coastal and marine ecosystems in the coastal areas of the country.

Experts at a national consultative policy workshop titled 'Sustainable and Environmentally Sound Management of Waste from Ship Recycling in Pakistan' agreed that coastal and marine ecosystems in the country are exposed to increasingly contaminated seawater because of ship dismantling activities carried out contrary to environmental safeguards.

In his key note address, additional secretary of the science and technology ministry Mohammad Ashraf said the role of investors in ship breaking activities and the owners of Gadani ship breaking yards was vital for conservation efforts.

"Thousands of tons of hazardous waste is piling up at the Gadani ship breaking yard in Baluchistan's coastal area, which is harming the marine ecosystem, the overall environment, the life of workers at the yard and of those living in nearby areas," he said.

Also attending the session was Susan Wingfield, programme officer at the Geneva based secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions.

She stressed on the need for installing facilities to handle hazardous waste in a scientific and environmentally safe manner in consultation with relevant stakeholders in order to avoid punitive action against or a ban on ship breaking activities under certain regulations of the European Union.

Ms Wingfield said the reasons behind the growth of the ship breaking industry in Pakistan was the comparatively low cost of labour and weak implementation of laws pertaining to environmental protection and workers' rights.

"We will help Pakistan in all possible ways in saving its marine and coastal ecologies by making the ship breaking activities environmentally safe," she said.

Professor Mohammad Irfan Khan of the Islamic University Islamabad informed the convention of EU ship recycling regulations that were enforced in 2013.

He said that according to the regulations, the European Commission is to establish a global list of ship recycling facilities that comply with the regulations.

“To avoid sanctions on dismantling European ships in Pakistan, the country’s yards will either need to move their operations off the beach or will need to upgrade occupational health and safety standards as well as downstream waste management to meet these standards,” he said.

International cooperation joint secretary at the climate change ministry Iftikharul Hassan Shah Gilani said ship owners were responsible for the clean and safe recycling of ships since they have benefitted commercially from the vessels.

“Therefore, they must show will and play their part in achieving the goal of dismantling ships in an environment friendly manner,” he added.

Senior advisor on chemicals and sustainable industrial development at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute Dr Mahmood Khawaja emphasised on the need for a viable environment-friendly ship recycling strategy.

Prof Shyam Asolekar of the Centre for Environmental Science and Engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology in Bombay talked about common hazardous waste, its treatment, storage and safe disposal issues in South Asia.

He said the installation of efficient waste treatment plants and effective environmental monitoring have never been more important for reducing the risk of ship disposal to local marine and coastal ecosystems.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1265997>

STUDY STRESSES DIVERSITY IN PLANTATION ALONG CITY ROADS

Dawn, June 20th, 2016

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: Monoculture (the practice of growing a single crop or plant) increases the risk of damages from environmental changes, disease and infestation and has caused huge losses in many urban landscapes of the world.

Karachi, too, is exposed to similar threats as the city seriously lacks diversity in plantation, says a study that analyses changes in plantation along a major road of the city over the past two decades.

Titled Changes in diversity and composition of flora along a corridor of different land uses in Karachi over 20 years: Causes and implications, the research has been published in an international journal and conducted by Prof Zafar Iqbal Shams of Karachi University’s Institute of Environmental Studies.

The study investigates changes in the taxonomic diversity and composition of plant species growing along a 15.2-km long corridor comprising M. A. Jinnah Road, Jahangir Road, S. M. Taufiq Road and Shahrah-i-Pakistan.

It compares data with a 1993 study conducted on the same corridor, which starts from the Merewether Tower and ends at Sohrab Goth, passing through the most densely populated 19 union councils of the city.

The study says that the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation has been extensively planting certain species along the streets over the last few decades without properly studying their suitability to the environment.

“This is evident from the fact that many species were extensively planted in Karachi over the decades but were later removed for various reasons. For instance, eucalyptus was extensively planted during 1980s and 1990s along the streets, which was later removed due to their fast growing roots and shoots that damaged many civic services,” it says.

According to the study, monoculture is commonly practiced in Karachi and currently *conocarpus erectus* is the most common species, which alone has 83.55 per cent individuals on the street under study.

The practice of growing one particular plant species that has gained momentum in recent years in Karachi may increase the risk of potential damages from environmental changes, diseases and insect infestation, it says.

Another area of concern, the study points out, is the large scale plantation of exotic species along the streets. It has also been observed that native species were replaced with exotic species during different plantation campaigns.

The study highlights importance of native species and says that most global plantation campaigns are now focusing on indigenous species to help restore native ecosystems in urban landscape. For instance, the Million Trees Programme of South Australia is dedicated to planting three million native plants across Adelaide metropolitan areas.

“Native trees require reduced external inputs and offer foraging resources to birds that may be reduced or absent in exotic streetscape. They also have cultural importance. For instance, *Ficus religiosa* (locally known as peepal) has a religious value in South Asia, *Azadirachta indica* (neem) and *Ficus benghalensis* (banyan) have been sufficiently celebrated in the literature of Indian subcontinent,” it says.

A total of 9,548 individuals of 28 exotic and 25 native species were found growing along the entire the corridor. Out of which, only 866 plants (9.07pc) were native while 8,682 plants (90.93pc) were exotic. *Concarpus erectus*, an exotic species, alone had 83.55pc individuals on the streets under study and was found growing in all transects of the corridor.

In 1993, the corridor did not have a single individual of this shrub and eucalyptus was the most common plant of the corridor. The streets were represented by 32 native and 35 introduced species that had 4,613 individuals, out of which 3,135 individuals (67.96pc) were exotic and 1,478 individuals (32.04pc) were native.

Seventeen exotic and 13 native species, which were reported growing in 1993, were not found in 2013 anywhere along the corridor.

In 2013, the corridor did not have a single plant of *Jatropha integerrima* (a native of tropical America), which had sizeable individuals in 1993.

The study shows that plant diversity of the corridor has declined substantially from 8.57 in 1993 to 1.41 in 2013. However, the “commercial-cum-residential area” has demonstrated greater diversity of native species in 2013 compared to that in 1993. This category has also shown the greatest richness of native species in 2013.

According to the study, biologically diverse species are preferred for plantation in urban landscapes to reduce potential damage from pests and diseases. A diverse composition of species and their population is better adapted to environmental changes, diseases and insect infestation.

It also points to the colossal replacements of large-stature trees with medium-stature plants, which may have substantially reduced the air pollutant sequestering capacity and other ecosystem services.

In 1993, the corridor had 42.19pc large-stature trees while in 2013 the corridor was represented by 90.63pc plants of medium-stature trees.

“Small-stature trees provide reduced ecosystem services. Studies show that large trees are more scenic and provide more shade to buildings than small trees. And, above all, remove more air pollutants, about 60-70 times greater, than those removed by small ones,” it says.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1265884>

DUG-OUT AREAS OF ORANGE LINE ROUTE STILL FLOODED
Dawn, June 24th, 2016

Lahore: The rainwater accumulated at various construction sites of the Orange Line train project and the trunk sewer or sanitation/drainage pipes near the project route couldn't be cleared till Thursday as the Wasa officials continued to drain out water through pumps and other equipment.

On the other hand, the Orange Line project steering committee sought launching of construction work on a new 14km long drain at a cost of Rs2.4 billion so that the residents of localities such as Lakshmi, The Mall, GPO, Lake Road, AG Office and Chauburji could get rid of such water drainage issues.

The areas along the Orange Line route where the accumulated rainwater was reported included the train's underground portion from the University Ground to Jain Mandir, the area near Lakshmi, dug out portions for concrete piling work/pillars from Dera Gujran to Lakshmi via Boharwala Chowk and Chauburji to Thokar and Ali Town (Rainwind Road) via Scheme Mor.

However, Water and Sanitation Agency deputy managing director (engineering) Aftab Ahmad Dhilloon claimed the agency had drained water from the areas it had dug for the trunk sewer till Thursday afternoon.

"We are responsible to clear the areas dug by us. So we have cleared our construction sites. And the sites where the Orange Line contractors have done digging will be cleared by themselves," he explains while talking to Dawn.

However, a spokesman for Wasa says the agency officials are assisting the Orange Line project contractors in draining the rainwater through pumps at various locations—mainly those in package-1 where the piling work is going on.

"Wasa is assisting the project officials in draining the accumulated rainwater within dug/under-construction median line on GT Road where the piling work has almost been done," he adds.

Meanwhile, presiding over a meeting of the Orange Line project steering committee, the commissioner said the government had allocated Rs2.4bn for constructing 14km long new drain that would pass through the central Lahore areas.

"This project will be helpful in getting rid of such issues permanently," he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1266853>

'AIR, NOISE POLLUTION BADLY AFFECTING HOSPITALS, PATIENTS'

Dawn, June 24th, 2016

Hasan Mansoor

Karachi: The increasing air and noise pollution is negatively affecting various busy thoroughfares and streets of the city, especially those running along some large hospitals and the pollution is taking its toll on the patients, it emerged on Thursday.

The M. A. Jinnah Road hosts many hospitals along its fringes and corners where the situation is getting graver for patients who otherwise needed extreme care and attention. Similar is the condition of Rafiqui Shaheed Road where apart from increasing pollution, the rusted sewerage system brings diseases instead of cure to patients of three major hospitals of the province located on it.

Experts said major hospitals like the Civil Hospital Karachi, the Services Hospital and several private hospitals along the M. A. Jinnah Road suffered because of growing pollution.

Similar situation could be witnessed on various busy streets in the city where the number of private hospitals is continuously on the rise as the managements are generally least concerned to take seriously the hazards of pollution.

Pollution levels in almost all of Pakistan's major cities are nearly 10 times higher than maximum level recommended by the World Health Organisation.

A free hand apparently given by the traffic police to rickshaws, taxis, minibuses, coaches and old buses and trucks to emit hazardous smoke — not to mention the noise — is the main reason behind the problems, the experts said.

Officials admitted that despite the provincial government's decision to ban all public transport vehicles made before 1976, they were still running on the roads.

They said that according to estimates, over 2.5 million vehicles were on the city roads and the number was growing constantly as hundreds of vehicles are registered in Karachi daily.

A visit to some of those hospitals showed that due to blaring vehicle horns, the patients are unable to get a sound sleep and thus unable to get speedy recovery. "Patients must sleep to recover. It's the significant factor," said a doctor.

A patient at a private hospital near Sharea Faisal who underwent an operation recently said he had been unable to sleep at night, while the hospital was filled with smoke emitted by vehicles, particularly during the rush hour."These drivers," he said, "have no respect for human life. They deliberately honk horns near hospitals."

Another patient said the traffic police had a stake in according free hand to powerful transport mafia, which stopped them taking any positive step to improve the situation.

"The noise and environmental pollution have assumed alarming proportions in Karachi, and if remedial measures are not taken, the situation may turn from bad to worse," said an expert.

The Pakistan Medical Association (PMA), Karachi chapter, has expressed concern over the increase in noise pollution in the city. "The smoke emitting vehicles have emerged as a major source of increasing respiratory problems for patients," a PMA official told Dawn.

"Action is required against all kinds of horns and on misuse of loudspeaker in residential areas and in streets where hospitals are situated," he said.

The experts said that pollution-related diseases in Karachi were on the rise due to intolerable levels of air and noise pollution. They said that such diseases, including cardiac, lung, eye, ENT, and skin diseases were affecting more than 30 per cent of residents.

They said air pollution in the city was exacerbating and almost all its streets were full of dangerous smoke and gases.

An expert of chest diseases said the number of people suffering from lung diseases was on the rise while patients of asthma and other chest diseases such as chronic bronchitis and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD) were affecting more fatally than before.

At least five per cent of adults and 10pc of children are suffering from asthma in Pakistan and the figures are getting even worse most likely due to growing industrialisation and urbanisation.

ENT expert Dr Qaiser Sajjad held the smoke-emitting vehicles, especially rickshaws, as the chief cause of air and noise pollution.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1266757>

SEPA WARNS HOSPITALS OF LEGAL ACTION OVER UNSAFE DISPOSAL OF WASTE
Dawn, June 24th, 2016

HYDERABAD: The director general of Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa), Naeem Ahmed Mughal, on Thursday warned managements of Liaquat University Hospital, Isra, Rajputana and other hospitals of legal action if they failed to treat hospital waste as per Hospital Waste Management Rules, 2014.

Mr Mughal said while conducting hearings of hospitals that Sepa had assessed that a considerable number of people were affected by diseases caused by hospital waste.

Sepa had issued notices on June 16 to 30 hospitals producing harmful waste asking them to attend hearings under Sepa Act 2014 and 27 of them attended.

Mr Mughal said in an official statement that the hospital waste threatened health and environment and it was, therefore, direly needed that HWM Rules, 2014, should be strictly implemented in all hospitals.

Under the rules, the hospitals were required to properly handle waste, minimise its affects and dispose it of accordingly. The management of waste included waste segregation, collection, transportation, storage, disposal, minimisation and reuse, he said.

The Sepa DG said that untreated wastewater generated by the LUH city branch and other hospitals of Hyderabad was also released into environment and freshwater bodies that polluted water and made it unfit for human consumption.

He said that untreated hospital wastewater was a source of multiple waterborne, viral and bacterial diseases. Besides, most hospitals burnt waste in the open, he said.

He said that Sepa monitoring teams had noted violation of Section 14 of Sepa Act 2014 during inspection of different hospitals and had collected sufficient evidence about improper management of waste including liquid and solid.

Sepa issued several notices for compliance of HWM Rules but the managements concerned did not take any action to put in place an effective system for handling waste, forcing the agency to issue notices for personal hearing.

The Sepa DG directed managements of hospitals, both government and private, to submit their waste management plans that addressed all environmental issues in an effective manner in line with HWM Rules. The hospitals should also ensure strict compliance of Sepa Act 2014, he said.

He said that hospital waste was harmful for human health and polluted environment. It was frequently observed that the hospitals burnt waste in the open or on the premises of healthcare facilities which constituted violation of Sepa Act.

Sepa Hyderabad region officer, Munir Abbasi, said that two private hospitals, Isra and Rajputana, produced more waste than any other private hospital given their number of beds.

These hospitals produced 4,000kg and 1,500kg solid waste per day, respectively, while LUH generated 650kg waste per day, he said.

He said that heads of all hospitals had undertaken to prepare waste management plans. Dr Wajid Shaikh, LUH medial superintendent, had disclosed that LUH's incinerator was working but it faced some issues and promised that he would follow any guidelines issued by Sepa in this regard, he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1266750>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 13TH TO JUNE 19TH 2016
ILLEGAL HUNTING: WILDLIFE DEPT RECOVERS RS66.78M
Business Recorder, 13 June 2016

Lahore: Director General Wildlife and Parks Punjab, Khalid Ayaz Khan has said that a total fine of Rs66.78 million has been recovered in lieu of 22,994 cases registered during last seven years against those who were involved in illegal hunting and other offences of wildlife laws through officers of the department and courts.

He said that all Regional Deputy Directors Wildlife and Wildlife Officers have been directed to pursue pending court cases on priority basis and make requests to the courts for early decisions.

He told this while talking to media persons during his visit to Lahore Zoo and Safari Park to review the security arrangements and to check the facilities being provided for visitors, here Sunday. On this occasion Deputy Director Wildlife Headquarters Naeem Bhatti, Director Lahore Zoo Shafqat Ali and Deputy Director Wildlife and In-charge Lahore Safari Zoo Park were also present.

Discussing details, Khalid Ayaz Khan said that officers of the department compounded 7952 cases against illegal hunters and offenders under wildlife act and received Rs42.2million as departmental compensation whereas 15,042 cases were decided by the court and Rs24.5 million received as fine.

Answering a question, Khalid Ayaz said that recovery of fine from illegal hunters is not the duty but elimination of the trend of illegal hunting is the responsibility of Wildlife Department. He said that all wildlife officers have already been directed to take every possible step to hinder illegal hunting in Punjab.

He said that those areas should be focused where more problems exist and desired targets and results be achieved at any cost. He further said that all officers of the department have been directed to work efficiently to further raise the image of the department as well as to clear the pendency in courts at the earliest.

DG Wildlife directed the Director Lahore Zoo and DD Lahore Safari Zoo Park to furnish a detailed report of security cameras. He also visited the monitoring room of security cameras and ordered to further enhance the number of cameras.

He further said that cold water arrangement be made for small kids even in the month of Ramazan because kids are exempted from fasting. He specially directed the in-charge of Lahore Safari Park Syed Zafarul Hassan to be vigilant and keep an eye on on-going projects of Zoo Safari for their early completion.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/06/13/3-page/768277-news.html>

MISPLACED PRIORITIES : LESS THAN 1% OF SINDH BUDGET ALLOCATED FOR ENVIRONMENT

The Express Tribune, June 13th, 2016.

Sheharyar Ali

KARACHI: Despite having witnessed deaths of over 1,000 people last year due to the heatwave in Karachi alone, the Sindh government does not seem to be bothered about environment at all. The allocation in this year's provincial budget for environment is less than 1% of the total budget.

In the budget for the fiscal year 2016-2017, the provincial environment department was allocated only Rs155 million in the annual development programme, which is Rs10 million more than last year's allocation. Interestingly, the amount is just 28% of what has been allocated for the reconstruction of the two-kilometre-long Tariq Road.

Five environment-related projects have been mentioned in the budget documents, with an estimated time of their completion between 2017 and 2019. Of these, four projects were conceived earlier in 2012 and in the following years. Not a single penny has been spent on these 'ongoing projects'.

The four ongoing projects, having an estimated total cost of Rs0.3 billion pertain to the study of environment and health impacts of pesticides and chemical fertilisers (approved on May 15, 2012), strengthening of environmental

monitoring system (approved on October 29, 2013), environmental awareness and education for protection and conservation of natural resources (approved on October 29, 2013) and establishment of regional offices for environment protection agency in three cities of the province (approved on December 10, 2015).

The one new project introduced this year, which is related to the establishment of environment information system, is estimated to cost Rs218 million. The amount allocated for it this year is Rs54.5 million.

With world temperature increasing over the years, the government has failed to counter climate change with its existing environment policies and bodies. Not a single megaproject has been announced on priority basis to counter the menace of global warming.

According to ecologist Rafiul Haq, environment issues never get to the agenda of the government perhaps because no revenue is generated through them. “Our cities have been turned into a concrete jungle and this is the reason we have failed at countering climate change.”

Meanwhile, the government has allocated Rs300 million for its coastal development programme. This amount goes to five schemes — four new and one ongoing.

The ongoing scheme is about improving major fishermen settlements and rehabilitation of flood-affected areas in the coastal belt around Thatta and adjoining areas.

Among the rest of the four, two pertain to study projects on sea intrusion impacts and development of a particular island in Keti Bunder. The two others include construction of office building of the coastal development authority and production of palm oil in the coastal belt.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1121384/misplaced-priorities-less-1-sindh-budget-allocated-environment/>

CONSTRUCTION, FISHING PRACTICES NEGATIVELY AFFECTING PAKISTAN’S SEA TURTLE
The Express Tribune, June 16th, 2016.

Haniya Javed

KARACHI: Sea turtles are negatively affected by the construction along Karachi’s beaches. For instance, huts at Sandspit Beach and other construction debris on beaches affect turtles’ presence. Turtles used to frequent the sandy beaches to lay eggs.

The rise in sea pollution, especially plastic waste, is another negative factor as green turtles mistake plastic for seaweed and feed on it. Marine fishing practices in Pakistan are also affecting sea turtles.

World Wildlife Fund – Pakistan (WWF-P) marine fisheries technical adviser Dr Moazzam Ali Khan shared some insights with The Express Tribune as the world celebrates Sea Turtles Day today (June 16).

Pointing out different factors threatening sea turtles, he said that their nests are destroyed by stray dogs, as the canines tend to eat their eggs that they lay on the seashore. “They are also disturbed by the presence of people on the shores. Female turtles go back into waters when they feel disturbances,” he explained.

Dr Moazzam said that out of seven species of sea turtles, five are present in the Indian Ocean and can be found in Pakistan as well. “The green turtle and olive ridley are the most commonly found, while the leatherback, loggerhead and hawksbill are seen very rarely,” he said.

He added that previously up to 95% of green turtles would come to visit Pakistan’s shores to lay their eggs. “This has been minimised,” he said. For the last 13 years, there has been no nesting evidence of olive ridley turtles either.

Fishing nets such as gillnets or trawlers pose the greatest threat to sea turtles. Professor Pirzada Jamal of the University of Karachi's centre of excellence in marine biology said that the biggest problem is that turtles are often caught by fishermen, despite the fact that there are international laws regarding the use of Turtle Excluding Devices (TED) in fishing nets. "The practice is simply not followed here," he lamented.

Adnan Khan, the incharge of marine conservation at the Sindh wildlife department, admitted that though by law every boat is equipped with a TED that filters the caught fish and leaves out the turtles, they are rarely used by fishermen. "They say by using a TED, their catch is affected, which is not true because the catch of fish is not affected by it," he explained, adding that the devices are only there for the sake of European Union officials who come to scrutinise Pakistan's fishing practices and report back.

"We make the whole world a fool by our fishing methods," he admitted. Another source of threat for these marine species is climate change, said Dr Moazzam. The rise in sea temperature affects the sea turtles' reproduction. "Twenty-eight degrees is the suitable temperature for turtles to lay eggs. As the temperature rises much above that, for instance if it hits 33 degrees, only female turtles hatch," he explained.

Dr Moazzam said that since the ban on the export of sea turtles in 1970, their export has been stopped completely. The smuggling that is reported is of an entirely different category of freshwater turtles. Adnan reiterated Moazzam's statement that no smuggling of sea turtles has been reported. Referring to it as an 'assumption', he said that because of the easy availability of sea turtles, there is no need to smuggle them.

He cited the consumption of fresh water turtles in countries such as China, Vietnam and the entire South East Asian region as the reason for their smuggling. "On the other hand, marine or sea turtles are found everywhere else in the world too. They are regularly consumed in Maldives, Sri Lanka and India and can be found globally," said Adnan.

According to the Sindh wildlife department, around 0.2 million baby turtles were released back into the ocean last year, while over 0.6 million turtle nests were protected. According to WWF-P, the Sindh wildlife department has released 6.72 million turtles back into the ocean in the last 30 years and 2.42 million nests have been protected.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1123615/world-sea-turtles-day-construction-fishing-practices-negatively-affecting-pakistans-sea-turtle/>

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION PUNJAB GOVT EARMARKS RS 185M

Business Recorder, June 17, 2016

LAHORE: In the Annual Development Programme 2016-17, the Punjab government has earmarked Rs 185 million for the department of Environment Protection.

The major part of the proposed allocation for 2016-17 will be utilised for provision of development of biodiversity parks in collaboration with district governments, installation of ambient air quality monitoring stations in Punjab, capacity building of EPA Punjab and study for most feasible treatment option for Hudiara Drain Wastewaters.

The government primarily deals with integration of environmental considerations in all economic activities while achieving the goals of economic growth and development. The department intends to create environmental awareness among the masses, monitor and continuously review the Environment Quality Standards, effectively exercise the regulatory control on environmental pollution and impart environmental sustainability through capacity building of provincial departments.

The major initiatives which will be implemented during 2016-17 include: Installation of ambient air quality monitoring stations in 4 cities in the Punjab, Capacity Building of EPA Punjab for enforcement of Environmental Standards in Combined Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs) and Industrial Estates (IEs) under J&C Programme, Construction of model vertical shaft brick kiln in collaboration with the Punjab Brick Kiln Association (PPP Mode) and Rationalization, revision and development of environmental quality standards and industry specific standards.

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 6TH TO JUNE 12TH 2016
EXPERTS FOR FOLLOWING NEQS TO CHECK RAVI POLLUTION
Dawn, June 6th, 2016

Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: To overcome rising water pollution in River Ravi being mainly caused by unchecked and untreated discharge of the city's entire sewage into it, experts suggest that national environmental quality standards (NEQS) as prescribed in the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act-1997 should be followed.

According to a feasibility study conducted by a private consultancy firm in association with the Lahore Development Authority (LDA) and Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa), the NEQS are flow-related and demand 10 times more flow in the water body as compared to the sewage discharges into it.

“In the context of Lahore, the situation becomes critical when several times in a year, the flow in River Ravi becomes equal or less than the sewage being discharged into it. This issue has also been highlighted in the Integrated Master Plan of Lahore – 2021,” the report, which also suggests various remedial measures including, launching of River Ravi Urban Development Project with provision of waste water treatment plants, reads.

The prime objective of the proposed project is not only to protect the river against the pollution caused by municipal waste water generated in Lahore, but also to revive the water body through flow and retention (as practiced in the past). This would allow the government to start various housing, commercial, and recreational activities along the 46km-long stretch along both banks of the Ravi.

In this respect, the report suggests that the effluents treated by the proposed treatment plants should have standard quality before being discharged into the river or be partially used for internal landscape irrigation or for external irrigation of city's “forest area”.

According to the NEQS, as prescribed in Environmental Protection Act-1997, the treated effluent quality for disposal into the inland rivers should be: “Total Suspended Solids (TSS): max 200 mg/L, Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD): max 80 mg/L, Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD): max 150 mg/L and Oil and Grease (O & G): max 10 mg/L.”

The study mentions that the installation of plants—a major component of the proposed project — will encompass the city's existing (combined) sewer and storm water network. It envisages development of a completely new waste water collection and treatment system, with separate sewer and storm water networks.

It also proposes construction of two concrete channels on both sides of the Ravi to collect the wet weather waste water discharge from the existing disposal stations and drains that flow to the river. These channels will also be used to receive the treated dry weather waste water flows.

It recommends a topographic survey of the land area between the river and Motorway/Bund Road.

“The river will be channelised and the proposed top water level will be higher than its present water level. The existing earthen gravity drains in this area, which are used to carry the flows from the disposal stations to the river, would no longer be functional.

New channels or conduits have to be designed within this area in order to convey the treated waste water either to the wet weather channel or to the Ravi River,” the report explains, besides proposing a wet weather channel in this area. The proposal used the old data and imagery gathered by the Nespak and seeks a complete topographical survey for defining and designing all the drains and conduits.

“And the respective World Health Organisation (WHO) Guidelines for water reuse must be followed when the treated municipal waste water effluent is intended to be used for the landscape irrigation,” the report says.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1263024>

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY OBSERVED

Dawn, June 6th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: World Environment Day was observed across the globe, including Pakistan, on Sunday with an aim to emphasise importance of actions needed to improve environment.

The Ministry of Climate Change and other organisations working for protection of environment organised seminars and other events in the four provinces and federal capital.

The day, observed every year on June 5 on the call of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), promotes worldwide awareness and action for protection of environment. Over the years it has grown to be a broad, global platform for public outreach and is widely observed by stakeholders in over 100 countries.

It serves as the ‘people’s day’ for doing something positive for environment and convert individual actions into a collective power that generates an positive impact on the planet earth.

The day is observed to highlight a range of environmental problems, including climate change, waste management, unsustainable consumption, degradation of natural resources and extreme natural disasters.

Last month at the second UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi, “Wild For Life” global campaign was launched, led by the UNEP, the UN Development Programme, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the Convention on the International Trade in Wild Species of Fauna and Flora.

The campaign asks everyone to pledge to end illegal trade in wildlife, from ordinary citizens who can ensure that they do not buy prohibited products, to governments who can pursue a change though implementing effective policies to protect species and ecosystems.

Angola, which is this year’s World Environment Day global host, has declared that it will no longer tolerate the sale of illegal wildlife products and is strengthening legislation and increasing border controls as part of efforts to restore elephant populations devastated by the country’s civil war.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1263079/world-environment-day-observed>

STUDY REVEALS HARM TO FISH FROM TINY BIT OF PLASTIC POLLUTION

Business Recorder, June 06, 2016

Scientists have demonstrated for the first time the devastating physiological and behavioural effects on fish exposed to the tiny bits of plastic pollution clogging the world’s oceans. Lab experiments with European perch larvae showed exposure to microplastic particles at levels present in seas inhibited hatching of fertilised eggs, stunted larval growth, reduced activity levels, and made them more susceptible to predators, increasing mortality rates, researchers said on Thursday.

“For me, the key finding and biggest surprise in this study was the fact that larvae preferentially ate microplastic particles and literally stuffed themselves with the microbeads,” ignoring their natural food source of zooplankton, said marine biologist Oona L?nnstedt of Uppsala University in Sweden.

There is increasing concern among scientists about the effect of pervasive plastic pollution on marine ecosystems. This study was the first to look at direct effects of microplastic particles on fish development, L?nnstedt said.

Microplastic particles, bits of plastic measuring no more than two-tenths of an inch (5 mm), come from large plastic trash that has fragmented into smaller pieces or from manufactured plastics of microscopic size such as microbeads in products like facial soap, body wash and toothpaste.

The European perch, known for its greenish color with black stripes and orange-to-red fins, is an important commercial fish species for coastal and lake fisheries and is also popular for recreational fishing, said Peter Ekl?v, an Uppsala professor of limnology, the study of inland waters.

Perch larvae exposed to microplastic particles lost their ability to use typical perch anti-predator behaviour such as freezing in place, Ekl?v said.

“Microplastics actually seem to interfere with an animal’s natural behaviours, such as feeding choices, activity rates and predator-avoidance strategies,” L?nnstedt said. “This is a serious cause for concern, in particular since microplastic particles often accumulate in shallow coastal areas where many developmental stages of aquatic organisms, not just fish, can be found.”

While this study involved perch, such plastic pollution is likely harmful to many fish species. The researchers said since this study, they have conducted similar experiments with other fish, both tropical (coral reef damselfish) and temperate (pike and flounder), and all showed responses to microplastic particles very similar to the perch.

“If microplastics are indeed affecting organisms both chemically and physically, then this really calls for a ban on microplastic beads in body-care products and cosmetics around the world,” L?nnstedt said. The research was published in the journal Science

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/53815/>

MINING, BLASTING ON THE MARGALLAS ILLEGAL, EPA TELLS SC

Dawn, June 9th, 2016

Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: Since it has not granted environmental approval for mining or stone crushing in the area, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Punjab argued before the Supreme Court on Wednesday that the mining, crushing and stone blasting activities being carried out on the Margalla Hills are illegal

In a report submitted before the Supreme Court through Additional Advocate General Punjab Razzaq A. Mirza, EPA Punjab said that its district officer (Environment) Rawalpindi has reported that 53 stone crushing units were operating on the Margalla Hills against which 53 references have been initiated.

The court’s attention was drawn towards the continued quarrying and cutting down of trees on the Margalla Hills after a discussion on the matter was aired on television on May 19 following which a three-member Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali took up the case.

During the TV programme, continued quarrying had been highlighted and it was revealed that the activity was carried out by influential mafia and well as cement factories.

The programme had included a report in which the reporter had visited Lora in Abbottabad and had discovered the unabated crushing of the hilly areas. The reporter said that the activity had been continuing for 35 years without any check and had damaged the greenery of the hills.

During the proceedings on Wednesday, a representative of a stone crushers association also requested the court to become party in the matter after which the chief justice observed the court wanted to hear the stone crushers to learn under which authority the hills were being blasted with explosives.

The forest cover on Margalla Hills is 17,111 acres and is surrounded by Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Taxila and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT).

After the creation of the Islamabad, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) approached the then provincial government of West Pakistan for the transfer of management of these reserve forests. Hence, of the 17,111 acres of forest, 12,511 was leased out to CDA in 1961 of which 11,870 acres comprise the Margalla Reserve Forest and the Banigala Reserve Forest constitute the remaining 641 acres.

An agreement in this regard was signed between the secretary agriculture, West Pakistan and Horticulture Directorate CDA in 1966. The remaining 4,600 acres are under the control of the Punjab Forest Department.

In its report, EPA Punjab explained that it has initiated legal action against illegal mining and rock crushing on Margalla Hills, Taxila and Rawalpindi. The department has also communicated with the Mines and Minerals Department Punjab about the applicable provisions of the Punjab Environment Protection Act 1997 and other regulations.

In a separate report, the Mines and Minerals Department Punjab explained that mining and crushing are banned in the buffer zone which is 1,000 yards from ICT boundaries towards the Rawalpindi district.

The buffer zone was created by the mineral department to keep the sanctity of the ICT boundary and the National Park. After the creation of the buffer zone, 109 mining leases were deleted from future auctions due to which the mineral department sacrificed a heavy revenue loss, the report said.

The creation of the buffer zone was also challenged by owners of crushing operations before different courts and to stop the illegal mining of limestone in the buffer zone and its surrounding areas. The mineral department lodged 227 FIRs in the Taxila police station.

However, outside the buffer zone, a lease for mining limestone can be granted under the Punjab Mining Concession Rules 2002. At present, some of the limestone mining leases are legally operating whereas others are operating under stay orders from civil courts, the report said.

The Islamabad Electric Supply Company has been asked several times to disconnect the supply of electricity to illegal crushing operations, the report said. It added that since regulatory matters regarding the licensing of explosives were not under the purview of the mines and minerals department, the explosives department of the federal capital had been time and again been requested to take action against the illegal use of explosives.

The mineral department has requested the District Administration and Environment Department to take action against those involved in unauthorised mining and crushing in the buffer zone and its surrounding areas, the report said.

The inspector general of police, Punjab told the court through a report that orders have been passed to DPOs, CPOs and RPOs across Punjab to ensure that orders of the Supreme Court are complied with.

Police has also been deployed in Margalla Hills in order to stop illegal blasting in the mountains.

The court then postponed further proceedings till June 13 with directions to the KP government to submit a report on the matter.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1263659/mining-blasting-on-the-margallas-illegal-epa-tells-sc>

GREEN PAKISTAN PROGRAMME: CLIMATE MINISTRY SEEKS PROVINCES' INPUT

The Express Tribune, June 11th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Climate Change (MoCC) has asked provincial governments and relevant departments to prepare their project concept (PC-I) with a timeframe to include their suggestions in the Green Pakistan Programme (GPP) project.

The ministry has written letters to provincial chief ministers, governors and forest departments seeking their input to implement the GPP project, a brainchild of the prime minister for sustainable socio-economic development while coping with climate issues.

An amount of Rs2 billion have been earmarked for the GPP after the prime minister approved the summary of the MoCC on May 26.

A total of over 10 million trees will be planted during the five-year programme, which will cost Rs10 billion.

The GPP, which will be implemented between 2016 and 2021, has been hammered out on the directives of the prime minister in consultations with all relevant stakeholders.

Resources under the GPP were supposed to be divided between the federating units including Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan governments and the FATA secretariat. The provincial share will be distributed amongst the federating units as per the latest NFC formula.

Of the Rs2 billion, Rs1 billion would be released during the new financial year, starting from July 1 under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), a source in the ministry said.

MOCC officials claim that the programme would be formally launched in July with a tree plantation campaign.

At a weekly briefing on last Tuesday, Deputy Inspector General Forest Munaf Qaimkhani told the media that the MoCC on the instructions of the premier would write a letter to all provincial chief ministers and others to convey the significance of the programme for sustainable socio-economic development the country and coping with climate change-induced disasters, particularly floods, heat waves, landslides, land and river erosions, cyclones, dust storms and desertification.

The MoCC in consultation with provincial forest and wildlife departments and other relevant federal governmental departments and non-governmental organisations, plans to conserve existing forests, planting more trees through community participation to meet international obligations related to forests.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1120315/green-pakistan-programme-climate-ministry-seeks-provinces-input/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 30TH TO JUNE 5TH 2016

'KARACHI AMONG FIVE MOST POLLUTED CITIES IN THE WORLD'

The Express Tribune, June 5th, 2016.

KARACHI: There used to be a time in Karachi when a visitor would toss a coin in the sea near Native Jetty and a young boy would dive in and get it back. The people would see the diver swim through the clear waters and get the coin. However, today the scenario is a mere tale especially for the younger lot.

Speakers at a roundtable conference, titled 'Mission: Save and Rehabilitate Karachi' recalled such happenings from the past when the port city was not as polluted as it is today. The event was jointly organised by National Forum for Environment and Health and Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) at Regent Plaza hotel on Saturday.

Karachi is among the five most polluted cities in the world, it was shared at the conference. Karachi, Rawalpindi and Peshawar are among the top most polluted cities in the world according to July 2015 findings of World Economic Forum, remarked environment management consultant Syed Nadeem Arif.

“According to WHO [World Health Organisation], about 29,000 deaths occur yearly in Pakistan due to environment problems while damages to economy amount to Rs4.5 billion,” he said.

Pakistan may lose its GSP Plus status if it fails to meet the prescribed conventions, as seven out of 27 of these are related to environment, pointed out Gulzar Feroz of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry. He also spoke about use of polythene bags and urged the people to stop their use inside their homes. “It has to start from home,” he said and lamented that the Sindh government does not plan on improving the environment.

The discussion also focused on how waste treatment plants in Karachi have been rejected by previous administrators claiming that the task does not falls in their domain and lack of capacity of sewerage treatment plants. However, points were also raised on the support of effluent treatment plants.

While space and financial constraints limit industries for setting up individual treatment plants, they are willing to extend their support if the government takes action against violators, said Saleemuz Zaman of Korangi Association of Trade and Industry.

On the same note, lack of political will and ownership for Karachi were cited as reasons for the state of environment in Karachi.

Speaking about the oxygen supply in the city, Coastal Restoration Alliance for Biodiversity CEO Rafiul Haq said, “For every Karachiite, there should be seven trees”. For a city with a population of 20 million, at least 140 million trees are required, he added.

On the other hand, architect Tariq Hasan said that cities like Karachi won’t grow vertically unless you go horizontal with the transport [develop a mass-transit system]. This won’t be possible until we get rid of transport mafia, he added.

Sepa director-general Naeem Ahmed Mughal called upon the provincial government to revisit its policy to declare 32 main roads of Karachi commercial, stated a press release sent by the organisation later.

He claimed that such large scale commercialisation has been done without conducting mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of any of the selected thoroughfares.

He also said that instead of declaring so many roads commercial at the same time, any specific area of the city should have been selected by the government for block commercialisation.

However, such selection should only be done after proper EIA of the proposed location, he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1116509/lets-clear-air-karachi-among-five-polluted-cities-world/>

July 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 25TH TO JULY 31ST 2016

DHA TO PLANT 130,000 SAPLINGS

The Express Tribune, July 26th, 2016.

KARACHI: Let's take baby steps, first Defence Housing Authority (DHA), then Karachi and then Pakistan said environmentalist Tofiq Pasha.

"DHA is very happy to announce this campaign in the area, as well as DHA City and the surrounding coastal areas," said DHA administrator Brig Zubair Ahmed at the launch of Green DHA tree plantation campaign on Monday. "We first started this campaign in March 2016 as CSR, with the plantation of 5,000 mangroves. This is a big step that we have taken in the direction of making our environment better," he said. DHA has launched this drive in collaboration with World Wildlife Fund-Pakistan (WWF-P).

According to Pasha, as many as 130,000 saplings will be planted through this campaign, which will include 25,000 trees in DHA, 100,000 in DHA City and 5,000 mangroves. The ones in DHA will be shades and native trees, mainly Kiker and Neem.

"It is a matter of life and death, tree plantation is that important. Humans can't live without trees, whereas trees can live without humans," warned Pasha.

According to him, excessive tree cutting began in the 1980s for the sake of expansion of roads and creating tall buildings. "Look at the plight of Malir, where hundreds of acres of trees, which were heat absorbers, and farmland have been destroyed," he lamented. People have realised their mistake mainly due to last year's heatwave, says Pasha.

Twenty-five per cent of the land mass should be under forest cover, he said. However, Karachi's situation is very different and no exact figure is available to ascertain how much is required to cover the land with trees. "This is a moment of excitement with an unprecedented 130,000 trees to be planted this season.

Pakistan is taking a real lead in this direction; this is a big thing for us and we look forward to continued partnership with DHA on this platform," said Ali Dehlavi, regional head for WWF-P.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1149069/dha-plant-130000-saplings/>

ENVIRONMENT: THE AFTERSHOCKS OF GLOBAL WARMING

Dawn, Sunday Magazine, July 31st, 2016

Hamid Ahmad Mir

For the past three decades climatologists have been raising alarms about global warming and its consequences, and now geologists have also got involved in the issue. World's renowned geologists are of the opinion that rapidly melting glaciers will result in increasing number of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis.

This is based on the premise that ice is extremely heavy — one cubic metre of ice weighs almost one ton and glacier being a colossal sheet of ice exerts tremendous pressure on the surface of the earth beneath their cover. When glaciers start to melt, as we are experiencing today, pressure on the earth's surface on which the glaciers are located is reduced significantly. The lightening of load on the earth's surface allows its mantle to rebound causing the tectonic plates beneath to become unstuck.

According to Patrick Wu, a geologist at the University of Alberta in Canada, the weight of thick ice puts a lot of pressure. This weight suppresses earthquakes, but when the ice melts earthquakes are triggered. Wu goes on to say that many earthquakes that occur in Canada today are related to this ongoing rebound effect that started with the end of the last Ice Age some 10,000 years ago.

In the face of present global warming, rapidly changing climatic factors and speedy deglaciation the foreseeable rebound is expected to be much severe and faster. Experts term this rebound 'Isostatic Rebound'. This process reactivates the fault, increases the seismic activity and lifts pressure on magma chambers that feed volcanoes.

Experts are also of the view that there are implications for parts of the world where glaciers and active faults coincide, including the Hindukush, Himalayas, Alps, Andes, etc. In Pakistan, in the Hindukush and Himalayan regions glacier melt due to climate change coincides with active faults.

Andrew Hynes, tectonics expert at McGill University, puts forward another theory to illustrate an additional relationship between glacier melt and earthquakes when he says that increased glacier melt increases the concentration of fluid in the fault that lubricates the rock, allowing the plates to slide.

An added phenomenon that needs to be kept in mind is that if glacier melt is reducing the stress on earth's surface in glaciated areas, it is also increasing the stress on seafloors due to rapid influx of water.

The massive melting of ice might trigger earthquakes that are strong enough to lead to the seafloor collapsing or an underwater landslide that in turn could generate a tsunami. Melting of glaciers and the subsequent rise in sea level also means that previously exposed continental margins become inundated with water.

Melting of ice in Antarctica is already triggering earthquakes and underwater seafloor slides, says Wu. Although, at present, these events are not getting much attention, these are early warnings of the more serious events that scientists believe will be experienced in near future.

The glaciated areas in northern parts of Pakistan are quite vulnerable to such events as they are not only heavily glaciated but are also located on tectonic fault lines. For the last three decades the area is also experiencing rapid ice melt due to climate change. Climate change induced disasters, like Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (Glofs) and riverine floods, have become common features in the northern parts of the country. Call it a mere coincidence or reality that for the same period earthquake events are also showing an upward trend vis-a-vis the Glofs/floods.

The recent floods and earthquake events in Hindukush and Himalayan regions of Pakistan are clear evidences of this correlation. Over a period of three decades the frequency and intensity of both glacier-melt and occurrence of earthquakes in the northern regions of Pakistan have increased. Apparently both seem to be directly proportional to each other. During August 2013 alone, Chitral district and adjacent areas experienced over a dozen earthquakes of above five magnitude. During December 2015 and first week of January 2016, District Chitral and adjoining glaciated areas experienced over five devastating earthquakes.

In Chitral it has now become a common belief among the local communities that the frequency and devastation of earthquakes in winter is directly proportional to the severity and intensity of floods during the preceding summer. However, this myth of the local communities needs to be evaluated and studied in detail.

Chitral is home to some 542 glaciers with an estimated volume of nearly 269 cubic kilometres and alone counts for nine per cent of the total glacial or ice reserves of Pakistan. According to experts from the field of environment, glaciology and hydrology all glaciers of Pakistan will melt away completely by the year 2035.

As has been mentioned earlier, one cubic metre of glacial ice weighs almost one tonne. If by 2035 all glaciers in Pakistan melt away, as has been predicted by experts keeping in view the present melting rate, then it means removal of 269 billion tonnes of load from the surface of the earth's crust in Chitral alone.

The melting of glaciers in the district is quite evident from increased number of Glofs and the ever increasing water flow in River Chitral (also known as River Kabul in the lower course) for the last two decades. However, the phenomenon needs to be studied in detail.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1274426/environment-the-aftershocks-of-global-warming>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 18TH TO JULY 24TH 2016

MINISTER CONCERNED OVER DISPOSAL OF TOXIC WASTE IN PHULELLI CANAL

Dawn, July 20th, 2016

HYDERABAD: Sindh Minister for Environmental and Coastal Development Dr Sikandar Mandhoro has taken notice of public complaints regarding discharge of untreated industrial, municipal and domestic wastewater/effluent in Phulelli canal.

He expressed his concern over the issue on Tuesday in the commissioner's office while chairing a meeting which also noted that such disposal of untreated wastewater into the freshwater body was seriously harmful to the population living downstream Phulelli canal.

Present at the meeting were the Hyderabad deputy commissioner and other officers of the departments concerned, including the representatives of Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Sindh Industrial Trading Estate (Site), Hyderabad.

The meeting discussed the way forward to resolve the issue of environmental significance.

Sindh Environmental Protection Agency Director General (Sepa) Naeem Ahmed Mughal called for installation of treatment plants in factories.

He emphasised the need for controlling pollution in the municipal and industrial sectors. Factory owners and public should take measures to control environmental pollution and avoid contamination of Phulelli canal. The DG warned that action would be taken against those violating the environmental laws.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1271868/minister-concerned-over-disposal-of-toxic-waste-in-phulelli-canal>

QAIM ALLOWS LOCAL GOVT TO OUTSOURCE GARBAGE DISPOSAL

Dawn, July 21st, 2016

Hasan Mansoor

KARACHI: As the three-day deadline given to the city administration to clean all neighbourhoods passed without any visible improvement on ground, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah on Wednesday asked the local government ministry to outsource the job of garbage lifting to some international firm in at least three district municipal corporations (DMCs) of Karachi.

While presiding over a meeting on garbage lifting issues at CM House, the chief minister asked the relevant authorities to turn Karachi clean in coming weeks by expediting the process to award contracts.

Earlier, Sindh Local Government Minister Jam Khan Shoro informed the meeting that with the government approval, he had invited international tenders for sweeping and garbage lifting in Korangi, East and South DMCs.

“The Solid Waste Management Board has issued a Letter of Intent (LoI) for two DMCs, South and East, to a Chinese firm and soon we will sign an agreement with them,” he said. On this, the chief minister said: “I want you [local government ministry] to expedite the process and sign agreement with the company within three weeks but ensure that work begin within three months after the award of contract.”

Mr Shah said the people of the city had suffered a lot. They faced terrorists, extortionists and hitmen. “I am proud to say that our government has restored peace to this megacity with the help of police, the Rangers and other law enforcement agencies,” he said. He asked the minister to ensure that people get better sanitary facilities in the city at the earliest.

Mr Shoro said 322,357 tonnes of garbage were generated on a daily basis in Karachi East alone. “Under the new outsource arrangement right from front end collection (house to house to dustbin/ katchra kundi), sweeping of roads

and streets and then lifting the garbage from Garbage Transfer Station (GTC) to landfill site would be done by the company,” he said.

He said the contract for this job would be awarded for a period of seven years.

About expenditure of the project, the minister said it would cost to \$9.65 million per year, and the company would continue to work for seven years if the Karachi East DMC was satisfied with its performance.

On DMC South, Mr Shoro said it generated 491,590 tonnes of municipal solid waste on a daily basis. The LoI had been issued to the same company for \$14.254 million a year. It would also be a seven-year contract, he added.

He said that the company would provide baskets to the houses for garbage and then there would be covered garbage dumps from where it would be collected. “For the first time, mechanical garbage collection and lifting will be made by a private company,” he said, adding that this would give an end to corruption in the sector.

Officials said similar action was being taken for garbage lifting in Korangi district. Mr Shah was earlier scheduled to visit different parts of the city and take action against the authorities concerned as per his previous warning to the top bureaucrats. But officials told the waiting reporters that the visit was cancelled.

Meanwhile, a delegation of leading industrialists called on the chief minister to share with him the problems their industries faced in receiving adequate water.

The chief minister, according to a spokesman, formed a committee to review how certain controlled connections of subsoil water could be given to them while ensuring that they were at least 200ft away from the KWSB mains.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1272106>

CALL FOR WATER CHLORINATION AS NAEGLERIA THREAT LOOMS

Dawn, July 21st, 2016

KARACHI: Medical experts have demanded for proper chlorination of water, as Karachi fears more cases of *Naegleria fowleri* due to lack of proper chlorination of potable water being supplied to the city by the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) .

As per a recent survey, 40 per cent water samples collected from different parts of Karachi were not properly chlorinated, increasing chances of fatal diseases caused by *Naegleria floweri*.

Naegleria is an amoeba (single-celled living organism) commonly found in warm freshwater (ponds, tanks, lakes, rivers, and hot springs) and soil. Only one species (type) of *Naegleria* infects people: *Naegleria fowleri*. *Naegleria fowleri* infects people when water containing the amoeba enters the body through the nose. This typically occurs when people go swimming or diving in warm freshwater places, like lakes and rivers.

The *Naegleria fowleri* amoeba then travels up the nose to the brain where it destroys the brain tissue.

However, one cannot be infected with *Naegleria fowleri* by drinking contaminated water. *Naegleria fowleri* does not survive in seawater and has not been detected in seawater.

In very rare instances, *Naegleria* infections may also occur when contaminated water from other sources (such as inadequately chlorinated swimming pool water or contaminated tap water) enters the nose, for example when people submerge their heads or cleanse their noses during religious practices (like ablution), and when people irrigate their sinuses (nose) using contaminated tap water.

Naegleria fowleri has not been shown to spread via water vapour or aerosol droplets (such as shower mist or vapour from a humidifier). According to focal person for *Naegleria fowleri* Dr Zafar Mehdi, 40 per cent of water samples collected from Gulberg, Gadap, Nazimabad, North Nazimabad, New Karachi, Shah Faisal Colony and Orangi lacked proper chlorination.

He said it was the responsibility of the KWSB to add proper chlorine in water before its supply to citizens.

Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) leader Dr Qaiser Sajjad said: “As Muslims we have to clean our noses while ablution (Ghusil and Wuzu) and it demands that water we use should be properly boiled or chlorinated.”

He said the KWSB should ensure proper chlorination of potable water at pumping station level however, the citizens could use water purification tablets and powders commonly available at medical stores.

He told the PPI that household bleach could also be used, but as most people did not know how to use it; therefore, water purification tablets and powders were best alternative to be used in water tanks of homes, offices, mosques, hospitals at individual and community levels.

Professor of Pathology at the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Medical University Larkana, Prof Dr Akbar Ali Soomro said that there was a need for solid steps for chlorination of water.

He said although through boiling water properly it could be made safe from *Naegleria fowleri*, chlorination was cost effective method of water disinfection being used worldwide.

However, citizens should also take measures at their level to use clean water to minimise risk of this disease. Such steps may include using water that has been previously boiled for 1 minute and left to cool. At elevations above 6,500 feet, boil water for three minutes.

The people can use a filter designed to remove some water-borne germs. The label may read “NSF 53” or “NSF 58”. Filter labels that read “absolute pore size of 1 micron or smaller” are also effective.

Citizens can disinfect water using chlorine bleach, he said.

Sodium hypochlorite is the active ingredient in common household bleach. Sodium hypochlorite is the source of chlorine in bleach. Most off-the-shelf bleach products will contain in between four and six per cent available chlorine. It needs just two drops of bleach per one litre or quart of water to get it chlorinate. When using household bleach for disinfecting water, add two drops of bleach per quart or litre of water. Stir it well, he added.

Let the mixture stand for a half hour before use. If the water is cloudy with suspended particles: First filter the water as best you can, and then double the amount of bleach you add to the water. However, calcium hypochlorite is widely used to chlorinate water.

A one-pound bag of calcium hypochlorite in granular form will treat up to 10,000 gallons of drinking water. Calcium hypochlorite is one of the best chemical disinfectants for water, better than household bleach by far. It destroys a variety of disease causing organisms, including bacteria, yeast, fungus, spores, and viruses.

However, Dr Merajul Huda Siddqui, who is also the chief of Jamaat-i-Islami Sindh chapter talking to PPI said that in Karachi not only the water being supplied to citizens was non-chlorinated, but it was also mixed with sewage due to leaking sewerage lines that run parallel to clean water lines in different localities.

He said he had visited many countries of the world where the governments supply clean potable water to citizens. He said however in Pakistan and especially in Karachi there was a thriving business of ‘mineral water’ earning billions of rupees because citizens were not provided with clean potable water.

He said if citizens were given clean potable water it would deal a blow to mineral water business. He said the higher authorities should look into the vested interests in this regard that do not want improvement of quality of potable water.

He said besides *Naegleria fowleri*, coliform bacteria were commonly found in water used for drinking for majority of citizens in Karachi which was a matter of grave concern.

He demanded that clean and chlorinated water was supplied to citizens, especially Karachiites to save them from diseases, including *Naegleria fowleri*.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1272105/call-for-water-chlorination-as-naegleria-threat-looms>

PAKISTAN'S FIRST URBAN FOREST MAKES WAY IN CONCRETE JUNGLE

The Express Tribune, July 21st, 2016.

Mudaser Kazi

KARACHI: With the massacre of greenery to accommodate big concrete structures, the government has turned a blind eye towards the decreasing number of trees in the city. One man has, however, embarked on a journey to make the city green by growing Pakistan's first urban forest in Clifton Block 5, adjacent to Neher-e-Khayyam.

The project seems small but if six to seven parks in Karachi are converted into forests it would change the ecological landscape of the city, remarked entrepreneur Shahzad Qureshi.

"I aim to restore the native forests of the region and around three years from now there would be a self-sustaining 15 to 20 feet deep forest. It would be so dense that people won't be able to step into it," he added.

Qureshi was inspired to grow an urban forest when he saw a Ted-talk by an Indian eco-entrepreneur Shubhendu Sharma in August, last year.

Sharma's company Afforest is a service provider for creating natural and native forests. "Our mission is to bring back our lost forests, we do it by creating them," reads the description on the company's website.

Sharma practices Miyawaki methodology to plant forests which helps grow them ten times faster than usual. He has played an integral role in growing more than 100 small-scale forests in different parts of India, Singapore, Netherlands and USA at homes, schools and factories to improve air quality and increase biodiversity.

Qureshi then contacted Sharma and invited him to Pakistan to work on a collaborative pilot urban forest project in Karachi, as more than a 1,000 people lost their lives in the heat wave last year due to lack of greenery in the city. Sharma visited Pakistan in November last year and worked on the project with Qureshi.

"This small piece is just a pilot project to make us aware of the problems which can occur while growing a forest in Sindh," said Sharma while speaking to The Express Tribune. "It's beginning of the beginning of a bigger dream."

The forest has about 1,280 plants, ranging from flower, fruits to canopy trees, informed Qureshi. There are around 45 species of trees that have been planted in an area of 400 yards, he added. The park in which the forest is located is over an acre in area.

The land on which the pilot project has been initiated on is government-owned, said Qureshi. He then contacted the horticulture department who gave him the permission to use certain patch of the abandoned area to grow the forest. The Sindh forest department helped me access a few native tree species from their own nurseries, he said.

The cost for the pilot project was quite high however it can be reduced, he remarked, adding that he is financing the forest and its maintenance at his own expense.

Speaking about the importance of soil, he said powerful soil is better for the growth of the plants. We must put all our organic trash in the soil to strengthen it as it provides adequate energy to the soil and then to plant when it is decaying, he explained. "The organic trash provides life to plants and it helps attract insects, which are integral in creating a natural cycle.

According to him, the sewerage water is also useful for plants contrary to what people might think. We have plenty of such water which we are draining into sea but it can be used for the plants, he added.

"It sometimes gives me goose bumps when I see the plants growing which I planted," he said while speaking about his journey so far.

Speaking about environmental degradation, Sharma remarked "The damage done to earth is repairable. We believe that our forest can be brought back, but only if we act now."

Qureshi also encouraged the people to start taking ownership of the environment and play their part in improving it. We have plenty of parks and empty places around, people should take the initiative of planting as many trees as possible, he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1145932/breathing-space-pakistans-first-urban-forest-makes-way-concrete-jungle/>

TREES' CUTTING AT MARGALLA HILLS: SC SEEKS COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

Business Recorder, 21 July 2016

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Punjab, KP and Islamabad Capital Territory administration to submit a comprehensive report after defining territorial limitation of Margalla Hills National Park.

Resuming the hearing of suo motu on cutting of trees of Margalla hills and Lora (KP) by the stone crushing mafia, a two-member bench headed by Chief Justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali hinted that the court shall take severe action against those involved in showing negligence over 80 per cent illegal stone crushing in the Margalla Hills.

During the course of the hearing, Additional Attorney General for Pakistan Waqar Rana clarified that the SUPARCO has provided satellite imagery of the Margalla Hills free of cost saying the SUPARCO has extended all possible cooperation within a short span of time. Rana requested the court to grant two weeks time for examination of the satellite imagery of the Margalla Hills.

The Chief Justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali remarked that during the last three years Margalla Hills were destroyed for stone crushing, adding that unfortunately responsible persons remained silent over the illegal activity for their vested interests. Seeking a report from the Punjab and KP provinces, the bench also asked the ICT administration to submit report in the matter and adjourned the hearing till first week of the August.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/07/21/9-page/778216-news.html>

CLEANING UP KARACHI

Dawn, July 23rd, 2016

A CITY of 20 million like Karachi generates at least 20,000 tonnes of solid waste per day, calculated as per the internationally accepted formula.

The Sindh chief minister was thus either deluding himself or pouring salt on the wounds of Karachi's citizens when he gave officials a three-day deadline to clear garbage from a city that has not witnessed a clean-up operation of the municipal kind for an extremely long time.

He reinforced his instructions by saying that he had provided sufficient funds for the purpose to the KMC, the District Municipal Corporations and deputy commissioners and threatened to terminate the officials concerned and the sanitation employees who "do not perform despite drawing salaries".

Of course, no one has attempted to undertake the Sisyphean task that has been demanded. Since then, in fact, there has been talk of outsourcing garbage collection to a Chinese company.

Even for a city that has long been a byword for urban decay, the decline of Karachi over the last few years has been marked, particularly since the local government system has been in abeyance.

Entire streets are being encroached upon by piles of garbage that grow by the day.

A serious effort to tackle this chronic problem entails getting down to the brass tacks and first setting up a committee with relevant, informed members to assess the situation so that a well-thought-out course of action can be devised.

Contrary to the chief minister's assertions, the funds allocated to waste collection and disposal are grossly inadequate. Moreover, for years there has been little investment in equipment and training, and manpower consists almost solely of political appointees who work to further their party's objectives rather than discharge the duties they are being paid to do.

Therefore, plans for proper personnel induction and SOPs need to be drawn up. There is no quick fix — not even a Chinese one — for such a prolonged dereliction of duty that has reduced Karachi to a vast, urban slum.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1272640>

CM GIVES ANOTHER DEADLINE FOR DISPOSAL OF CITY GARBAGE

Dawn, July 24th, 2016

Bhagwandas

KARACHI: As the deadline given to the city administration and civic agencies to clean the metropolis within three days had expired without any success, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah on Saturday told the officials concerned to complete the task within two months.

The fresh order came after the chief minister inspected the ongoing garbage removal drive in various parts of the city. He made the announcement while talking to the media at the Karachi airport just before leaving for Dubai.

Mr Shah said he knew that the period of three days granted to the local authorities earlier was insufficient but the move was intended to activate them on a war footing. He said he was happy to witness that the situation finally began to improve.

Finding the civic agencies and the city administration being fully activated, the chief minister said they were being given two months to clean the city. He expressed the hope that the task would be completed within the given deadline as he did not intend to extend it any further.

Certainly, he said, it was an uphill task to remove the garbage dumped on roadsides and transfer it to the landfill sites besides lifting municipal waste being generated on a daily basis and ensure their proper disposal. Also, the four major storm water drains passing through the metropolis was being desilted, he said.

Earlier, the chief minister accompanied by Sindh Local Bodies Minister Jam Khan Shoro and other officials drove to various areas including the Boat Basin nullah, Mai Kolachi, M.A. Jinnah Road, Old Sabzi Mandi, Hassan Square, Bait-ul-Mukarram mosque area, Stadium Road, Manzoor Colony and Qayumabad nullahs.

Mr Shah also got down from his vehicle to witness the excavation / de-silting work being carried out at the Boat Basin and Qayyumabad nullahs and directed the local government minister to ensure that the garbage being taken out of the nullahs was not left along the drains but shifted to the landfill sites.

He announced that he would revisit the areas and after assessing the cleanliness situation would give prizes to the officials concerned who performed well while stern action would be taken against the officers whose areas remained filthy.

Karachi Commissioner Ejaz Ahmed, Karachi Metropolitan Corporation administrator Laeeq Ahmed and other officials accompanied the chief minister during the tour.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1272719>

FOUR CLIMATE MINISTRY DEPARTMENTS WITHOUT PERMANENT HEADS

The Express Tribune, July 24th, 2016.

Shahzad Anwar

ISLAMABAD: At least four departments of the Ministry of Climate Change have been functioning without permanent heads for an extended period of time.

Meanwhile, work at the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) has almost come to a standstill due to the lack of a permanent head.

“The Ministry of Climate Change had forwarded the names of five shortlisted candidates to the Federal Public Service Commission for test and interviews for the slot of the EPA director general, but no progress has been made in hiring despite a lapse of six months,” an official in the ministry told The Express Tribune on the condition of anonymity.

“Such lethargic attitude and delays without any cogent reason are hampering activities of the environment body,” he said adding that the delay has pushed vital decisions and issues related to the environment on the back burner.

The official said that climate ministry’s three other departments — the Global Change Impact Studies Centre, the Zoological Survey of Pakistan and the Pakistan Environmental Planning and Architectural Consultants — were also being on an ad-hoc basis with unrelated officials holding additional charge of top slots.

The Pak-EPA’s director general slot was being run by ministry’s environment wing Director General Irfan Tariq as additional head after the former DG moved to head the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme in Sri Lanka.

“In practical, the Pak-EPA has become a rudderless body right now and environmental violators feel free to do whatever they want in the absence of an active environmental watchdog,” an official at the Pak-EPA said.

Moreover, the Global Climate Impact Study Centre, the research arm of the climate ministry, was being run on an ad-hoc basis since the retirement of its executive director Dr Ishfaq Ahmed several years ago.

The centre has an important role in capacity-building, policy analysis and information dissemination on issues related to climatic change issues. The centre also assesses the impact of climate change on key socio-economic sectors such as water, food, agriculture, energy, forestry, health, ecology and recommends adaptation and mitigation measures.

The Zoological Survey of Pakistan, another important wing of the climate ministry, has also been functioning without a permanent head since 2008. From 2008 to 2013, it was run either by deputationists or officers with additional charge.

Similarly, the Pakistan Environmental Planning and Architectural Consultants, set up by the government in 1974 as a consultancy firm for planning and designing urban infrastructure, the architectural design of buildings and structural and environmental engineering, has also been functioning without a permanent head for three years.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1148019/environmental-issues-four-climate-ministry-departments-without-permanent-heads/>

10,000 ILLEGAL HOUSES OVER GUJJAR NULLAH TO BE DEMOLISHED

The Express Tribune, July 24th, 2016.

KARACHI : In yet another announcement to restart the anti-encroachment drive on Gujjar Nullah, the local administration vowed to remove 10,000 illegal houses built over the natural drain.

District Central deputy commissioner Captain (retd) Fariduddin Mustafa announced on Saturday that the anti-encroachment drive has kicked off from Café Pyala in Gulberg Town. A similar drive was launched last year in August with much fanfare but it died down without achieving any significant results. The original length of Gujjar Nullah, which starts from Haji Mureed Goth and ends in North Karachi Sector 11-J, was 13 kilometres and it was 210 feet wide, pointed out Mustafa, adding that the width has been reduced to only five feet at many locations due to encroachments.

“For now, we will only make it 60 feet wide,” he said, adding that, on Saturday, 400-metre-wide space was cleared. The encroachers have been warned to vacate the spot by Monday. There are around 30,000 illegal houses over Gujjar Nullah and 10,000 of these will be demolished, he claimed.

A 10-foot-wide road will be built on both sides of the drain after the encroachment drive, he promised. The current operation is, however, not the part of the great Gujjar Nullah resettlement project as that involved the rehabilitation of the affected families, Mustafa clarified. “Currently, we are only cleaning the nullah bed.”

Realising his earlier deadline of three days was unrealistic to clean up Karachi, Sindh Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah has given the local administration two months to lift all the garbage.

“I had given them [local administration] three days just to wake them up from slumber and assess their capacity,” said Shah, speaking to the media at Karachi airport shortly before he left for Dubai on Saturday. “I am giving them more time now to clean the city.” Merely three days to clean this megacity of all the garbage is not only difficult but also impossible, he said. “I am happy to see the administration worked hard and this is just the beginning of the work,” he said. “[The cleanliness drive] will be successfully completed within two months.”

Shah pointed out that the city administration was seeking at least six months to clean the city. “[But] I will not give them so much time,” he said. “This is a big job. They have to lift the accumulated garbage and debris along with regular sweeping and lifting of household waste,” he said. Moreover, the de-silting of four storm water drains and nullahs was also in progress and the garbage excavated from the nullahs has to be transported to landfill sites, he added.

Earlier, the chief minister visited different areas of the city where cleanliness work was in progress. His entourage, which included Karachi AIG Mushtaq Maher, Karachi commissioner Aijaz Khan, Karachi Metropolitan Corporation administrator Laiq Ahmed and some municipal commissioners, paid a visit to Boat Basin nullah, Mai Kolachi Road, MA Jinnah Road, Old Sabzi Mandi, Hassan Square, Baitul Mukarram Masjid, Stadium Road, Manzoor Colony and Qayyumabad nullah.

Shah got off his jeep at Boat Basin and Qayyumabad nullahs where de-silting had been carried out. He directed Sindh local government minister Jam Khan Shoro, who joined him at Boat Basin, to ensure the lifting of filth and garbage dung from the nullahs and transportation to the landfill sites. "If it is left along the embankments of the nullahs again, it will fall back," he pointed out. The chief minister offered cash prizes to those officers who ensure cleanliness in their areas.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1147959/operation-clean-10000-illegal-houses-gujjar-nullah-demolished/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 11TH TO JULY 17TH 2016

KARACHI'S AIR QUALITY MONITORING SYSTEM INOPERATIVE FOR FIVE YEARS

Dawn, July 11th, 2016

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: Despite growing global concerns over air pollution and the fact that Karachi has been declared the fifth most polluted city in a World Health Organisation (WHO) report released early this year, the government seems to be in no hurry to re-start environmental monitoring stations that have remained idle for the past five years due to lack of funds, it emerged on Sunday.

According to sources, the city has three dysfunctional environmental monitoring stations (EMS); two of them installed at the head office of Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) in Korangi and the office of deputy commissioner of district central in North Nazimabad respectively, while the third is a mobile environmental monitoring station.

These systems, they said, were provided to Sepa in Sindh and to other provincial government departments as part of the Rs1.23bn project launched by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency in collaboration with the Japan International Corporation Agency (Jica) in 2007.

JICA's share in the project was 79pc (973m) in the project. The federal government bore 21pc (260m) while the Sindh government was to provide technical assistance and environmental monitoring equipment.

The project's objective, sources said, was to measure air pollutant levels especially in the city's industrial zones.

"The stations did carry out air monitoring for some years before they fell into disuse following devolution under which the project was transferred from the federal government to the provincial government without any financial assistance," said additional director general of Sepa S.M. Yahya, adding that the stations operated till 2012.

The government, he said, now had approved a project to restart their operation. "The budget of the Rs140m project titled 'Strengthening of environmental management system' has been approved and the Pakistani representative of the Japanese company earlier involved in the project has been asked to carry out repairs and maintenance of the monitoring systems," he said.

To a question about the amount required to run these stations and whether Sepa has the technical capacity to run these systems, he said Rs5m was required annually to run them.

"Some staff posted at other stations will be called in, besides a few new appointments would be made in the coming months. Hopefully, air quality monitoring will resume within three months," he said.

It is noteworthy that Sindh environment minister Dr Sikandar Mandhro while responding to some environmental concerns raised by lawmakers in the assembly, had told the house in Feb earlier this year that the EMS would be operational in a few months.

According to a 2016 WHO report, Karachi is the fifth most polluted city in the world followed by Peshawar and Rawalpindi.

Thirteen of the top 20 most polluted cities in the world, the report says, are in India. The report ranked 1,600 cities in 91 countries for the quality of their air, which is measured for concentrations of particulate matters (PM 10 and PM 2.5), two major harmful pollutants that can cause serious diseases.

The study, sources said, was not the first report showing the alarming levels of air pollution posing a direct threat to human health. In 2013, an Aga Khan University and Hospital (AKUH) study had linked a striking rise in emergency room visits and hospitalisations for cardiovascular diseases to higher levels of air pollutants in Karachi.

An independent environmental consultant Saquib Ejaz Hussain observed: “Karachi is one of the few cities in the world that has no air quality index, a number used by government agencies to communicate to the public how polluted the air currently is or how polluted it is to become. The air quality monitoring exercises of Sepa were erratic and the agency never analysed or documented its data to predict future pollution levels.”

The government job wasn't just to monitor air pollutant levels but also to take measures to control them, he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1269978>

URBAN FORESTRY: FOR ANIMALS, HOME IS WHERE THE TREE IS

The Express Tribune, July 11th, 2016.

Ferya Ilyas

KARACHI: Rapid development and the subsequent chopping of trees in Karachi has not only created problems for residents but also damaged the habitat of many birds and animals that lived here. Wildlife diversity, which is crucial for environmental stability, has reduced to such an extent that one doesn't listen to birds chirping in the morning anymore.

As environmental activists make a case for more trees in Karachi, we take a look at how the absence of greenery forces wildlife away from the city and as a result disturbs the system that keeps all living things alive.

Umair Shahid, a conservationist working with World Wildlife Fund Pakistan (WWF-Pakistan), says protecting wildlife is essential because birds, animals and insects help maintain the ecological balance which supports life. “Snakes protect rice crops from mice; birds control pests and protect fruits. Our ecosystem works because there's a balance,” he says.

In agreement, wildlife expert at International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Tahir Rasheed says every living creation has a role to play and together they make the food web. “If we remove even one organism, there will be serious consequences. For instance, if we have fewer birds, there will be more insects and the use of harmful pesticides will increase. Certain birds and insects help in seed dispersal; if they disappear, there will be food security problems. Birds that feed on termites help in controlling the damaging pests,” he elaborates.

If this balance is disturbed, Rasheed says, human beings will suffer because ultimately the food chain ends with them.

An ecologist associated with IUCN, Nadeem Mirbahar, says wildlife is also important for recreation which has a positive impact on mental health. “Looking at animals or interacting with them gives you peace of mind. That is why zoos and animal sanctuaries are established in the middle of cities so people are not deprived of this experience,” he states.

Trees play a crucial role in maintaining balance in our ecosystem by providing shelter, food, breeding ground and protection to animals. “It is such a beautiful system in which one tree is used by different animals in multiple ways.

Animals make homes in tree trunks, roots and cavities. They eat their leaves and fruits as well as other smaller animals living in them. They reproduce and bring up their children in the protective environment. And in case of a threat, camouflage in them,” IUCN expert Rasheed explains.

To ensure a healthy balance of wildlife in Karachi, WWF’s Shahid says it is important to restore native trees. “There’s a relation between the local trees and local animals established over the years and they support each other. To sustain one, we have to protect the other,” he states.

While trees are valuable when alive, Rasheed from IUCN says they are equally important when decaying or dead. “Animals continue to live in trees and feed on them as they decompose,” he says.

Just like humans, wildlife stays in an area as long as they have food, water and shelter and when these basic necessities cease to exist, they move on. With the number of trees in Karachi only decreasing, it comes as no surprise that many native species are no longer found in the metropolis. “If you speak to the older residents, they tell you numerous species of birds have vanished from the city. Earlier, one could easily see koel, kingfisher, jungle babbler, purple sunbird and bulbul flying around in the city,” Shahid says, lamenting that now we are only left with eagles and crows.

Shahid, however, shares there are small animal sanctuaries in different areas around the city thriving because of the greenery in those locations. “A wide variety of natives trees are found inside the University of Karachi and Karachi Zoo and you can find diverse species of birds there.

There’s a place in the KDA Officers Cooperative Housing Society near Stadium Road which is an excellent spot for bird watching in the morning. In Gulshan-e-Iqbal’s Aziz Bhatti park, there is a pond made from seepage water and I encountered 21 birds species there during the last winter,” Shahid lists.

On protecting wildlife in the face of unregulated development in Karachi, IUCN’s Mirbahar criticises the city planners’ disregard for urban ecosystem management which calls for preservation of biodiversity in the area chosen for development work.

“Sometimes the Environmental Impact Assessment reports lie about the extent to which biodiversity is hurt by a project; in other cases, the reports only look at threatened species (critically endangered, endangered and vulnerable animals) and ignore scores of other species which are equally important,” he says, stressing that no animal can be taken out of the food chain.

“Animals are part of the ecosystem and provide important services invisible to human eyes and when their habitat is damaged, they migrate,” Mirbahar says, regretting that while we enjoy sitting on a bench under a tall tree when we travel abroad, we don’t support such urban features in our own country.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1138973/urban-forestry-animals-home-tree/>

COAL DUST KILLS 23,000 PER YEAR IN EU: REPORT

Business Recorder, July 11, 2016

Lung-penetrating dust from coal-fired power plants in the European Union claims some 23,000 lives a year and racks up tens of billions of euros in health costs, an NGO report said on Tuesday. Even as the bloc shifts towards renewable sources like wind and Sun energy, coal still accounted for 18 percent of the EU’s greenhouse gas emissions in 2014 and a quarter of its electricity mix in 2015, said the analysis.

Emissions from 257 power plants for which data was available “were associated with 22,900 premature deaths in 2013,” said the report entitled “Europe’s dark cloud: How coal-burning countries make their neighbours sick”.

There are a total of 280 coal-fired plants. The study was compiled by researchers from four green energy lobby groups: the Health and Environment Alliance, the WWF, Climate Action Network Europe and Sandbag.

In addition to deaths, the report blamed coal plant pollution for nearly 12,000 new cases of chronic bronchitis and more than half-a-million asthma attacks in children in the EU in 2013.

The medical treatment required, as well as reduced productivity caused by absence from work, amassed “substantial costs” of 32.4 billion to 62.3 billion euros (\$36 billion to \$70 billion), said the report.

About 83 percent of deaths, some 19,000 in total, were blamed on inhalation of fine particulate matter, air-borne particles so small – under 2.5 micrometres in diameter – that they can enter deep into the lungs and bloodstream.

“Most common causes of death connected to particulate matter exposure are strokes, heart disease, chronic lung disease or lung cancer,” said the report.

It warned the particles “are transported hundreds of kilometres and across national borders, impacting the health of people both within the country of production and further afield.”

The report listed the EU’s worst offenders, attributing 4,690 premature deaths to coal power stations in Poland, 2,490 to Germany, 1,660 to Romania, 1,390 to Bulgaria and 1,350 to Britain.

The five countries most affected by pollution from their own as well as neighbouring countries were Germany with 3,630 deaths, Italy with 1,610, France with 1,380, Greece with 1,050, and Hungary with 700.

“Air pollution is responsible for millions of deaths world-wide,” Roberto Bertollini, the World Health Organisation (WHO) representative to the EU said in a statement.

“Higher temperatures from climate change will exacerbate the problem.”

A similar study in the United States had attributed more than 13,000 premature deaths to coal pollution, while Indian research has blamed as many as 115,000 premature deaths and 20 million asthma cases per year on coal.

In Paris last December 195 nations agreed to curb climate-altering greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas in a bid to limit global warming to “well below” two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) from pre-industrial levels.

<http://www.brecorder.com/fuel-a-energy/193/64035/>

URBAN FORESTRY: REVENGE OF THE FALLEN (TREE)

The Express Tribune, July 12th, 2016.

Ferya Ilyas

KARACHI: Trees in Karachi continue to fall prey to development and commercialization and as the vital green cover shrinks day by day, it is important that concerned citizens question authorities for every tree removed. We speak to government officials and environmental activists to find what citizens can do to stop unauthorised tree cutting in their neighbourhoods.

Amber Alibhai, General Secretary of NGO Shehri-CBE, says KMC’s Parks and Horticulture Department is responsible to look after trees on all public spaces and citizens should report tree cutting violations to local police station and parks department of their zone. “The complaint must have photographs as evidence and should be copied to Commissioner Karachi, Administrator KMC, and Director General Parks and Horticulture Department,” Alibhai advises.

She also calls on the citizens to be vigilant that invasive species like Conocarpus are not planted in the city.

Abdullah Mushtaq, Director General for KMC's Parks and Horticulture department, says the civic body doesn't have the authority to take action on its own but with the help of police, they try to curb illegal tree cutting. "We don't have any law, force of our own or magisterial powers. We file FIRs with the police and work with them to catch fellers. We recently caught people cutting trees red-handed late at night," he shares.

Environmental specialist Saquib Ejaz Hussain says there are no regulations or guidelines in place to govern trees in Karachi. "There's no specific law for the city; there is one for forests in Sindh province but even that is not adequate," he says

Hussain says because there are no local rules, international best practices are looked into to manage trees in the city. "For instance, these guidelines dictate that if a tree is being cut, it should be compensated with at least five trees," he explains.

In the absence of city-centric laws, Mushtaq says when KMC files FIRs against illegal tree cutting, it argues the action damaged government property and caused monetary loss – money invested in planting and taking care of that tree – and demands adequate punishment for these crimes.

Environmental specialist Hussain says the issue is not as simple as planting five trees to compensate for one chopped tree. "Pakistan is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity which calls for maintaining the diverse variety of living things that exist in our environment. When we cut trees and talk about replanting them, we never discuss the overall ecological loss and how to compensate it sufficiently," he says.

The specialist says multiple species such as Neem, Lignum and Badaam are chopped in Karachi for development purposes but are replaced with only one species – Conocarpus. "Planting it is illegal and against the principle of sustainability because in technical terms, Conocarpus is not even a tree, it is a shrub," Hussain remarks.

As an expert who compiles Environmental Impact Assessment reports for developmental work, Hussain says he suggests keeping in mind the tree's age, canopy size and species to properly compensate for the loss. "I say don't stop at five trees for one; plant ten if you have to," he states.

Apart from the loss of biodiversity, Hussain says cutting trees also have an impact on carbon balance. "In Karachi, we see vegetation is removed for construction of housing schemes and apartments; this means we are reducing carbon absorbers (trees) and increasing carbon emissions (human activity). The exact scale of carbon misbalance should be understood and acknowledged to ensure sustainable planning,"

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1139623/urban-forestry-revenge-fallen-tree/>

HUNDREDS OF TREES CHOPPED DOWN TO WIDEN KOHAT-HANGU ROAD

Dawn, July 16th, 2016

Zulfiqar Ali

PESHAWAR: Poor planning coupled with lack of coordination among various departments has led to the destruction of hundreds of trees after the Pakhtunkhwa Highways Authority started work on the widening of 24 kilometers road between Kohat and Hangu.

The Office of the Divisional Forest Officer in Kohat confirmed that 645 native and imported trees on both sides of the road were fallen, while 639 more trees had been marked for harvesting.

An official said trees on both sides of the highway were notified as protected forests.

Various species, including sheesham, wild mulberry and eucalyptus were planted along the road around two decades ago. Now, the authority is clearing young trees that would severely underestimate environmental impacts, said a conservator.

“Fresh plantation along the highway will take at least two to three decades to become mature because most of the species are slow growing,” the official said, while showing serious reservations about the cutting of green trees.

“Losses to the environment and provincial kitty can be prevented only through long term planning,” he said. But PHA officials said the department had planted trees without getting the authority’s permission, which was illegal.

Work on the dualisation of the highway from Sherkot to Hangu was started in October 2015 with an estimated cost of Rs1.5 billion and completion date is December 2018. A section of the highway passes through the area, which is famous for growing high quality of guavas.

The widening of Sherkot-Hangu section is part of the dualisation of the highway from Kohat to Thall Town adjacent to Kurram and North Waziristan Agencies. First phase of construction of dual carriageway from Kohat city to Sherkot had already been completed.

The PHA and forest department are in dispute over the removal of the trees on both sides of the road that caused delay in the project.

DFO Shakeel said his department would issue no objection certificate for cutting the remaining 639 trees only when the PHA showed progress on the previous work, where trees were chopped off.

The authority is asking for immediate harvesting of all trees to expedite work on the project.

A relevant engineer said the delay in issuance of NOC for cutting trees had slowed down the project.

“The authority has been waiting for NOC for the last six months,” he said.

Like the forest department, he said, telecommunication and power supply companies were also reluctant to remove their transmission lines from the thoroughfare.

Argument of the PHA officials is that the forest department had planted trees without seeking permission from the relevant department.

The official said rules and regulations of the PHA didn’t authorise any government or private entity to plant trees or build infrastructure 110 feet on either side of the road.

“The forest department is bound to obtain NOC from the authority before plantation,” he said.

The PHA officials, too, have reservations about the plantation of eucalyptus along the highway saying its roots caused damages to the foundation of the road.

“Planting trees close to the road is unsafe because it can be hazardous in accidents,” an official said.

He said the forest department planted species like eucalyptus on the authority’s properties just to show performance because the species grew rapidly.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1271159>

MUDDY ROADS INDICATE ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION: EXPERT

Dawn, July 17th, 2016

Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: Sheikh Amin, a retired government servant, travelled on a motorbike in Islamabad for decades. However, for the last a few years he has been troubled by the accumulation of mud on different roads in the city.

“In the ‘80s and ‘90s, I used to travel on different roads in the federal capital on a motorbike. Even during rains I never saw mud on the roads and my dress always remained clean. However, I never visited Rawalpindi during rains because of mud on roads there,” he told Dawn.

“For the last a few years, I have observed that during rains muddy water start flowing on the roads in the federal capital. I can also see people traveling on motorbikes getting soaked in muddy water. Even the colours of their clothes change,” he said.

“This change, which has occurred over a few years, is really disturbing because it shows that there is something wrong with the environment and conditions of the city. With the passage of time, things are changing in the city,” he said.

Islamabad is the most beautiful city of the country, so steps should be taken to ensure that it sustained its beauty. Otherwise, Islamabad will give a look of other cities of the country where mud gathers on roads even after a light rain, he said.

Environmentalists also believe that the capital city has suffered in many ways and the accumulation of mud on the roads was a result of manmade changes and deforestation.

Dr Jawad Chishti, an environmentalist, told Dawn that the recent changes showed that the “living layer” of the land, which was necessary for the plantation, was disappearing in Islamabad.

Describing the nature of the land, he said there was a layer of soil on the rocks which was called the top soil or the living layer. Big trees play a major role in ensuring that the top soil remained at its place. Moreover, bushes also play a vital role in making the soil firm.

“Plantation cannot grow without the top soil. Unfortunately, development activities and deforestation have damaged the top soil. Here there is a trend to plant saplings which cannot be alternative to big trees.”

He said in natural forests, there were different kinds of trees and bushes which reduced the flow of rainwater. But these days, after development works, only saplings are planted which cannot reduce the speed of rainwater. The top soil also moves along with the rainwater and can be seen in the shape of mud on roads after rains, Dr Chishti added.

“The erosion of the soil will not only decrease the capacity of plantation on slopes and mountains but it will also choke our sewerage and water drainage lines,” he said.

Because of deforestation, dust particles in the air also increase so during rains they accumulate on roads and add to the problems of the citizens.

There is a need to stop deforestation. Bushes should be planted to reduce the flow of water and stop soil erosion. Otherwise it will increase the pace of silting in water reservoirs, he said.

“If the top soil is removed from the Margalla Hills, it will be very difficult to re-fix it.”

Dr Chishti said the government should introduce public transport systems all over the city to reduce the burden of traffic and pollution.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1271249/muddy-roads-indicate-environmental-degradation-expert>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 3RD TO JULY 10TH 2016

ECO(UN)FRIENDLY: G-B NATURE LOVERS DECRY FESTIVAL AT DEOSAI

The Express Tribune, July 6th, 2016.

Shabbir Mir

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) government's decision to hold a festival has created unrest among nature lovers who feel the event could prove detrimental to the environment.

The area is home to rare wildlife, wildflowers and a wide variety of butterflies.

Outrage followed an advertisement released to newspapers by the tourism department that invited seal quotations for service delivery for a two-day "ecofriendly festival" at Deosai.

The festival is scheduled for August 6 and 7. It is expected to attract local and foreign tourists to Deosai, the world's second highest plateau.

It was declared a national park in 1993 to protect the Himalayan brown bear and its habitat. The attempt proved to be a success and created a hope for survival of the species in Deosai where its numbers increased from just 19 in 1993 to 40 in 2005. However, the bear still remains endangered in 2016.

"This is a ridiculous decision as it will destroy the habitat of many creatures," Waseem Samad, a nature lover and civil society activist, said. He spearheaded campaigns on social media to save nature.

In one of his posts, Samad argued, "No country in the world would arrange [such] a festival at a place blessed with biodiversity without prior risk assessment."

He said playing polo, beating drums and dancing in middle of Deosai will only pollute the fragile environment. The pages on the social media attracted comments which disapproved of the festival on the plateau.

Karim Tahir, a conservationist, urged authorities to respect international laws, to which Pakistan is a signatory, that ban such activities inside a national park.

"Wildlife has rights and it is our responsibly to protect those [species] which have been declared threatened or endangered."

A government official, on the other hand, said the activity would be ecofriendly. However, details were yet to be finalised. In 2015, the government planned a car rally in the same area, but later suspended the race for reasons yet to be made public.

The Deosai plains are also home to the Himalayan ibex, red fox, golden marmot, locally called the Phia, grey wolf, Ladakh ural, snow leopard and over 124 resident and migratory birds.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1137060/ecounfriendly-g-b-nature-lovers-decry-festival-deosai/>

MOUNTAINS CALL: CLEANLINESS DRIVE LAUNCHED IN THREE AJK DISTRICTS

The Express Tribune, July 6th, 2016.

MA Mir

MUZAFFARABAD: The administrations of three districts in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on Tuesday started cleanliness and road repair drive to facilitate the tourists who intend to visit the region during Eidul Fitr holidays.

“More than 200 workers have been deployed to clean the main roads, parks, tourist spots and the banks of Jhelum and Neelum rivers in the capital city to give a better feeling to the tourists who are planning to spend Eid holidays in the scenic areas of the AJK,” Deputy Commissioner Masoodur Rehman told The Express Tribune on Tuesday.

He said that roads linking Neelum, Pirchanasi and Leepa valleys with the capital city had been cleared to ensure smooth flow of traffic.

In Neelum Valley the district administration has also cleaned the main tourist spots.

“The main spots such as Sharda, Karen, Kutton, Taubutt and Kel have been cleaned and are now open to welcome the tourists. Machines have also been deployed at five places on the 200km-long Neelum Valley Road to clear the route of any blockade by landslides and rain,” Neelum Valley Deputy Commissioner Hamid Kayani said.

A special team has also been formed to monitor the rates of private guest houses and hotels to discourage overcharging and to provide a better sense of feeling to the tourists.

He said the Rescue-1122 and State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) teams had already been put on alert to meet any emergency situation during the monsoon rains in the Himalayan mountain region.

Besides the civil administration, we have established a good working relationship with Pakistan Army in the Neelum Valley so that in the wake of any emergency their services could be availed, Kayani added.

The areas close to Banjoosa Lake in Rawalakot District have also been cleaned to give a pleasant look to the Eid revellers.

Rawalakot Deputy Commissioner Sohail Azam said that besides the lake they had also cleaned the road to Tolipir as well.

“After Banjoosa Lake, Tolipir is the most beautiful and attractive place for the tourists who want to spend Eid holidays in Rawalakot,” he added.

A cleanliness drive has also been launched to make the tourist spots clean for the visitors.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1137174/mountains-call-cleanliness-drive-launched-three-ajk-districts/>

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS: GOVT REFUTES VILLAGERS' CLAIMS IN DAM CONSTRUCTION CASE
The Express Tribune, July 6th, 2016.

HYDERABAD: The district administration of Thar has denied allegations that the construction of a dam in Tharparkar will dent the livelihood of locals and damage the ecosystem.

Several villagers had challenged the dam's construction by Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company through a petition filed in the Sindh High Court's Hyderabad Circuit Bench last week.

On Monday, the deputy commissioner of Tharparkar, assistant commissioner of Islamkot taluka and police submitted their replies before the bench. SECMC 's counsel sought time for submitting their reply.

However, he submitted the Sindh Environment Protection Agency's (Sepa) letter of approval to refute the petitioners' charges that the project is being implemented without an environmental impact assessment.

Eleven residents of various villages of Islamkot taluka have claimed that the dam will adversely affect 15,000 locals and 20,000 livestock.

They have prayed the court to declare the dam's construction illegal. In his report, the district commissioner, while denying all contentions of the villagers, said the locals will be duly compensated under the law. The bench, comprising Justices Zafar Ahmad Rajput and Muhammad Saleem Jessar, fixed the next hearing on July 13.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1137167/environmental-concerns-govt-refutes-villagers-claims-dam-construction-case/>

AIR POLLUTION ANALYSIS: LAB DYSFUNCTIONAL FOR PAST SIX YEARS

The Express Tribune, July 9th, 2016.

Shahzad Anwar

ISLAMABAD: The country's central lab for sampling and analysis of air pollution in Islamabad has been dysfunctional for the last six years, while a special grant of Rs18 million allocated for the lab's revival in January lapsed in June 2016.

The Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Central Laboratory for Environmental Analysis (CLEAN), completed in 2007 at a cost of Rs713.3705 million with the help of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica), has not been operational since 2010.

On a request made by the Ministry of Climate Change in January, the finance ministry released Rs18 million to revitalise the lab, but the lax attitude of the EPA and climate ministry officials let the allocated sum lapse.

The facility, which aims to establish a basis for a nationwide analysis of environmental pollution, and to enhance technical capacity of environmental watchdog, consists of a main lab, an air and water lab, a stake emission data centre and a micro-biological lab with equipment capable of testing industrial and municipal waste as well as air pollution.

Equipment bought for the facility and sub-facilities has been gathering dust at the EPA's head office and provincial stations.

The equipment has not been used since the Ministry of Environment was devolved to the provinces in 2010.

On May 30, Climate Change Secretary Syed Abu Ahmed Akif and EPA officials had claimed that the lab would be made functional within one week.

When asked about the delays, Akif blamed an equipment supplier for the inordinate delay, saying the supplier was not following procedural requirements for payment of cash.

"They are demanding Rs18 million in advance without furnishing a bank guarantee against the payment," Akif claimed.

The official said that the ministry would either approach Jica for providing new equipment or take its help to ask the local supplier to relax its practice for calibration of the environmental monitoring system (EMS).

The secretary also offered an odd observation on the system, asking, "Who would subscribe to the data even if we collect and release it."

"Without a comprehensive usage system, data generation is useless," he added.

The secretary suggested that the Islamabad Capital Territory Administration and the Capital Development Authority should be taken on board for data usage.

He said that the ministry had written to the finance minister to carry forward the lapsed grant from last year.

Sources said that the EPA also lacked trained staff to run lab operations.

The lab has only had four staffers — a lab director and deputy director, an inspector and an assistant.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1137960/air-pollution-analysis-lab-dysfunctional-past-six-years/>

FOR RAIN-DEPRIVED KARACHI, POSSIBLE RESPITE IN NURTURING TREES

The Express Tribune, July 10th, 2016

Ferya Ilyas

KARACHI: Trees are fast disappearing from Karachi's landscape to make way for billboards selling lawn suits and crispy burgers and as we lose our source of shade and oxygen, we also reduce our chances of inviting rain during hot summer days.

Rain occurs when water from the earth surface evaporates, moves up in the sky, cools down to form clouds and falls back when the cloud becomes too heavy to stay afloat. Experts say trees play a role in forming clouds and making them heavy enough to rain.

Muhammad Tahir Qureshi, a senior adviser of coastal ecosystem at International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), says trees help cool down the overall temperature which in turn helps formation of clouds.

An environmental expert at WWF-Pakistan, Saeedul Islam, says trees also play a role in making clouds heavy by exporting more water into the atmosphere through the process of transpiration.

“As this water from tree is in gaseous form, it freely spreads and interacts with moving clouds. This combining of water vapours from trees with water vapours of clouds makes the mass heavy and leads to rainfall,” Islam explains, quickly adding this process takes place only with the help of large number of grown trees and not small amount of vegetation.

“This is the reason why we have heavy rainfall in our northern areas; they have thick forests which make air moist and cause rain,” he says, stating that if Karachi can nurture thick trees in a big number — at least one-fourth of total area — the city can have better rainfall.

IUCN's Qureshi says Karachi used to have regular winter and summer monsoons with very little rainfall in the colder months but thundering downpour from June to September. “In the 1950s, when I was growing up, I remember having to write an essay on ‘Karachi ki toofani barishain’ because that's how intense and regular they were,” Qureshi quips, stating that now for the last 15 to 20 years, as per meteorological data, the city's monsoon pattern has become erratic and irregular.

“Sindh coast would witness 200mm rainfall per year in the past but now it is hardly 50mm. Earlier, when it would rain in Karachi, areas from one corner of the city to another would be wet but now we see that if there's rain in Nazimabad, DHA remains dry,” he says, highlighting the inconsistent nature of rainfall in Karachi.

Qureshi says according to 1892 data, 150 million acre-foot (MAF) Indus water would discharge into the Arabian Sea from Kotri Barrage alone. “This abundance of water supported our mangroves but now the total water for entire Pakistan, as per a mid-1990s report, stands at 206MAF,” he states.

The IUCN expert says Karachi's two flowing rivers — Lyari and Malir — also nurtured thick vegetation around their path but rapid growth and industrialisation destroyed the natural environment.

Rafiul Haq, founder of Coastal Restoration Alliance for Biodiversity, says trees are not a luxury but a necessity as they are a major contributor of the oxygen we breathe. "One person's need for oxygen for 24 hours is covered by seven trees; by this calculation, we need 140 million trees for the estimated 20 million people that live in the city," Haq states.

"Thankfully we have 420 trees per person spread across the world as well as plants in sea producing oxygen to help us keep breathing," he adds. Haq laments that while we aspire to build high-density areas with tall buildings in Karachi, we don't ever consider having high-density forests for our benefit. "One of the Millennium Development Goals is to build resilient cities which is basically a society's capacity to cope with disasters and return back to life. Trees play a very important role in achieving this goal," he shares.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1138464/water-water-nowhere-rain-deprived-karachi-possible-respite-nurturing-trees/>

August 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 29TH TO SEPTEMBER 4TH 2016

RECYCLING INDUSTRY FEELS PRESSURE FROM FALLING COMMODITY PRICES

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, August 29th, 2016

Gill Plimmer

IN a cathedral-sized warehouse, the rubbish from 1m households is being sorted on huge conveyor belts.

At the exit, ready to be driven away, are large bales of plastic, which will remain in Britain for reprocessing as water bottles, and bundles of paper and card, which will be sent to China for reuse as packaging for iPhones and TVs.

Two years ago Biffa, which runs the plant in north London, would have received £400 for each tonne of recycled plastic. But now — with a glut of oil — it receives just £300. Recycled paper and cardboard cost £80 a tonne three years ago. In June it slumped to just £55, according to figures from Let's Recycle UK, the trade website.

The fall in prices has put pressure on every part of the waste management industry. "Recycling is a commodities business," says Ian Wakelin, chief executive of Biffa, which collects waste from more than 2.4m households for 36 local authorities in the UK.

"Everything we do competes with virgin material prices. The industry used to be happy to take the risk of commodity price volatility. But when it became clear that this was a prolonged slump, that became difficult."

Plastic has suffered most. With new plastics made from the byproducts of oil and gas production, it has become cheaper for the manufacturers of water bottles, ice cream containers and yoghurt pots to buy their raw materials new, rather than recycled.

But nearly all material prices have plummeted. The price of steel cans has nearly halved over the past two years from £125 a tonne to between £45 and £70 in June, while the price of clothes in textile banks has dropped by about £100 to just £160 a tonne.

For some waste management companies, the pressure has become unbearable. Although most earn the bulk of revenues from collecting waste, “the recycling business still needs to be profitable in its own right”, says Mr Wakelin.

Kier Group, the FTSE 250 construction and environmental services company, decided to leave the industry after warning in July that it would take a £33m loss on its recycling business in the 2016 financial year.

Many of Kier’s eight- to 10-year contracts were agreed years ago when oil was \$80 a barrel. With the price now at \$40-50 a barrel, Kier said it would pull out of recycling as contracts ended.

The London-based Closed Loop, Britain’s biggest plastic bottle recycling plant, cited competition with virgin materials when it was put into administration in May. It has since been acquired by Veolia, the French waste management company.

Others such as Pennon, which owns Viridor, the waste management company, have mothballed plants, while many — including Cory Environmental Services, which served four local authorities, have been taken over amid consolidations.

Biffa, for example, has made nine acquisitions in the past year, helping operating profits rise from £49.1-62.5m in the year to March 2016.

For the most part, however, the larger companies have survived by renegotiating contracts with city authorities, preserving their recycling business, albeit at slimmer margins. “Every time a contract comes up we have to try to raise the price and negotiate a risk share,” says Mr Wakelin. “The one thing we don’t want is to be locked into fixed seven- or eight-year contracts.”

Until recently, recycling could be lucrative for town halls. When commodity prices were high, recycling companies would sometimes even pay local authorities for waste that had been cleanly separated by households and business. But with prices for recycled products low, companies are passing on the costs to town halls so that they share the volatility in the market.

Chris Loughlin, chief executive of Pennon, which services about 150 local authorities, expects the trend toward ‘sharing commodity risk and reward with clients’ to increase. The past few years have been “difficult as a result of weak commodity prices”, he says.

This has put pressure on town halls. Marcus Gover, chief executive of Wrap, which lobbies for the recycling industry, says: “Councils are facing a tough time, so although it’s a small part of their budgets, every penny counts. They will be trying hard to get the best price.”

The upside is that councils could benefit under the risk-share model if commodity prices rise. Regardless of this, Mr Wakelin argues that the business model needs to change if recycling rates are to be driven higher and the industry put on a more sustainable basis.

With concerns about Brexit and a potential recession mounting, it is an awkward time for the industry.

The environmental benefits of recycling are well accepted but much of the progress has been driven by EU legislation. In the UK about 45pc of household rubbish is recycled — up from less than 5pc in 2000 — but under EU targets this should rise to 50pc by 2020. Without subsidies, landfill is always cheaper.

Mr Wakelin is relaxed about the impact of Brexit on the industry. “I don’t think the government would row back on recycling,” he says. “I have every confidence we can work it out.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1280508>

SEVEN HELD FOR HUNTING ENDANGERED MARKHOR

Dawn, September 1st, 2016

QUETTA: Seven poachers, including two Levies officials, were arrested by officials of the forest and wildlife department for their involvement in illegally hunting markhor, an endangered species of wild goats, in the Suleiman mountain range.

According to official sources, a team from the forest and wildlife department, along with members of the community, on Wednesday raided an area where the poachers were present.

Markhor — the national animal of Pakistan — is an endangered animal and the government has imposed a ban on its hunting as it could lead to their extinction.

The wild goats are found in the Takatu mountains and its surrounding areas which have been reserved as the breeding ground for them by the forest and wildlife department.

“We have arrested seven poachers and seized hunted markhor,” said a senior official of the forest department, adding that a case was filed under the wildlife law against the poachers.

According to the official, two Levies officials were also involved in the illegal hunting of the Suleman markhor. They were identified as Abdul Nafay and Rafiullah.

The other five men were identified as Saifur Rehman, Mohammad Ismail, Riaz Khan, Nimatullah and Mohammad Zahid.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1281317>

‘ENVIRONMENT DEGRADATION CAUSES RS365BN ANNUAL LOSSES’

Dawn September 1st, 2016

KARACHI: Audience at a conference on sustainable cities were informed on Wednesday that Pakistan suffered Rs365 billion annual losses because of constant environmental degradation.

“The public health sector accounts for having biggest share in such a colossal loss of Rs1 billion every day to the government exchequer,” said Naeem Ahmed Mughal, director-general of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency while speaking at the conference titled “Making our cities sustainable” organised by the National Forum for Environment and Health (NFEH) in connection with its 13th Annual Environmental Excellence Awards at a hotel.

He informed the audience that in future the local government agencies would be put to prosecution as a matter of policy without giving them any exemption as like cases against other public, private, and industrial institutions in the province were referred to environmental tribunals for their unsafe practices causing damage to environment.

Sindh Transport Minister Nasir Hussain Shah said the present Sindh government of the Pakistan Peoples Party was fully committed to resolving transportation problems of the people of Karachi for which Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) was being constructed.

He said in a coming few days, he would fly to China for signing a memorandum of understanding for launching the Yellow Line — a component of BRTS.

He claimed that the Sindh government on its part had completed all the prerequisites and formalities regarding the revival of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) and now it was up to the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to make progress for building the circular railway service in Karachi.

He said PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari had directed the provincial authorities to give another chance to JICA to make progress towards revival of the KCR, otherwise the Sindh government should go for a renowned Chinese firm to build the project.

He said the Sindh government was fully committed to the cause of environment mitigation as for this reason the scope of provincial environment department had been expanded to include subject of climate change and also that the chief minister was holding the additional portfolio of environment department.

He said that owing to unchecked practices of municipal agencies, 450 million gallons of untreated waste water was being released into the Arabian Sea while air pollution had been rapidly increasing owing to absence of any solid and municipal waste management system while district municipal corporations were engaged in burning of domestic waste instead of its safe disposal.

Ijaz Ahmed Khilji, an expert of mass transport systems, said 42 per cent population of Karachi was dependent on public transport system while passenger buses and other public carriers accounted for just 4.5pc of total number of vehicles, thus, creating serious stress on existing passenger vehicles plying on roads of Karachi.

Secretary for environment and climate change Aijaz Talpur said Sindh had been actively pleading its case that 220 megawatts generated by it through alternative source of energy at the Jhimpir wind corridor should be used on a preferential basis through transmission lines giving connectivity to national power grid instead of waiting for completion of the solar power project in southern Punjab.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1281222/environment-degradation-causes-rs365bn-annual-losses>

CLEAN ENVIRONMENT, ECOSYSTEM: PUNJAB GOVERNMENT ADOPTS SIX NEW STANDARDS
Business Recorder, September 03, 2016

The Punjab Government Has Added Six New Standards To The Punjab Environmental Quality Standards (Peqs) Which Deal With Municipal And Industrial Effluent, Gasses Emissions, Ambient Air, Noise, Vehicular Emissions And Drinking Water Quality. This Was Announced By The Punjab Environment Minister Begum Zakia Shahnawaz Here On Friday. She Said That These Standards Have Been Adopted From National Standards.

Standards For Treatment Of Liquid Waste And Disposal Of Biomedical Waste By Incineration, Autoclaving, Microwaving, And Deep Burial Are A New Addition To The Environmental Quality Standards.

The Standards For Biomedical Waste Provide Detailed Methods For Ultimate Disposal Of Hazardous Biomedical Waste. These Standards Will Help Improve Control On Disposal Of Infectious Biomedical Waste. The Bio Medical Waste Treatment Standard Will Change The Way Province Used To Manage This Waste Earlier.

By Introduction Of This Standard, Large Hospitals Can Now Have Option To Autoclave Waste. Autoclaved Biomedical Waste Can Be Sent To Landfill Sites. This Will Reduce Air Pollution Due To Incineration Of Such Waste. Standards For Incineration Will Regulate Incineration Of Hazardous Plastic Waste Coming Out Of Hospitals. Notification Of The Standards Is The First Step Towards Regulation Of Environment In The Province, The Minister Said.

She Further Said That Industry-Specific Standards Are Being Developed. Rs 30 Million Have Been Provided In The Annual Development Programme Of The Province For This Purpose. Environment Protection Department Is Collaborating With International Development Agency Of Germany (Giz) For Development Of Industry-Specific Standards In The Textile Sector.

She Further Said That It Is About Time That We Start Taking Environmental Protection Seriously. Indiscriminate Discharge Of Untreated Wastewater Into Waterways Has Polluted Our Canals And Rivers. Incidence Of Disease Due To Pollution Is Increasing. Pollution Is Also A Cause Of Poverty.

The Minister Said That The Next Step Is Updating Of Existing Rules, Regulations And Guidelines And Drafting Of New Ones. The Punjab Environmental Protection Agency Review Of Initial Environmental Examination And Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2016 Have Been Placed On The Website Of Epa Punjab For Comments From All Stakeholders.

These Regulations Now Regulate The Consultants Who Carry Out Environmental Assessment Of Projects. Specifying Minimum Educational Qualification Of Consultants Would Enhance The Quality Of Environmental Reviews.

Environmental Review Fees, Specified In The Year 2000, Are Suggested To Be Revised. Additionally, An Annual Renewal Fee Has Also Been Recommended For All Projects Seeking Environmental Approval. The Annual Fees Have Been Recommended To Cover The Monitoring Expenses Of Epa Punjab. This Is In Accordance With The “Polluters Pay Principle” Enshrined In The Punjab Environmental Protection Act 1997, The Minister Concluded.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/82127/>

‘PLANT MORE TREES IF YOU WANT TO PURIFY THE AIR YOU BREATHE’

Dawn September 4th, 2016

Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: With a message of planting more trees and taking responsibility for one’s environment, Horticulture Society of Pakistan organised a talk on Karachi’s waste management problems and solutions at their Garden centre here on Saturday.

“Trees and plants take in carbon dioxide from the air to turn it into oxygen. They utilise carbon emission from cars, etc as food for themselves. Therefore we encourage you to plant more trees. It is very important that you do so if you want to purify the air you breathe,” said Syed Ehtesham-ul-Haque, environment consultant, who heads a team of experts in the United States and the Middle East who design and develop integrated waste management facilities for cities, at the beginning of his talk.

Coming then to the heaps of waste piling up in the city, he said that the government had set up a Sindh Waste Management Board, which was not just responsible for Karachi but the entire province of Sindh. “Still it is not very clear as to how this board will be working with the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation. You also need monitoring, enforcement and awareness for the operation to be successful,” he said.

The expert said that even though there had been no proper census done, by making a rough estimate he could say that Karachi’s population was around 25 million. “If the waste produced by each person comes to around 0.6kg a day, it amounts to 16,500 tonnes of waste per day for the city to take care of,” he said.

“There is intent, resolve and teaching needed to clean up all this mess. Just burning trash is not going to help,” he said. “In fact, it will make you sick because the emission produced from burning waste carry dioxins. These colourless dioxins deposit in the glands and are passed onto the next generation. They also cause lung and heart diseases and cancer,” he said.

Karachi has two landfill sites — at Jam Chakro and Hub — where the city’s garbage is dumped. There is talk of another such landfill at Dhabeji as well. But Mr Haque showed examples of other landfill sites in the US where they keep covering up the garbage to keep the soil balanced.

“We have not even thought about utilising all this waste for energy purposes,” he said, also pointing out how much fuel the trucks carrying the waste used up in transportation. He suggested garbage compactors to carry more garbage per trip.

“What we need is an integrated waste management system that requires the following of regulations. There should be awareness programmes about waste management at the school, college and university levels.

For it makes an enormous difference when your child stops you from littering around unnecessarily and throwing things anywhere even when there are bins present. It would also make a huge difference if the corporate sector joined in and adopted portions of the beach, maybe. I’m sure there would be no pollution on our beaches then,” he said.

“There should be different waste collection systems in place for the different areas of the city according to their demographic and economic conditions. For instance, there can be a door-to-door collection in small communities and katchi abadis and roll-out containers or collection carts in other places. Garbage bags should be avoided as much as possible because they add to the waste problem. Buildings should have garbage shoots,” he said.

Other suggestions made by the expert included a fine for polluters. “We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children,” he said summing up his talk with the old proverb.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1281850>

MANCHAR LAKE CONTAMINATION: JUDICIAL OFFICERS TO SUPERVISE RO PLANTS’ INSTALLATION
The Express Tribune, September 1st, 2016

Karachi: The Supreme Court (SC) appointed on Tuesday judicial officers to supervise the installation of reverse osmosis (RO) plants around Manchar Lake.

A three-judge bench, headed by Justice Amir Hani Muslim, also ordered the district and sessions judges of Jamshoro and Dadu to appoint civil judges to conduct surprise visits and supervise the installation of RO plants by the federal and provincial authorities to ensure provision of potable water to nearby residents.

The lake has been contaminated due to the discharge of untreated waste.

The bench, that comprises Justices Mushir Alam and Khilji Arif Hussain, was hearing a human rights case relating to the growing contamination in Manchar Lake, the largest freshwater reservoir in the country.

At the outset, the judges took serious notice of the absence of the federal finance and planning secretaries, who were previously issued notices to show-cause as to why contempt proceedings may not be initiated against them for not implementing the court’s orders to release funds for completion of the Right Bank Outfall Drain (RBOD) I and III.

The bench, irritated at their absence, ordered the additional attorney general to ensure the attendance of both officers, warning to issue non-bailable warrants in case they fail to comply with the order.

Sindh’s irrigation secretary also filed a report in court, informing that 35 RO plants had been installed in localities adjoining Manchar Lake to ensure the supply of potable water.

However, the judges expressed their dissatisfaction over the report, observing that all the plants had been installed on a political basis, as they were not installed where residents needed them the most.

The also directed to depute civil judges to get the RO plants installed under their supervision after due verification of the localities.

The incomplete RBOD project had wreaked havoc, observed the bench, adding that while the authorities were busy ‘calling meetings’, fertile lands were turned barren and people were dying.

“Around 80% of the projects initiated in Sindh are not looked after properly and that is ruining the initiatives,” remarked Justice Amir Hani Muslim. A mechanical person was made project-director, but there is no one to question his merit, the bench noted.

Meanwhile, Sindh chief secretary Siddique Memon assured the bench that competent officers will be posted [from now on].

However, the bench noted with serious concern that apparently no service structure exists in the province as neither appointments are made on merit, nor competent officers are made directors of projects. Even the chairperson of the public service commission is not competent for the post, nor do its members fulfill the criteria, the bench added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1173646/manchar-lake-contamination-judicial-officers-supervise-ro-plants-installation/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 22ND TO AUGUST 28TH 2016
A FLOATING THREAT: SEA CONTAINERS SPREAD PESTS AND DISEASES
Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, August 22nd, 2016

Oil spills garner much public attention and anguish, but ‘biological spills’ represent a greater long-term threat and do not have the same high public profile.

It was an exotic fungus that wiped out billions of American chestnut trees in the early 20th century, dramatically altering the landscape and ecosystem, while today the emerald ash borer – another pest that hitch-hiked along global trade routes to new habitats – threatens to do the same with a valuable tree long used by humans to make tool handles, guitars and office furniture.

Perhaps the biggest ‘biological spill’ of all was when a fungus-like eukaryotic microorganism called *Phytophthora infestans* – the name of the genus comes from Greek for ‘plant destroyer’ – sailed from the Americas to Belgium. Within months it arrived in Ireland, triggering a potato blight that led to famine, death and mass migration.

The list goes on and on. A relative of the toxic cane toad that has run rampant in Australia recently disembarked from a container carrying freight to Madagascar, a biodiversity hotspot, and the ability of females to lay up to 40,000 eggs a year make it a catastrophic threat for local lemurs and birds, while also threatening the habitat of a host of animals and plants.

In Rome, municipal authorities are ramping up their annual campaign against the tiger mosquito, an invasive species that arrived by ship in Albania in the 1970s. *Aedes albopictus*, famous for its aggressive biting, is now prolific across Italy and global warming will make swathes of northern Europe ripe for colonisation.

This is why the nations of the world came together some six decades ago to establish the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) as a means to help stem the spread of plant pests and diseases across borders boundaries via international trade and to protect farmers, foresters, biodiversity, the environment, and consumers.

“The crop losses and control costs triggered by exotic pests amount to a hefty tax on food, fibre and forage production,” says Craig Fedchock, coordinator of the FAO-based IPPC Secretariat. “All told, fruit flies, beetles, fungi and their kin reduce global crop yields by between 20-40pc,” he explains.

Invasive species arrive in new habitats through various channels, but shipping, is the main one.

And shipping today means sea containers: Globally, around 527m sea container trips are made each year – China alone deals with over 133m sea containers annually. It is not only their cargo, but the steel contraptions themselves, that can serve as vectors for the spread of exotic species capable of wreaking ecological and agricultural havoc.

For example, an analysis of 116,701 empty sea containers arriving in New Zealand over the past five years showed that one in 10 was contaminated on the outside, twice the rate of interior contamination. Unwelcome pests included the gypsy moth, the Giant African snail, Argentine ants and the brown marmorated stink bug, each of which threaten crops, forests and urban environments. Soil residues, meanwhile, can contain the seeds of invasive plants, nematodes and plant pathogens.

“Inspection records from the United States, Australia, China and New Zealand indicate that thousands of organisms from a wide range of taxa are being moved unintentionally with sea containers,” the study’s lead scientist, Eckehard Brockerhoff of the New Zealand Forest Research Institute, told a recent meeting at FAO of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM), IPPC’s governing body.

Damage exceeds well beyond agriculture and human health issues. Invasive species can cause clogged waterways and power plant shutdowns.

Biological invasions inflict damages amounting to around 5pc of annual global economic activity, equivalent to about a decade’s worth of natural disasters, according to one study. Factoring in harder-to-measure impacts may double that, Brockerhoff said.

Around 90pc of world trade is carried by sea today, with a vast panoply of differing logistics, making agreement on an inspection method elusive. Some 12m containers entered the US last year, using no fewer than 77 ports of entry.

Moreover, many cargoes quickly move inland to enter just-in-time supply chains. That’s how the dreaded brown marmorated stink bug — which chews quickly through high-value fruit and crops — began its European tour a few years ago in Zurich. This animal actively prefers steel nooks and crannies for long-distance travel, and once established likes to set up winter hibernation niches inside people’s houses.

— FAO report

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1279041>

AHEAD OF MAYORAL ELECTIONS: KMC LOSES CHARGE OF TWO LANDFILL SITES

The Express Tribune, August 22nd, 2016.

Oonib Azam

KARACHI: The charge of two garbage landfill sites in the city, Jam Chakro and Gond Pass, has been handed over to the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) from the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), just a week before KMC’s mayoral elections. The elections are scheduled on Wednesday, August 24, at the old KMC city council hall on MA Jinnah Road.

This has apparently been done by the incumbent provincial government in a bid to take powers from the newly formed city council. The elected city council already has no powers regarding areas and functions that fall under the jurisdiction of the Sindh Building Control Authority, master plan department, Karachi Water and Sewerage Board, Lyari Development Authority and Malir Development Authority. With major issues such as water, sewerage and land organisation out of its hands, the council seems to be nothing more than a figurehead.

SSWMB secretary Nadir Khan told The Express Tribune that on paper, the charge of the landfill sites has been transferred to the SSWMB but they have not taken over its physical possession as there are several liabilities on KMC’s part which have to be paid off.

The KMC has also requested Sindh’s local government department, through a letter, to release funds for payments to contractors engaged in operating and managing the landfill sites.

According to the letter, the KMC is supposed to pay Sanco Technologies – the contractor for the Gond Pass landfill site – and Astrotech International – the contractor for the Jam Chakro landfill site – Rs85 million and Rs97 million, respectively.

A senior KMC official, on the condition of anonymity, said they have stopped monitoring these landfill sites, as they have been handed over to the SSWMB.

Meanwhile, SSWMB's executive director of operations, Dr AD Sajnani, pointed out that the decision has been taken to handover the landfill sites to the SSWMB but they have not started formal operations as the KMC has yet to pay off its liabilities. Till then, the KMC is responsible for the sites, he claimed.

Khan said the issue of KMC's outstanding bills has yet to be decided but a solution will be found within the next few days. If the rift between the two organisations continues, it could lead to a severe garbage crisis in Karachi in the days to come.

Meanwhile, District Municipal Corporations (DMCs) continue their operations of collecting garbage from houses and transferring it to their Garbage Transfer Stations. According to Dr Sajnani, the functions of the DMCs have not been disturbed yet.

Once the city council is formed, its members will decide how and when to assume the DMCs' functions but it must get the consent of the respective DMC heads. East DMC administrator, Shafiqur Rehman, confirmed that they are still responsible for garbage collection.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1167211/ahead-mayoral-elections-kmc-loses-charge-two-landfill-sites/>

ENVIRONMENTAL TRIBUNAL'S CREATION ENTERS SLOW LANE

Dawn, August 23rd, 2016

Mohammad Ashfaq

PESHAWAR: The provincial government has failed to set up the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Environmental Protection Tribunal to punish violators of environmental law even more than one and a half years after the formal enforcement of the environmental protection law.

A relevant official told Dawn on Monday that absence of the tribunal had been letting the people involved in environment-related crimes scot-free.

Section 21 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Environmental Protection Act 2014 states: "Government shall, by notification in the official gazette, establish one or more environmental protection tribunals as it considers necessary and, where it establishes more than one environmental protection tribunals, it shall specify territorial limits within which, or the class of cases in respect of which, each one of them shall exercise jurisdiction under this act."

It added that the tribunal shall consist of a chairperson who is, or has been, or is qualified for appointment as, a judge of the high court and two members of which at least one shall be a technical member with suitable professional qualifications and experience in the environmental field as may be prescribed.

The officials said the government's failure to establish the tribunal went against the interest of ruling PTI's chief Imran Khan, who had been laying emphasis on environmental protection in the province and launched launching a billion tree plantation campaign of late.

They said before the KPEPA 2014 was enforced, a federal tribunal existed to decide the cases of environment-related crimes under the Pakistan Environment Protection Act, 1997, but the enforcement of the provincial law led to its dissolution.

The officials said in the absence of the provincial environmental tribunal, the number of the environment-related crime cases pending decision had run into hundreds, including many, which were being processed by the erstwhile federal tribunal.

They insisted the formulation of rules was necessary for the establishment of the tribunal but the law department had turned out to be hurdle to it.

The officials said the environment department had forwarded the proposed rules to the law department for vetting more than a year ago and even seven bilateral meetings had taken place since then but the needful had yet to be done.

They said the draft rules were not new and instead, the environment department had made minor changes to the federal rules governing the federal tribunal before sending them to the law department.

The officials said in the absence of the tribunal, not a single person had been convicted and punished for violation of environment law in the province.

When asked how the crimes against environment are controlled or stopped when the tribunal doesn't exist, they said there were two ways to do the job though they're not very effective.

The officials said the first way was that the environment department requests the respective district administration to at least seal a factory or other activity functioning in violation of the law, while the second way was that the environment department has the power to impose minor penalty on lawbreakers though it didn't help check crimes.

A senior official in law department held the environment department responsible for delay in the formation of the environmental tribunal.

"Our (law) department has made several legal observations on the proposed rules but they haven't been addressed until now," he said.

The official also said there was an ambiguity in the proposed rules regarding the salary of the tribunal's chairperson.

He said in a recent meeting, both law and environment departments had agreed to amend the environment law to remove the ambiguity to pave the way to the tribunal's establishment.

The official also said not only the law department's section vetting proposed laws and rules was understaffed but most of its staff members didn't 'know how to work' for being new to the job.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1279410/environmental-tribunals-creation-enters-slow-lane>

MARINE POLLUTION

Dawn, August 26th, 2016

ALTHOUGH small, the fisheries sector is part of the country's economy. More importantly, it is the main source of livelihood for the people of scores of villages dotting Pakistan's coastline. These realities, to say nothing of the pressing need of the planet's conservation, have sadly done little to prod citizens or state authorities into action that could save our part of the Indian Ocean.

On Wednesday in Karachi, a national workshop on the topic of sustainable fisheries had been organised by the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum in collaboration with a UN agency. On the occasion, Federal Minister for Ports and Shipping Mir Hasil Khan Bizenjo lamented the practice of overfishing. In passing, he also mentioned another issue which many feel is of even more pressing importance: marine pollution.

As acknowledged some time ago by the Marine Pollution Control department, some 350 million gallons of raw sewage or untreated industrial waste from Karachi enter the harbour every single day. In addition, thousands of tonnes of solid waste are dumped into or end up in the harbour on a daily basis. This appalling picture is only likely to worsen given that not all the pollutants going into the sea from this country's coastline are tabulated.

Under the weight of the waste that is generated, the infrastructure in many of Pakistan's cities is almost on the verge of collapse. Unfortunately, the seas are in a similar situation, again through damaging human activity and interference in the ways of nature.

Efforts have been made to clean up the waters, but this is a long and expensive process that will take time to bear fruit. The first thing to be done is to stop the flow of sewage and garbage from Karachi — this is by far the single large source of pollution. The city's old and inadequate sewage systems need a serious overhaul, and waste management has to become a priority. The recently inducted chief minister has promised a cleaner Karachi; can he be induced to turn his attention to the sea as well?

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1279944>

SINGAPORE SHROUDED IN SMOG AS HAZE RETURNS TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

Dawn, August 27th, 2016

SINGAPORE: Acrid smog blanketed Singapore on Friday as the city-state was hit by the year's first major outbreak of haze, an annual crisis sparked by forest fires in neighbouring Indonesia.

Singapore's air quality index reached unhealthy levels with conditions deteriorating through the day, marking the worst haze episode in the city since vast parts of Southeast Asia were blanketed in smoke in 2015.

Last year's haze outbreak was among the worst in memory, shrouding Malaysia, Singapore, and parts of Thailand in acrid smoke.

The blazes are started illegally to clear land, typically for palm oil and pulpwood plantations, and Indonesia has faced intense criticism from its neighbours over its failure to halt the annual smog outbreaks.

Indonesian police said a total of 463 people have been arrested over forest fires so far in 2016. This is more than double the number arrested over the blazes in the whole of 2015 but the data suggest that most of this year's arrests involved smallholders.

Singapore's National Environment Agency (NEA) said the Pollutant Standards Index (PSI) breached "very unhealthy" levels of 215 during the day. PSI levels above 100 are deemed unhealthy and people are advised to reduce vigorous outdoor activity.

The NEA added that the smoke was being blown from fires in central Sumatra, the Indonesian island just across the Malacca Strait from Singapore. Visibility from high-rise offices and other vantage points was virtually zero.

Women cover their faces with masks as haze shrouds the business district.—Reuters

Food server Marcus Tan, 28, who works at a riverside restaurant with outdoor seating, said he was worried the haze would agitate his asthma.

"I know I'm supposed to wear a mask so I don't have another asthma attack. But do you think anyone will want to eat food served by someone wearing a mask?" he said.

Smog was also visible in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of neighbouring Malaysia, over a few days last week but did not breach unhealthy levels.

Singapore last September closed schools and distributed protective face masks as the air pollution index soared to hazardous levels following three weeks of being cloaked in smoke.

Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency said on its website that the number of "hotspots" on Sumatra had increased in the past 48 hours.

A hotspot is an area of intense heat detected by satellites, indicating a blaze has already broken out or that an area is very hot and likely to go up in flames soon.

As of Friday, there were 69 hotspots on Sumatra, up from 43 two days earlier, the agency said.

In the Indonesian part of Borneo island — another area where large numbers of smog-belching fires occur every year — there were 31 hotspots as of midnight Thursday local time, it added.

However there were far fewer fires than at the peak of last year's crisis, when hundreds burned out of control.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1280164>

POISONOUS FUMES: POLLUTION CONTINUES TO TAKE TOLL ON CITIZENS' HEALTH

The Express Tribune, August 28th, 2016

Shahzad Anwar

ISLAMABAD: Around 110,000 premature deaths in Pakistan are the result of exposure to air pollution. The country ranks third in the world for most premature deaths.

A couple of years back, the World Bank had asked Pakistan to take immediate measures to reduce the level of outdoor pollution to protect the health of its citizens from further damage.

But the country's seriousness in fighting pollution could be gauged from the fact that its premier lab for air pollution sampling and analysis has not been operational for the last six years. A special grant of Rs18 million allocated for the lab's revival in January also lapsed in June.

The Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Central Laboratory for Environmental Analysis (CLEAN) was set up in Islamabad in 2007 at a cost of Rs713.3705 million with the help of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), but it has not been operational since 2010.

The facility, which aims to establish a basis for a nationwide analysis of environmental pollution and to enhance technical capacity of the environmental watchdog, consists of a main lab, an air and water lab, a stack emission data centre and a microbiological lab with equipment capable of testing industrial and municipal waste as well as air pollution.

Equipment bought for the facility and sub-facilities has been gathering dust at the EPA's head office and provincial stations. The equipment has not been used since the Ministry of Environment was devolved to the provinces in 2010.

The lax attitude of the EPA and climate ministry officials led to the lapse of the allocated sum.

On May 30, Climate Change Secretary Abu Ahmed Akif and EPA officials had claimed that the lab would be made functional within a week. When asked about the delay, he blamed the equipment supplier, saying "the supplier was not following procedural requirements for payment of cash".

The secretary had also offered an odd observation on the system, asking, “Who would subscribe to the data even if we collect and release it.” “Without a comprehensive usage system, data generation is useless,” he had added.

“The collection of hard data is critical to effectively build a case and eventually solve the more complex and multi-faceted problems arising to environmental pollution,” said meteorologist and research scientist Dr Qamar Zaman while talking to The Express Tribune.

According to a report released by the World Bank in 2014, there is a stronger link between both indoor and outdoor air pollution exposure and cardiovascular diseases such as strokes and ischaemic heart disease, as well as between air pollution and cancer. This is in addition to air pollution’s role in the development of respiratory diseases, including acute respiratory infections and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases.

Climate Change Ministry’s Deputy Director Media and Communication Mohammad Saleem admitted that the country lacks latest data about outdoor air pollution.

“Inadequate government’s attention towards air quality management in the past is the main cause of gap for a reliable air quality data, which has held back policy measures to check the escalating level of the outdoor air pollution, considered to be a major cause of cancer deaths,” he said.

Saleem said that the climate ministry has recently launched a study to gather figures about national carbon emissions for automobiles and industry.

He explained that the data collected from the study would be used for policy measures to cope with the aggravating problem of outdoor air pollution and to introduce a mechanism to make industrial and transport sectors environment-friendly by introducing clean technologies.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1171203/poisonous-fumes-pollution-continues-take-toll-citizens-health/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 15TH TO AUGUST 21ST 2016

CUT IN GREEN GASES: TEAM FORMED TO OUTLINE STEPS

The Express Tribune, August 19th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has constituted a team of experts to outline the steps for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

The team will formulate the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) for mitigation and adaptation to tackle climate change issues.

At a meeting on Thursday, the Ministry of Climate Change deliberated upon a preparation plan in formulating timely and researched based INDCs ahead of its submission to the Conference of the Parties (COP-22), which is going to be held in Morocco from November 7 to November 18.

The meeting chaired by Climate Change Minister Zahid Hamid was also attended by French ambassador Martine Dorance, Moroccan ambassador Mustapha Salahdine, representatives of the Punjab Environmental Protection Agency, the UNDP, the Ministry of Water and Power, the Ministry of Finance, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National University of Science and Technology, Quaid-i-Azam University, the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the Pakistan Meteorological Department.

“The team would help identify where we stand and what efforts are required for mitigation and adaptation to cope with climate change issues,” the minister told the participants.

Last year before the COP-21, Pakistan had submitted its action plan to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat without making any specific commitments after missing the deadline and it was strongly criticised by local climate change experts. The country, however, has committed to reducing its emissions to the extent possible in the wake of the work on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project which may lead to a rise in greenhouse emissions significantly.

“We have to learn lessons from COP-21 to actively participate in COP-22. It is a big gathering with a participation of officials, the private sector, civil society and all stakeholders. Pakistan has signed the Paris agreement and taking initiatives for its implementation,” the French ambassador said.

The ambassador of Morocco said that “We have formulated a steering committee having experts to organise and take care of arrangements of the COP-22.” He said that they were expecting significant participation from Pakistan in the conference.

INDC deputy head of experts’ team Dr Bilal Anwer gave a presentation on a research under way on the INDCs preparation in Pakistan. “We have taken 2015 as a base year to calculate INDCs because a lot of economic activities took place from 2012 to 2015”.

“We are also analysing mitigation potentials for different sectors and some areas of mitigation included in INDCs such as improving irrigation through the lining of canals and strengthening risk management system for the agriculture sector,” Anwar said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1165520/cut-green-gases-team-formed-outline-steps/>

GUJJAR NULLAH CLEAN-UP: 1,700 ILLEGAL SHOPS, HOUSES DEMOLISHED

The Express Tribune, August 19th, 2016.

KARACHI: As many as 1,700 illegal shops, mini cattle-farms and houses have been demolished during the anti-encroachment operation at Gujjar Nullah.

The drive is being conducted by the anti-encroachment cell of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation in collaboration with District Municipal Corporation of District Central.

“Our hopes are high,” remarked District Central deputy commissioner Fariduddin Mustafa. The operation has been more than satisfactory and we have been able to get rid of a large number of illegal structures, which seemed impossible, he said, adding that it is tough going against the public even if they are breaking the law.

The initial plan is to make the nullah 60 feet wide and a 10-foot-wide road will be built on both the sides of the drain after the drive, he claimed. The 13-kilometre-long nullah flows from North Karachi Sector 11-J and falls into the Lyari River near Sindhi Hotel, Liaquatabad, he added.

The anti-encroachment drive was set to be completed by December, this year, said Mustafa. However, given the pace of the drive it is likely to end earlier, he added.

Speaking about the hurdles during the drive, anti-encroachment cell director Mazhar Khan informed that initially they faced resilience from the residents of the area but ever since the Rangers and police were deployed, the drive has been going on according to the plan.

Commissioner Ejaz Ahmed Khan said that this operation, if completed, will prove to be a major breakthrough for the drainage system of the city. The reason it took so long to initiate the drive is due to the people living near the nullah, he explained.

The government has their hopes high but a similar operation was initiated last year in October and municipal authorities could manage to clear only two kilometres of the nullah. However, the operation was suspended later due to shortage of funds.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1165441/gujjar-nullah-clean-1700-illegal-shops-houses-demolished/>

NEED TO CONNECT GARBAGE WITH BUSINESS STRESSED

The Express Tribune, August 20th, 2016.

Ishrat Ansari

KARACHI : Even if citizens try to keep their streets clean, they still have to dump their garbage at some place. Collection and disposal of garbage is a major issue being faced by the public, which cannot be solved without the government's help.

This was the general theme of a discussion on Karachi's garbage crisis by civic experts at the Aga Khan University on Thursday.

Piles of garbage lying unattended in the streets, parks, playgrounds, alleyways and the coast speaks volumes about the government apathy in dealing with the menace of waste disposal, agreed urban planners.

"Since there is a total vacuum from the government's side, we should create a network of NGOs, civil society and communities to solve the garbage problem," remarked urban planner Farhan Anwar.

Sharing data from a book, associate professor of urban studies at the department of social sciences and liberal arts, Institute of Business Administration, Nausheen Anwar, said that among 20 waste-producing countries in the world, Pakistan is number 16.

"We live in an era of consumerism which means lots of waste is generated. Hence there is a dire need to change our lifestyles," she stressed.

Nausheen said waste could be made productive as recycling is a big industry, adding that the government, citizens and communities will have to play their roles in dealing with solid waste. "The livelihood of ordinary people is associated with recycling industry but waste management methods in the country are poor," she explained.

The main issue with solid waste management is that we consider solid waste as mere waste – kachra – while it should be considered a resource, said Farhan.

He explained that waste must be categorised as 'organic' and 'inorganic'. Organic waste comprises food and kitchen waste while inorganic waste consists of paper, plastic and metal. He added that many things that we throw away as garbage can be recovered and converted into value-added products.

In addition to Farhan's point, Nausheen said, "We need to find the connection between garbage and business," adding that waste is also consumed to produce energy.

"We produce thousands of tonnes of solid waste but there is no reliable data about the amount of solid waste the city generates daily," Nausheen pointed out.

An architect from Indus Valley School of Arts and Architecture, Ahmed Mian, said waste management is a totally unregulated sector in Karachi. "We need to differentiate between garbage and recyclable materials," he said, adding to the argument made by the other two speakers. Talking about architectural debris waste, he said construction of buildings produces a lot of garbage but we don't know how to manage it.

The experts were of the view that recycling is not practiced in the country. Therefore, dumping and trash burning are common near our homes. Moreover, burning trash can pose a serious health concern. Farhan said nobody really knew what sort of health problems can be caused by burning garbage in the open air, pointing out that no authentic research had been done on the subject as yet.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1166055/trash-talk-need-connect-garbage-business-stressed/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 8TH TO AUGUST 14TH 2016

GUJJAR NULLAH CLEANUP: ALMOST 700 HOUSES, SHOPS DISLODGED

The Express Tribune, August 9th, 2016.

KARACHI: Around 685 unauthorised houses and shops have been demolished in the last two weeks during the ongoing anti-encroachment drive along Gujjar Nullah.

This was stated by Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) anti-encroachment director Mazhar Khan while speaking to The Express Tribune.

Due to the strict orders from higher authorities, the operation is being carried out on daily basis, he informed.

Speaking about the hurdles during the drive, he said there are around 30,000 houses on the nullah and when the drive started the residents would throw stones at KMC's teams. "However, soon police and Rangers were asked to accompany the team and protect them", he explained.

District Central deputy commissioner Fariduddin Mustufa, while commenting on the operation, added that the 13-km long Gujjar Nullah is one of the most important nullahs for drainage of rainwater and its encroachment can lead to urban flooding in the city.

The plan to reclaim the nullah is being implemented so that machineries could easily clean it before the rain comes again, he claimed.

Mustafa also mentioned that during the recent rains, the situation was much better as many encroachments at Gujjar Nullah had been removed and it was easily cleaned.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1158237/gujjar-nullah-cleanup-almost-700-houses-shops-dislodged/>

FIR REGISTERED AGAINST FIRM FOR CUTTING DOWN 540 NEEM TREES

Dawn, August 10th, 2016

Bhagwandas

KARACHI: The Sindh forests department (SFD) finally succeeded in getting an FIR registered on Tuesday against the firm organising the annual cattle market for cutting down its 540 neem trees along the Superhighway between Toll Plaza and the Wadi-i-Hussain graveyard.

The SFD had been trying for the past many days to get the FIR registered but the Malir police had refused to register the case.

The FIR was eventually registered on the orders of the district and sessions Judge of Malir, who was also approached by the SFD on the issue.

The FIR (No 93/16) has been registered on the report by SFD Range Forest Officer Imran Bhutto under Sections 379, 427, 34, etc of the Pakistan Penal Code, against the Everest International, which is setting up a temporary cattle market in the vicinity.

Judge Khalid Hussain Shahani in his order also advised the deputy commissioner of Malir to look into the issue of cutting down of 540 neem trees along the Superhighway and submit a report by Thursday (Aug 11).

In his order, issued on the SFD's application on Monday, the judge had ordered the Malir SHO to register a case against the officials of M/s Everest International and advised the SSP (operations) to appoint an honest police officer, not below the rank of a DSP, to investigate the case and take the suspect to task.

The SFD, on the orders of the president of Pakistan, had planted neem trees on over a couple of kilometres long stretch along the Superhighway from Toll Plaza to the Wadi-i-Hussain graveyard some eight years back.

Last week over 540 neem trees of that plantation were cut down so that a temporary cattle market being set up there could be visible from the road.

The SFD approached the police but they did not register the FIR and just took the application.

The order says that the SHO Malir is reported to say that though such an application was received by him but since nobody came forward to record the statement, as provided under Section 154 of the criminal procedure code, therefore no case was registered.

The order says that a report furnished by the assistant commissioner of Malir affirms that hundreds of trees have been cut down and Maveshi Mandi was being established by the M/s Everest International.

The AC Malir in response to a question said that neither the property on which the market was being set up belonged to the Everest International, nor the Sindh government had given any permission to it to establish a mandi, therefore apparently it seemed that all was being done without a lawful authority.

Meanwhile, divisional forest officer Attaullah Shaikh through a communication had also approached the Station Commander of Malir Cantonment informing him that on the midnight of Aug 4 over 540 neem trees had been ruthlessly cut in front of Askari Housing Scheme (AHS) and when the forest officials came on the scene the people cutting the plantation escaped along with their shovels and entered the AHS.

When forest officials approached the AHS no response was given, however, a water bowser came out of the AHS and threw water at the gate to remove the wheel marks of the bowser entering the AHS.

The trees have been cut to give visibility from the road to an 'unauthorised' cattle market being set up by the Everest International on land proposed for the AHS, says the DFO in his communication — copies of which have been sent to the headquarters Corps 5 Karachi; director general housing, GHQ, Rawalpindi; headquarters 25 mechanized division Malir Garrison — and has requested that immediate legal action is initiated against the culprits as per law.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1276539>

STONE CRUSHING PLANTS SEALED IN ABBOTTABAD

Dawn, August 11th, 2016

ABBOTTABAD: The district administration and Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) on Wednesday sealed many stone crushing plants for polluting local environment.

The residents of Chona Kari and Ghumawan areas had lodged complaints with the authorities against the stone crushing plants. The district administration and EPA first served notices on the owners of the stone crushing plants for polluting environment and posing a problem for the residents of the both villages.

However, the owners did not bother to respond to the notices and continued to crush stones. Additional Assistant Commissioner Syed Abbass Ali Shah Bukhari along with a team of EPA raided the stone crushing plants and sealed about 12 plants for violating rules and creating pollution, which was dangerous for the health of residents of the area.

On the occasion, Syed Abbas Ali Shah said that they sealed the plants on the complaints of the villagers, were disturbed by the noise and dust of the plants.

He said that they would take strict action against other plants if they received any complaint about it.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1276808>

KARACHI'S GARBAGE CRISIS

Dawn, August 12th, 2016

AMONGST the many tragedies that have afflicted Karachi over the decades — such as crime, terrorism and urban blight — the city's solid waste problem is assuming crisis proportions.

In neighbourhoods across the city — from the enclaves of the elite to the sprawling urban slums — there are mounds of garbage piling up everywhere, with the provincial government and municipal authorities at sea about how to solve the problem.

The new Sindh chief minister has made statements about how he wants Karachi cleaned up; but beyond well-intentioned words, the city's residents want to know whether the rulers have any real plan to combat the garbage menace.

As urban planners point out, there is no reliable data about the amount of solid waste the metropolis generates on a daily basis, though estimates suggest it runs into thousands of tonnes.

Much of the waste ends up in dumps, alleyways and open spaces where it remains for weeks if not longer, while some of it is burnt in bonfires that unleash a vile miasma that chokes the entire locality.

Surely, Karachi deserves better. Though this situation has persisted for decades, it has become worse over the past few years; state-sponsored cleanliness drives have produced no lasting results.

Experts say the problem is that the state does not treat waste management in a holistic manner.

For example, while statements about lifting garbage will be made, it is unclear how it will be ultimately disposed of. Waste disposal and treatment is a linked exercise, from garbage generation to disposal, and must be addressed in a systematic way.

Moreover, the state should realise that garbage collection will not only result in a cleaner city, it can also result in revenue through energy generation, creating compost from organic waste, recycling material etc.

A proper plan overseen by elected local governments — accompanied by a campaign sensitising citizens about proper waste-disposal methods — should be the government's top priority; if need be, the model of other cities, such as Lahore, can be studied.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1276937>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 1ST TO AUGUST 7TH 2016

DIRTY WATER STUNTS MILLIONS OF INDIAN CHILDREN: STUDY

Business Recorder, August 01, 2016

India is home to the world's largest number of stunted children due to a lack of toilets, dirty water and poor hygiene, according to a new study published on Tuesday. Despite high economic growth in recent years, India has more stunted children than Nigeria, Pakistan, China and the Republic of Congo combined, with 48 million under the age of five – about 30 percent of the global total, a WaterAid report said.

Stunting is a form of malnutrition in which children are shorter than normal for their age and is largely irreversible after the age of two.

If they survive, they grow up physically and intellectually weaker than their better-fed peers. WaterAid says a lack of toilets and clean water are causing high levels of stunting in India.

That is because high rates of open defecation lead to contamination that can spread disease and infection.

Data collated by WaterAid showed that 140,000 children die every year from diarrhoea in India, while 76 million do not have access to safe water and 774 million live without adequate sanitation.

“India has the highest number of people in the world... practising open defecation, which spreads deadly diseases and makes children more susceptible to diarrhoea and other infections,” said Megan Wilson-Jones, WaterAid health and hygiene analyst. “So it is no surprise that so many children in India suffer from stunted growth,” she added.

Open defecation has long been a major health and sanitation problem in India, where almost 594 million people – nearly half the population – defecate in the open, according to UNICEF.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stressed the need to clean up India since storming to power in 2014 and has repeatedly urged every household to have a toilet within four years to end the spread of disease.

Nigeria ranked second with 10.3 million stunted children while Pakistan stood third in WaterAid's study with 9.9 million.

Impoverished Bangladesh fared better than its bigger, wealthier neighbour India, recording 5.5 million cases in its 160 million-strong population.

The country has almost eliminated open defecation in just over a decade through a concerted campaign to build toilets.

East Timor was the country where stunting was most prevalent.

Nearly 58 percent of the young nation's children suffered from the condition, while Germany had the lowest rate at 1.3 percent.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/pakistan:/70706:dirty-water-stunts-millions-of-indian-children-study/?date=2016-08-01>

POLLUTION FROM COMMERCIAL JETS HARMS ENVIRONMENT: US

Business Recorder, August 01, 2016

Greenhouse gases emitted by commercial airplanes contribute to global warming and endanger public health and the environment, US officials concluded on Monday, opening the path for regulation of passenger planes. The final assessment by the US Environmental Protection Agency supports the goals of President Barack Obama's plan to reduce emissions from large sources of carbon pollution.

US aircraft are “the single-largest greenhouse gas (GHG)-emitting transportation source not yet subject to GHG standards in the US,” said the EPA. Aircraft are responsible for about three percent of total US GHG emissions.

And US airplanes make up 29 percent of these emissions from all aircraft globally, said the EPA.

“Addressing pollution from aircraft is an important element of US efforts to address climate change,” said Janet McCabe, EPA’s acting assistant administrator for air and radiation. “Aircraft are the third-largest contributor to GHG emissions in the US transportation sector, and these emissions are expected to increase in the future,” she added.

“EPA has already set effective GHG standards for cars and trucks and any future aircraft engine standards will also provide important climate and public health benefits.”

It was necessary for the EPA to make a final determination that risks are posed to the environment in order to begin the regulatory process. However, Monday’s announcement neither proposes nor finalizes any such regulations.

The EPA said the emissions of concern are carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆).

The regulations would exclude small tourist aircraft and military airplanes.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/70710/>

REDUCTION IN USE OF PLASTIC BAGS PROPOSED

Dawn, August 4th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: A roundtable conference on sustainable development began on Wednesday by highlighting increasing population as Pakistan’s biggest challenge, and suggested reducing the consumption of plastic bags as a measure to adapt to the threat of an altering climate.

At the ‘National Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption and Production for the preparation of National Action Plan’, UN Country Representative Neil Buhane warned: “Pakistan’s huge population is a big challenge. The government’s Vision 2025 is similar to SDGs. The plastic bags are threat to environment. The imposition of a higher price on plastic bags can reduce their use.”

Participants of the two-day workshop contributed ideas for sustainable consumption and production in Pakistan, the efficient and affordable use of natural resources, the reduction of climate change vulnerabilities and to help achieve food, water and energy security.

Organised by the Ministry of Climate Change, the United Nations Environment Programme’s Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the European Union Switch Asia Programme, the workshop looked into ways to minimise pressure on natural resources and achieve sustainable development.

The workshop was also informed that on February 19, Pakistan became the first country in the world whose National Assembly passed a unanimous resolution adopting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda as its national development agenda.

SDG 12 of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development aims to ensure sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns.

Climate Change Minister Zahid Hamid said: “Global SDGs complement Pakistan’s Vision 2025.”

“The SDGs agenda is now Pakistan’s development agenda. The SDGs are PDGs – Pakistan Development Goals,” Mr Hamid added.

He said the sound management of natural resources required effective environmental governance, which could bring about a paradigm shift from environmentally insensitive development to inclusive, equitable and balanced economic growth driven by natural resource management, afforestation, biodiversity conservation and resource efficiency.

Mr Hamid said Pakistan ranks eighth on the list of countries most affected by climate change, and needed to adopt a “green growth” concept to achieve the implementation of policies that promote climate resilient, environmentally sustainable economic progress and foster low carbon, socially inclusive development at the same time.

He added that the conversion to a “green economy” would require economy-wide structural and technological changes through the “greening” of key sectors such as energy, urban infrastructure, transportation, industry and agriculture, as well as the “greening” of investments, the creation of green jobs and the facilitation of green trade.

The workshop was also informed that the Green Pakistan Programme, which focuses on reducing natural resource degradation and mitigating climate change impact would launch soon.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1275262>

OVER 600 TREES CUT DOWN

Dawn, August 5th, 2016

Bhagwandas

KARACHI: Over 600 fully grown Neem trees, which were planted along the Superhighway between Toll Plaza and Wadi-i-Hussein graveyard, have been chopped down reportedly to make a temporary cattle market being set up visible from the main road, it emerged here on Thursday.

When police were approached by Sindh Forest Department (SFD) officials for registering an FIR, they agreed only to receive a complaint.

Responding to Dawn queries, SFD’s range forest officer Imran Bhutto said the plantation was done on a directive of the president of Pakistan a few years back and the trees had shown good growth.

He said on Wednesday night some people, said to be working for the contractor who is developing the temporary cattle market, chopped down the over 600 fully grown Neem trees, planted along the Superhighway, so that the cattle market could be visible to visitors from the main road.

He said he went to the Malir Cantonment Police Station to register an FIR but the police officer, Azeem Solangi, did not register the FIR and said he would seek permission for it from his superior officials. He, however, received a complaint, added Mr Bhutto.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1275475>

WAR AGAINST GREENERY

Dawn, August 6th, 2016

HERE in Pakistan, there is no dearth of instances where short-term gain trumps long-term benefit, often while those who are meant to take a more forward-thinking view turn a blind eye.

This is what leads to problems such as, for example, the endless encroachments on public spaces in cities.

The latest iteration of this proclivity is reported from Karachi where on Wednesday night some 600 fully grown Neem trees planted along the Superhighway between the Toll Plaza and Wadi-i-Hussain graveyard were chopped down.

The trees were planted by the Sindh Forest Department a few years ago, according to a range forest officer, and had been thriving. But commercial concerns must always triumph: a temporary cattle market is being set up in the area, and the trees had to go so that it could more easily be visible from the main road to potential customers.

In other words, an asset that could have benefited the general public for decades was without a thought given up.

A moment's reflection upon Pakistan's realities might throw up the idea that this is hardly surprising. But the same can possibly be said about the follow-up, which is that when the police were approached by SFD officials for registering an FIR, they agreed only to receive a complaint.

It would perhaps be a small matter were it not for the fact that this pattern of waging a war against greenery is amongst the more insidious, yet little remarked upon issues in Pakistan.

Whether it is the city administration chopping down trees in Lahore for the Canal Road widening project, or the timber mafia doing the same and by degrees denuding the country's forests, the practice is widespread.

The way out of the situation is simple — at least on paper: raise awareness amongst the citizenry and law enforcers, enhance the capacities of the latter, and keep watch on the consequences of climate change. Straightforward remedies, but seemingly far-fetched in the context of Pakistan.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1275686/war-against-greenery>

HOUBARA CONSERVATION PLAN

Dawn, August 6th, 2016

KARACHI: The Pakistan Army and nongovernmental organisation Houbara Foundation International Pakistan (HFIP) dispersed seeds of arid zone plants over the Cholistan Desert through aircraft on Friday morning.

This is the annual programme being conducted jointly by the army and the HFIP, which works for the conservation of the wildlife particularly the houbara bustard for the past 19 years, a HFIP statement says.

This time over 90 kilograms of seeds of desert plants — *Zizyphus nummularia* (locally called Malah Berry), *Fagonia cretica* linn (Dharman) and *Farestia jacquemonti* (Lathia) — have been sprayed.

These plants are consumed by various wildlife species and are particularly favourite of migratory bird houbara bustard, which comes to spend its winter in arid zones of the country particularly the Cholistan Desert.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1275677>

TREE CUTTING: MOURNING THE LOSS OF THE YOUNG NEEMS

The Express Tribune, August 6th, 2016.

KARACHI: Sitting next to Wadi-e-Hussain graveyard off Super Highway, Shujaat Hussain isn't mourning the loss of a loved one but hundreds.

A day earlier, as many as 540 Neem trees that Hussain has been taking care of for the last three years were brutally chopped down to pave way for a cattle market set up by a private company.

On Friday afternoon, Hussain sat under the grey skies staring at the corpses of the young Neem trees. "They were so young," said the gardener of the Sindh Wildlife Department. It was a rude shock for the man to come to work on Thursday morning and find the trees bulldozed. "As soon as I arrived at the spot, the tree cutters ran away on their motorcycles," he pointed out. "It's not an easy task to grow a Neem tree in an arid region. We grew thousands of them," he said.

According to Sindh Forest Department range officer Imran Bhutto, 10,000 Neem trees were planted nine years ago on National Highway Authority land between Wadi-e-Hussain graveyard and New Sabzi Mandi.

“These trees are a landmark for Karachi,” he said, explaining that whoever enters Karachi can spot these trees from a distance and know they have entered city limits.

Preliminary probe into the matter revealed that a company named Everest International has received permission from Askari Foundation, related to the defence forces, to establish a cattle market at this location.

This is surprising given there is an official cattle market located a stone’s throw away and private individuals are not allowed to set up their own markets. Malir cantonment official Munawar Aleem Rana said that no other cattle market is allowed to be established on Super Highway other than the one at Sohrab Goth. Stern action will be taken against the management of the private cattle market if it is set up, he warned.

Everest has even invited tenders through various newspapers mentioning the same location of the cattle market as the site where the trees were bulldozed.

An Everest International consultant, Rahat Ali, told The Express Tribune that they have permission from Askari Foundation, and not Cantonment Board Malir, to run the cattle market. The cantonment board runs the official cattle market on Sohrab Goth and is the relevant authority in this matter.

“We don’t need any no-objection certificate from Malir deputy commissioner or the cantonment board as we have direct permission from Askari Foundation,” he claimed, before denying that the company bulldozed any trees in the area. “We have rooted out only a few small plants,” he insisted.

Meanwhile, Bhutto from the forest department blamed Everest for bulldozing the trees to create parking space for the private cattle market. The department tried to lodge an FIR against the culprits but the cantonment police station refused, he said. A Cantonment police station officer, Azeem Solangi, said they are looking into the matter and will register a case as soon as they know who the culprit is.

Karachi commissioner Ejaz Ahmed Khan, who had recently announced that tree-cutting has been made a punishable offence, was unaware of this incident. “I will definitely take action against the culprits,” he said. Meanwhile, the Malir deputy commissioner was unavailable for comments.

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://tribune.com.pk/story/1156637/tree-cutting-mourning-loss-young-neems/>

HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS: TEXTILE BRANDS, RETAILERS SET TO MINIMIZE INDUSTRIAL RELEASES
Business Recorder, August 6, 2016

LAHORE: Many of the textile brands and retailers in Pakistan are committed to their responsibility for people and the environment and they are ready to recognize the urgent need for minimizing industrial releases of all hazardous chemicals, said a spokesman of the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association.

In line with a long-term sustainability program, the front runners are committed to prevention of pollution and aim at zero discharge of all hazardous chemicals along their supply chain until no later than 2020.

It may be noted that the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association have initiated the Partnership on Sustainable Textiles in October 2014 to respond to the need for sustainable production and consumption as well the increasing awareness of the citizens and the civil society.

Beside of improving social standards, the establishment of environmental standards including the sustainable management of chemicals along the textile value chain is the major issue of the Partnership.

The targets of the partnership regarding sustainable chemicals management include the substitution of hazardous chemicals by 2020 through a strategy on zero discharge of hazardous chemicals. The most critical substances are listed in Manufactures Restricted Substances Lists (MRSL).

Through adequate capacity development and technical assistance, the partnership will support the manufactures in the producing countries in complying with the agreed standards.

A major initiative under the programme is to follow the campaign initiated by Greenpeace with the target to phase out hazardous chemicals in the textile value chain by 2020.

The Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC) is a group of major producers and brands which are committed to the 2020 goal.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/08/06/11-page/783728-news.html>

September 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 26TH TO OCTOBER 2ND 2016

POLLUTION: COURT CENSURES K-P OVER FILTH, POOR SANITATION IN PESHAWAR

The Express Tribune, September 30th, 2016.

Fawad Ali

PESHAWAR: A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) has held authorities in the K-P capital responsible for transforming the city of flowers into a cesspool of filth and poor sanitation.

Hearing a case against increasing pollution and poor sanitation filed by Hamid Khan, a two-judge bench observed on Thursday that the provincial capital was turned into a 'God forsaken city' due to dereliction of duties by the authorities.

"If they [authorities] continue to drag their feet and fail to perform then we have to take some punitive action and send them packing," said Justice Qaiser Rasheed, the head of the bench.

Counsels for Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP), Cantonment Board Peshawar (CBP) Transport Department, district government as well as the Environment Protection Agency director general Dr Muhammad Bashir Khan appeared before the bench.

When the hearing commenced on the petition, the EPA's DG informed the court that solid waste was still being burnt in the open air despite the court's clear directions.

Justice Rasheed asked the CBP executive officer to explain why burning of waste was not stopped. The CBP official replied that a contractor, who was tasked to dispose of the waste, was burning it. He said notices had been served on him.

The judge asked as to why the CBP was not cancelling the agreement with the contractor who was causing problems to the residents.

In response to the WSSP comments in which it termed the petition as frivolous and fictitious, the bench observed that it was not the proper reply to a court notice.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1191115/pollution-court-censures-k-p-filth-poor-sanitation-peshawar/>

OUT OF NOWHERE: MEGABATS TAKE OVER ALL THE BIG TREES ON ISLAND

The Express Tribune, September 30th, 2016.

Sarfraz Memon

SUKKUR: Thousands of megabats, also known as fruit bats, have occupied all the big trees on an island situated in the middle of River Indus near Sukkur Barrage. Earlier, such bats were seen in the katcha area of Piryalo and Pir Jo Goth.

How the island was formed is an interesting story. Ten out of 66 gates of Sukkur Barrage were permanently closed back in 1942 due to accumulation of large amounts of silt in its right pocket. With the passage of time, silt continued to accumulate and a big island has now emerged with a large number of trees. As the island remains mostly deserted, the megabats have apparently chosen this place as their roosting area.

According to residents, the megabats were first spotted 15 days ago. During a visit to the island, it was observed that bunches of megabats were hanging upside down on the branches. Many branches of the trees had broken down, apparently due to the bats' weight.

When they sensed human presence, they started making noise and flew from here to there. However, they did not attack anyone. Apart from adult megabats, juvenile bats were also seen hanging. The size of a juvenile megabat was larger than that of an eagle while the wing span of the adult megabats is around one-and-a-half metres.

Contrary to common perception that megabats attack humans and small birds and animals, it was observed that crows, egrets and other birds were fearlessly sitting near them and the bats were indifferent to them. Nevertheless, they seemed disturbed by and afraid of human presence.

WWF-Pakistan Sukkur chapter senior project officer Imran Malik, who was also present on the island, said that there are many species of the megabats in the world. Contrary to common perception, these megabats do not eat flesh or suck blood, he said, adding that they eat fruits and suck nectar from flowers for their survival.

Talking about the behaviour of the megabats, Malik said that they choose such a roosting place where water is available along with a large number of trees. At night, they fly to their feeding place, he said, adding that their nesting place can be somewhere else.

“No doubt these bats cause extensive damage to fruit trees and destroy flowers and soft branches of trees but they are very helpful as well,” said Malik. “After eating fruit and other flowers, their droppings contain the seeds of that particular fruit or flower and thus help in spreading the trees at other places.”

Besides they carry pollen on their wings and body and travel from male tree to female trees, which is the best way of pollination, he added. According to him, governments in developed countries compensate the losses of farmers to discourage the killing of the megabats.

However, he added, we don't have such a mechanism here in Pakistan and, therefore, the farmers are afraid of the bats and try to kill them. He appealed to the people, especially farmers, not to kill megabats as they are completely harmless for humans, birds and animals.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1190860/nowhere-megabats-take-big-trees-island/>

PAKISTAN'S CHALLENGES: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS 2015-2030: DOING MORE AND BETTER WITH LESS

Dawn, October 1st, 2016

Shafqat Kakakhel

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 calls for ensuring sustainable consumption and production (SCP), reaffirming global consensus on the centrality of sustainable practices in the quest for sustainable development — commitments that were articulated in the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 adopted by the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992.

The targets linked to Goal 12 include sharp cuts in food losses and waste; environmentally sound management of chemicals; sustainable public sector procurement; enhancing knowledge and awareness about the benefits of sustainable practices and lifestyle; rationalisation of fossil fuels subsidies; and strengthening the scientific and technological capacity of developing countries to embrace SCP. I

It is correct to say that sustainability has mainstreamed the other SDGs, especially those related to poverty eradication, education and healthcare, water scarcity and pollution, renewable energy, economic growth and employment, etc. SCP patterns aim at maximising resource and energy efficiency. It is all about “doing more and better with less” and preventing all kinds of wastes and depletion of the ecosystems vital for human survival and prosperity.

Significantly, although Pakistan's contribution to the inter-governmental negotiations on the SDGs was negligible, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif did attend the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York in September 2015 at which the SDGs were adopted as the main content of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Then, in February this year, the National Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming the SDGs as the country's national development agenda.

In August, the government facilitated and actively contributed to an UN-sponsored round-table on SCP, where the minister for climate change, Zahid Hamid, described SCP as a means of ensuring “efficient, appropriate and affordable use of our natural resources, which reduces our vulnerability to climate change and helps achieve food, water, and energy security”.

Since then he has announced the government's plan to consult federal and provincial ministries, as well as non-state stakeholders on the recommendations of the round-table — and the outcome will be reflected in a National Action Plan on SCP.

Mr Hamid also referred to the prime minister's Green Pakistan Programme, aimed at arresting natural resource degradation and mitigating the adverse impacts of climate change.

Following such, it has been learnt that the government plans to revise the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS), which had been developed for the Rio+20 summit in 2012, with a view to reinforcing the references to sustainable industrial development; climate resilient infrastructure; mass transit system and conservation of land and marine biodiversity.

Meanwhile, sustainable consumption and production is crucially relevant for Pakistan given the massive degradation and depletion of natural resources due to the population explosion — from 32 million in 1947 to over 185 million in 2010 — and agricultural and industrial development pursued without regard for environmental sustainability.

Per capita, fresh water availability has declined from over 5,000 cubic meters in the 1950s to less than 1,000cm in 2010. Therefore, the quality of drinking water has deteriorated in most cities and towns, leading to a huge increase in water-borne diseases.

If that wasn't enough, the majority of rivers, lakes and ponds are heavily polluted and industrial, municipal and household waste continues to be dumped in water courses. Because of the decaying water infrastructure, there is a 40pc water loss in conveyance from dams to farms, which is seriously challenging for agricultural development. To add, industrial, agricultural and household chemicals are freely imported and used without any regulatory system.

Then, forest cover has dwindled from 5pc to around 3pc. Massive depletion of natural resources has meant the cutting of trees, resulting in increased timber imports for housing, furniture production and other usage. Resultantly, health and productivity are impacted because of the lack of sustainability.

The challenges are numerous given Pakistan's resource efficiency is among the lowest in Asia. At the government-led round table on sustainable consumption and production last month, it was disclosed that we use 1,070 litres of water for each dollar worth of GDP compared to the Asian average of 128 litres.

Pakistan's energy efficiency is estimated at 128 megajoules (MJ) per dollar, whereas the Asian average is 16MJ per dollar. The main causes of unsustainable consumption and production are rooted in poor governance, corruption, incompetence and inefficiency, non-existent or dysfunctional legal and regulatory systems, and lack of expertise in government agencies and among citizens.

The comprehensive Pakistan Environmental Protection Act (PEPA) enacted in 1997 was followed by the Environment Policy, which includes policies and action plans on a range of issues that, implicitly or explicitly, aim at promoting sustainable consumption and production — such as cleaner production, protecting biodiversity, desertification, clean drinking water, etc. However, most of the policies and action plans are largely unimplemented with the institutions established under PEPA moribund.

And while the proposed formulation of a national action plan on SCP should be welcomed, it is imperative that the real challenge lies in how to overcome governance, institutional, technical and technological constraints likely to impede the implementation of existing blueprints. This factor is also one of the challenges facing the other SDGs, perhaps, and their related targets.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1287276>

OVER 300 FRESHWATER TURTLES SEIZED, FOUR SUSPECTS HELD

Dawn, October 1st, 2016

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: In another major breakthrough, the wildlife department confiscated more than 300 live freshwater turtles on Thursday evening and arrested four men in Shaheed Benazirabad district.

Speaking to Dawn, officials said the turtles, identified as black pond species (*Geoclemys hamiltonii*), were seized during a search of a vehicle at a checkpoint within the wildlife sanctuary located in Deh Akro II.

“They were kept in 20 jute bags in the vehicle bearing registration no. KG-5414. A first offence report (FoR) has been registered,” said deputy conservator wildlife Shaheed Benazirabad division, Dara Munir Qazi.

The suspects were identified as Ghulam Rasool, Gul Mohammad, Saddam Mallah, and driver Babu Zardari, he added.

According to him, the suspects have been produced in the court of judicial magistrate of taluka Daur and the case will be taken up once the jurisdiction of wildlife cases is decided.

“It's the first time that such a huge number of freshwater turtles have been seized in the district and we want that the offenders get strict punishment through the court, though the wildlife department has the authority to impose fines,” he explained.

All turtles were alive and being kept in the district wildlife office. “They would be released once we get court orders for the same,” he said.

To a question about how the offence was made in the wildlife sanctuary, he said that the suspects were transporting the turtles to Karachi via Sakrand through a deserted area called Mund Jumrao, the border area between Khairpur and Sanghar.

Chief conservator wildlife Saeed Akhtar Baloch said the case seemed to be part of the same ring exposed a few weeks ago in the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) area of Karachi.

“The accused Saddam Mallah arrested in the present case is the first cousin of Sachey Dinno Mallah, who is already booked in a turtle offence case,” he said.

The accused were all fishermen and caught turtles while fishing in the water bodies of Shaheed Benazirabad and Sanghar districts.

“The accused Saddam admitted during investigation that he been supplying turtles to Chinese in Karachi for the last seven months,” he added.

It is noteworthy that 780 freshwater turtles, all black pond species, were confiscated in a major raid last month in the DHA area and the wildlife department arrested 12 people including three Chinese.

Investigations showed that the turtles were all trapped from the Chotiari Dam area in Sanghar. Two key wildlife traffickers, Pappu Punjabi and Nawab Khan, were declared absconders in the case.

The case is currently being heard in court.

All freshwater turtle species of Pakistan are endangered and protected under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Balochistan wildlife protection acts and are included in the revised Sindh Wildlife Protection Act.

According to experts, illicit wildlife trade of freshwater turtles is escalating in Pakistan as there have been a number of cases in which these animals, particularly the black pond species, have been confiscated in large numbers in recent years.

Poaching and smuggling of freshwater turtles due to their demand in East Asian countries, particularly China, Hong Kong, South Korea and Vietnam, has led to a significant decline in their populations, they believe.

“Freshwater turtles of Pakistan are found in the entire Indus River system including its tributaries, irrigation canals, ponds and water reservoirs. Pakistan has eight species of freshwater turtles which dominate aquatic habitats.

“Turtles play a significant role in aquatic ecosystem being scavengers; they are responsible for cleaning the aquatic environment by feeding upon dead organic material and diseased fish. Freshwater turtles being a keystone species also control the population of fish,” says the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan website.

Meanwhile in another case, six men were arrested in Mitiari, Hyderabad, who were using two falcons as bait while another two suspects were held with three peafowl chicks in a village in Mithi, Tharparkar district.

“They had kept the chicks in a large bottle and were transporting them to Mirpurkhas in a bus,” said wildlife official Ghulam Sarwar Jamali, adding that a FoR had been registered and the accused being kept in the wildlife custody would be fined.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1287136/over-300-freshwater-turtles-seized-four-suspects-held>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 19TH TO SEPTEMBER 25TH 2016

SCORES OF TURTLE REMAINS FOUND ALONG SUKKUR LAKE

Dawn, September 19th, 2016

FaizaIlyas

KARACHI: Dozens of freshwater turtles were found dead on Saturday along a lake in Sukkur where they were released a week ago, it emerged on Sunday.

According to sources, scores of turtle remains were found along Kallar Lake, some 15km from Sukkur, where they were released following their seizure by the wildlife department in a raid on a Defence Housing Authority (DHA) bungalow in Karachi.

“I found them dead on the vegetation along the water body. They were about 90 in number,” a villager who counted the remains told Dawn on the phone.

Sources said that turtles also suffered mortality, around two dozen deaths, according to some media reports, during their travel from Karachi to Sukkur as they were kept in plastic bags and were mishandled while being unloaded from the truck. A number of turtles, sources added, fell from the truck as the barrier was lifted to take them out. The staff dragged them in bags to throw them in the lake.

“Some turtles had already died before they could be released,” said another villager who witnessed the turtles being released. The allegations are not without grounds as a video recently shared on social media clearly shows turtles being mishandled during the unloading process.

“The fact that turtles were not quarantined also made them very vulnerable to external risk factors. It’s important to quarantine such animals to ensure that they are healthy and safe to be released in the environment,” said a wildlife official on condition of anonymity.

Upon contact, provincial wildlife conservator Saeed Baloch rejected the information that the released turtles had died in large numbers or were mishandled, though he admitted that a few turtles may have died during unloading.

“I have no such information. It was a major seizure and releasing more than 700 turtles was by no means an easy task,” he said, adding that mortalities could occur during handling such a large number of animals.

The department didn’t have the facility to quarantine or tag turtles, he replied to another question.

“Besides, the law says confiscated animals should be released as soon as possible into the wild, which we did.

“The staff of the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWF-P) was also there at the time of the turtles’ release. You should also ask them about these allegations. Some of their staff members are trained in turtle handling,” he said.

Criticising what he described as a ‘media trial’, a wildlife official, who was involved in the raid and release of the turtles, said that reporting on turtle mortalities would demoralise the staff. “They did a wonderful job by confiscating and sending these creatures back to their habitat. But, instead of praise, we are being discouraged to carry out our duties,” he said, while arguing that WWF-P equally shared the ‘blame’ for poor handling if it was the case.

Some experts, however, believed that though the wildlife staff had potential for investigation, they lacked training to handle animals and there was a dire need to equip them and provide them with relevant training, facilities as well as increase their numbers.

The WWF-P official based in Sukkur said that he could only give a statement on Monday when he would join the office after holidays.

A total of 780 live freshwater turtles identified as black pond species (*Geoclemys hamiltonii*) were confiscated in a major raid on traffickers in DHA. Twelve suspects, including three Chinese, were arrested and sent to judicial custody. Later, nine suspects including the three Chinese were granted bail.

Investigations showed that the turtles were all trapped from the Chotiari Dam area in Sanghar. Two key wildlife traffickers, Pappu Punjabi and Nawab Khan, were declared absconders in the case.

The turtles, most of them female, were later released by the wildlife department into either the Kallarlake or the Nara canal, both located in Sukkur.

All freshwater turtle species of Pakistan are endangered and protected under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Balochistan wildlife protection acts and are included in the revised Sindh Wildlife Protection Act.

According to experts, illicit wildlife trade of freshwater turtles is escalating in Pakistan as there have been a number of cases in which these animals, particularly the black pond species, have been confiscated in large numbers in recent years. Poaching and smuggling of freshwater turtles due to their demand in East Asian countries, particularly China, Hong Kong, South Korea and Vietnam, has led to a significant decline in their populations, they believe.

“Freshwater turtles of Pakistan are found in the entire Indus River system including its tributaries, irrigation canals, ponds and water reservoirs. Pakistan has eight species of freshwater turtles which dominate aquatic habitats.

“Turtles play a significant role in aquatic ecosystem being scavengers; they are responsible for cleaning the aquatic environment by feeding upon dead organic material and diseased fish. Freshwater turtles being a keystone species also control the population of fish,” says the WWF-P website.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1284615>

PM REJECTS DESIGN, ROUTE FOR PROPOSED CHAIRLIFT DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS
Dawn, September 21st, 2016

KASHIF ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has rejected the design and route of the Capital Development Authority's (CDA) proposal for a chairlift, from the foothills of the Margallas up to Pir Sohawa village, on environmental grounds.

The design for the proposed project was forwarded to the prime minister by the CDA through the Capital Administration and Development Division (CADD).

Chairing a meeting to review the CDA's projects, CADD Minister Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry directed CDA Chairman Sheikh Ansar Aziz and other officials on Tuesday to redesign the route for the proposed chairlift. It was also decided during the meeting that Dr Chaudhry and CDA officials will visit the Margalla Hills to finalise the route.

Dr Chaudhry said: “Today, I directed the CDA to redesign the route of the proposed cable car project, as the prime minister has rejected out proposed route and design.”

Speaking to Dawn, he said Mr Sharif has directed that the project be redesign to avoid the felling of trees. “Now, we will design the route in the alignment of the existing Daman-i-Koh/Pir Sohawa road to avoid tree cutting,” he said.

“After finalising the design and route, we will advertise this project to call for expressions of interest from national and international firms.”

According to the CDA’s initial plan, cable cars would operate close to the Islamabad zoo, stop briefly at Daman-i-Koh and head up to Nakhiala Peak near the Pir Sohawa village. The entire distance covered 2.5 kilometres, base camp would be 1,995 feet above sea level with a peak station at 3,839 feet.

The project is a decade old. Various CDA administrations have announced the project only to shelve it after criticism from environmentalists. In 2002, when the authority was a subordinate organisation of the interior ministry, the interior minister chaired several meetings to launch the project but failed to execute it. Back then, the total cost of the project was estimated to be Rs500 million.

This time around, the CADD minister is optimistic that his team will manage to start the project after eliminating all environment-related problems.

However, the Margalla Hills have officially been a national park since 1980, under section 21(1) of the Islamabad Wildlife (Protection, Conservation and Management) Ordinance 1979.

Its park status prohibits any kind of commercial activity or settlement in the area. The CDA previously relaxed these rules to develop Daman-i-Koh and Monal Restaurant in the heart of the hills, thereby disturbing wildlife.

Some CDA officials Dawn spoke to said if launched properly, the project would boost tourism in the capital. One CDA official said there should be no environmental concern because “we can design the project to be completely environmentally-friendly”.

During Tuesday’s meeting, several other projects, such as the Bara Kahu bypass, provincial pavilions at Saidpur Village, carpeting Constitution Avenue, and sectors – such as Park Enclave I and II, C-15 and I-15, were discussed in detail. The minister directed the CDA to complete ongoing projects as soon as possible.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1285063>

COMPLETION OF RBOD-II ONLY SOLUTION TO PROTECT MANCHHAR LAKE, SAYS OFFICIAL

Dawn, September 21st, 2016

DADU: Adviser to the Sindh chief minister on irrigation Babar Hussain Effindi has said that completion of the Right Bank Outfall Drain (RBOD-II) project is the only solution to protect Manchhar Lake and its surrounding areas from contamination of water in Main Nara Valley (MNV) Drain.

He said the federal government had not released funds, which delayed the project and the situation affected population of Manchhar Lake and its surrounding areas.

Addressing a press conference at the circuit house of Sehwan Sharif on Tuesday, he said contaminated water of the lake was not only dangerous for the people fishing in the lake and its species, but also for the people of Kotri, Hyderabad, Thatta and Karachi if the water was released into River Indus. He was accompanied by a team of water and irrigation experts like Sukkur Barrage Chief Engineer Nazeer Hussain Mahar, superintendent engineers Ikram Hussain Qureshi and Abdul Qadir Palejo and Engineer Zaheer Hussain Memon.

He said that not only saline and polluted water of upper Sindh was flowing into the Manchhar lake through the MNV drain, but untreated waste of industries and factories of Balochistan and Punjab was also coming into the lake.

He said it was must to divert this water of the MNV drain into sea after construction of RBOD-II project which was a long term planning to protect the lake.

He said that more than 60 per cent construction work of RBOD-II was completed and the remaining would be completed as soon as the federal government released funds to the irrigation department of Sindh.

He said that on the directives of Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, he reached Sehwan along with the team of irrigation engineers to find a solution and submit a report to the CM for long term and short term solutions.

He strictly directed irrigation officials of Shahbaz division of Sehwan Sharif not to release contaminated water of Manchhar Lake into River Indus.

He also visited areas surrounding Manchhar Lake and held meetings with fishermen and local Abadgars at Bund Manchhar, Zero Point, Shah Hassan and Bubak.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1285013>

YELLOW TURTLE IS ALBINO, NOT A NEW SPECIES, SAYS WILDLIFE DEPT OFFICIAL

Dawn, September, 22nd, 2016

KARACHI: With reference to reports circulated in social, print and electronic media regarding a yellow turtle found near Nindo town of Badin district being a new species, the Sindh wildlife ministry on Thursday said it was not rare as the turtle was albino.

Saeed Akhtar Balouch, conservator in the ministry, said the turtle portrayed in pictures and footages was an albino amongst the *Lissemys punctata* (Indian flap shell turtle), a freshwater water turtle species found in South Asia.

He said the Indian flap shell turtle was declared under the second schedule of Sindh Wildlife Protection Ordinance 1972 as protected animal and was placed in the Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife Fauna and Flora (CITES).

“The Indian flap shell turtle — commonly found in Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and Burma — is known to be omnivorous and its diet consists of frogs, fishes, shrimp, snails, aquatic vegetation, plant leaves, flowers, fruits, grasses and seeds,” said the official.

“It lives in the shallow quiet often stagnant waters of rivers, streams, marshes, ponds, lakes and irrigation canals.”

Mr Balouch said the species was not new to Sindh or Pakistan but due to albinism congenital disorder characterized by the complete or partial absence of pigment in skin, hair and eyes due to absence or defect of tyrosine, a copper-containing enzyme involved in the production of melanin.

“It is the opposite of melanism,” he said. “Unlike human, other animals have multiple pigments and for these, albinism is considered to be a hereditary condition characterised by the absence of melanin particularly in eyes, skin, hair, scales, feathers or cuticle.”

He said the field staff of Badin district had already been asked to check and report for further scientific investigation of the species from academia and turtle experts.

Speaking to reporters, the wildlife official denied reports about mortality of several black-spotted turtles released in Kaller Lake of Sukkur district.

Mr Balouch said there was no evidence found of such high level mortality of black pond turtle at Kaller Lake during his visit on Tuesday as reported in electronic media late night of the same day. He said he spent a whole day on the spot and checked suitability of the lake personally and also met the surrounding community.

Mr Balouch informed to the media that the place chosen for the release of turtle, i.e., Kaller Lake, was found as most suitable habitat as the black pond turtles commonly found in the quite shallow often stagnant waters of river, streams, marshes, pond, lakes and irrigation canals.

The Kaller Lake was fed directly from Indus River. He added that about 218 black pond turtles were also released in the same lake in 2014 which were repatriated from China where they were attempted to be smuggled from Pakistan and the same were enjoying their free life there.

He said the field staff had already been deployed with strict instructions to provide maximum protection to the released turtles and indication signboards were placed at the lake for information or in case of any mishap.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1285258>

STAKEHOLDERS UNSURE ABOUT SEPA'S ABILITY TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE OF STANDARDS

Dawn, September, 23rd, 2016

HASAN MANSOOR

KARACHI: Many stakeholders attending a public hearing on Thursday expressed doubts about the capacity and authority of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) to effectively carry out post-EIA (environmental impact assessment) monitoring of development projects, despite assurances given by its chief.

They said it was difficult to believe that the regulatory agency would manage to ensure that public and private organisations complied with the environmental laws and fulfilled the commitments they made before launch of the projects.

Organised by Sepa, the public hearing discussed in detail an EIA report on a coal trans-shipment project at two berths of the Port Qasim Authority (PQA).

The proposed project involves turning, according to the planners, two berths of the PQA into modern coal-handling facilities. After completion of the project, the two berths are proposed to handle about 30,000 tonnes of coal a day.

The project will be developed by the Huaneng Fuyun Port and Shipping (Pvt) Ltd, a joint venture of Huaneng Shandong Ruyi (Pakistan) Energy (Pvt) Ltd and Qungdao Old Captain Shipping Company Ltd.

The project will be meant to supply coal imported from South Africa to Sahiwal where the Chinese have invested in a coal-fired power plant said to be part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The EIA of the project has been prepared by the Global Environmental Management Services.

Shabbir Anwar Kazi, the PQA's director general (technical), said his organisation was building an advanced facility at the PQA dedicated to safe coal operations that created minimal environmental hazards.

He said that no project could be launched without approval of Sepa and the project under review would be implemented in such a manner that the environment would largely remain unaffected.

Even though many environmental experts, representatives of civil society and owners of the factories located in the vicinity attended the hearing, none of the people who owned small shops and restaurants expected to be dismantled for the project showed up, perhaps because the event was not widely publicised.

The owners of factories in the area expressed concern over the proposed presence of huge facilities dealing with coal in the vicinity which, according to them, could contaminate their products.

They said that with an increasing number of coal facilities being set up at the PQA, the day was not far off when the port would be transformed into a ‘coal port’.

Industrialists and environmental campaigners also expressed doubts over implementation of the ambitious mitigation measures mentioned in the report, saying that similar promises had been made before launch of previous projects as well.

Mr Kazi said the PQA had five silos which had the capacity to cater to the needs. “We have enough capacity to cater to coal as well as everything that we have been facilitating so far. We are evolving keeping in view the international standards,” he said.

The participants also questioned why the authorities were building a separate facility for handling coal for the CPEC when the Pakistan International Bulk Terminal (PIBT) was already being set up there. The terminal is regarded as the country’s first terminal for coal, clinker and cement.

A representative of the PIBT said that like many other stakeholders attending the meeting his organisation too should have been regarded as a stakeholder and consulted. He said the PIBT would have ample capacity to handle the additional coal required for the CPEC project.

A representative of the IUCN wanted to know whether or not the mangrove trees to be uprooted from near the existing railway line would be replanted.

Some participants said that according to some studies, pollution in the area had already touched alarming levels.

Naeem Ahmed Mughal, the director general of Sepa, said that unlike many countries where coal was used extensively for producing electricity Pakistan used less than one per cent of coal in its power plants.

He said there were facilities dealing in coal in the world which had been set up within the communities but these posed no dangers because of modern safety measures.

He said the planners would have to strictly follow the safety design and Sepa would be there to monitor the post-approval environmental situation. He also asked the industry representatives to follow safety standards in order to mitigate environmental hazards in the area.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1285503>

IN THE WILD, GOLDFISH TURN FROM PET TO PEST

The Express Tribune, September, 24th, 2016

STEPH YIN

Two decades ago, someone dropped a handful of unwanted pet goldfish into a creek in southwestern Australia. Those goldfish grew, swam downstream, mucked up waters wherever they went and spawned like mad. Before long, they took over the whole river.

Researchers from Murdoch University believe this scenario, or something like it, is the cause of a feral goldfish invasion in Australia’s Vasse River. Since 2003, they have been running a goldfish tracking and control program that involves catching fish along the length of the river, freezing them to death and studying them in the lab.

Despite this program, goldfish in the Vasse are thriving, with some fish growing as long as 16 inches and weighing up to four pounds — the size of a two-liter soda bottle.

Goldfish are one of the world's worst invasive aquatic species, with outbreaks also having been reported in Nevada, Colorado and Alberta, Canada, in the last several years. Goldfish in the Vasse River, though, "have the fastest known growth rate of goldfish in the world," said Stephen Beatty, a researcher at Murdoch University who helps lead the control program. If his team gets the Vasse's goldfish problem in order, its work could inform goldfish management efforts far beyond Australia.

Goldfish invasions start with a disconnect between how people view goldfish and what goldfish are like in the wild, Dr. Beatty said. "Once you introduce something into a new environment — even if it's a cute, cuddly aquarium fish — it can have quite unexpected, serious biological consequences."

The goldfish is a domesticated carp, first bred in ancient China for ornamental gardens. For centuries, goldfish were prized symbols of luck and fortune. Shortly after they made their way to the United States in the mid-1800s, however, they transitioned from the exotic to the mundane.

The United States government played a large role in this, according to Katrina Gulliver, a historian who has chronicled the goldfish. For decades in the late 1800s, the newly established Commission on Fisheries gave goldfish to Washington, D.C., residents as a publicity stunt, handing out as many as 20,000 fish in some years.

In a New York Times article from 1894, a reporter jested, "The business of distributing free goldfish to the people of the District of Columbia has become such a tax on the Fish Commission that it appears they must choose between running a goldfish bureau for Washington exclusively and conducting the legitimate work of the bureau."

This, and the later practice of giving out goldfish at carnivals, spawned the harmful notion that goldfish are disposable and inconsequential. In fact, when tossed into waterways — particularly warm, nutrient-rich and relatively stagnant ones like the Vasse — goldfish behave in unexpected ways.

For one, they look different. Freed from the constraints of a tank, goldfish balloon to the size of footballs. Within a few generations, they revert to natural yellow and brown colors, in place of the bright orange that breeders try to achieve.

They are also an ecological nightmare. Goldfish swim along the bottom of lakes and rivers, uprooting vegetation, disturbing sediment and releasing nutrients that trigger excess algal growth. They feed broadly, eating algae, small invertebrates and fish eggs. To add insult to injury, they transmit exotic diseases and parasites.

Females produce up to 40,000 eggs each year — much more than most freshwater fish species — and are capable of interbreeding with other species of wild carp. With no natural predators, a large portion of goldfish offspring survive to reproductive age, continuing a cycle of rampant overpopulation.

So how do you get rid of them in a lasting way? Once they're established somewhere, eradicating goldfish is a notoriously difficult undertaking — which is why Murdoch scientists recently spent a year tracking the movement of the fish in the Vasse. Their study, published last month in *The Ecology of Freshwater Fish*, yielded some unexpected findings.

For starters, goldfish are long-distance swimmers — Dr. Beatty's team saw goldfish routinely travel the length of multiple football fields in a day, and even observed one fish that traveled more than 140 miles in a year.

For another, goldfish migrate to spawn. That's right, the same fish that are often kept in tiny bowls, swimming in circles, navigate in droves to an off-channel wetland during breeding season.

It is perhaps a surprising finding for a domesticated species, but the behavior seems to be innate, Dr. Beatty said, and points to goldfish having complex cognitive abilities.

“We think of goldfish as not being very intelligent — more like furniture or home accessories than sentient creatures,” said Dean Pomerleau, an engineer from Pittsburgh. But his family has trained pet goldfish to perform complicated tricks, such as nosing a tiny soccer ball into a net, and researchers have shown that goldfish can discriminate between music by Bach and Stravinsky. (Yes, goldfish can hear — they have evolved a bone structure that translates changes in pressure from sound waves from their swim bladder to their inner ear.)

A better understanding of goldfish behavior can inform management strategies, Dr. Beatty said, such as trapping fish en masse after they have migrated to their breeding grounds.

Meanwhile, to ensure goldfish invasions don’t get worse, it is crucial that pet owners get rid of unwanted fish responsibly, said Linda Walters, a biology professor at the University of Central Florida who has helped produce two children’s books on the dangers of emptying home aquariums into local waterways.

The best strategy is to give healthy fish away, to a responsible aquarium, pet store or hobbyist, Dr. Walters said. In Florida, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission takes unwanted exotic pets off people’s hands on regularly scheduled amnesty days.

If your fish is sick, the most humane way to kill it is probably to put it in an ice slurry. As for whether you should flush your fish down the toilet, experts recommend against it. Not only is there a slight chance your fish could survive a journey through the septic system and end up in the wild, but, in general, it’s just not a very pleasant way to say goodbye to Bubbles.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/23/science/discarded-goldfish-invasive-species.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 11TH TO SEPTEMBER 18TH 2016

SC ISSUES WARRANTS FOR OFFICIALS ABSENT FROM MANCHHAR LAKE POLLUTION HEARING

Dawn, September 11th, 2016

Tahir Siddiqui

KARACHI: Taking exception to the absence of the federal finance and planning secretaries during the hearing of the Manchhar lake contamination case, the Supreme Court has issued bailable warrants for their arrest and asked the senior superintendent of police (SSP) of Islamabad to ensure their attendance on the next date.

The order of the court that conducted the proceedings on Friday at the Karachi Registry was issued on Saturday.

The two-judge bench, headed by Chief Justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali, also issued directives to the judicial magistrates concerned to keep paying surprise visits to ensure that all the reverse osmosis plants providing potable water to the people of the area were functional.

It asked the magistrates to intimate the engineer concerned if a plant was not operating and take action against him if it was not repaired within 24 hours. The judicial officers were asked to submit their reports to the court every four weeks.

The bench said in its order: “In other words, there appears to be no will of the federal government to take immediate steps and even the Sindh government is equally responsible in multiplying the agony of the locals of Manchhar lake who are deprived of their basic right to drinkable water.”

The court said a project executed by the Water and Power Development Authority which resulted in flow of contaminated water into the lake must have poor designing. “We are not technically sound to comment upon the designing of the projects, which are either under way or were taken before in this context, but we are sure that something is wrong at some level, which nobody wants to rectify.”

The court expressed extreme displeasure over the absence of the secretaries and said that their conduct ex facie showed that they were least pushed by its directives.

“This court in terms of Article 190 of the Constitution has absolute powers to give directions to the executives who are bound to comply with them. Administrative or executive functions of these secretaries cannot override the judicial directions of this court.”

The bench issued Rs50,000 bailable warrants against each of the officials, to be executed by the SSP for ensuring their attendance in court on Oct 18.

“On their appearance, they shall furnish the justification for their non-appearance for today. They shall also offer explanation for non-compliance of the orders of this court passed on 17-09-2015. On perusal if we find that there is no plausible explanation offered by them, we will proceed against them by framing charge under the contempt of court,” the bench said.

The court observed that it had taken up the issue of lake contamination in 2010 and “till date no progress has been made”.

It said that the locals were suffering from multifarious diseases, including hepatitis-C, and many of them had lost their lives. The bench noted that the gravity of the issue increased when the irrigation authorities started releasing the contaminated water of the lake into the Indus.

“On account of this release of water, the downstream population on both sides of the Indus river started losing their lives on account of toxic effluent and waste contained in Manchhar lake,” it added.

The order concluded: “The matter is adjourned to 18-10-2016, on which date the federal secretary, finance, federal secretary, planning, federal secretary for water and power, chairman, Wapda, chief secretary, Sindh, secretary, irrigation, and other who are present in court today shall be in attendance with the proposal of immediate redressal of the issue to minimise the inflow of contaminated water into Manchhar lake.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1283456/sc-issues-warrants-for-officials-absent-from-manchhar-lake-pollution-hearing>

ROAD TO FREEDOM: OFFICIAL NEGLIGENCE RESULTS IN TURTLES' DEATH

The Express Tribune, September 13th, 2016.

Sukkur: More than two dozen black-spotted turtles died while being transported to Kalar Goth to be released in the Indus River on Monday.

The bodies were eventually thrown into the river which is reflective of the carelessness of the officials of wildlife department and World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWF-P).

A team of the wildlife department and WWF-P brought around 780 black-spotted turtles from Karachi in sacks on Sunday night. They had been recovered in a raid from a house in Defence from where they were reportedly going to be smuggled abroad.

The turtles were kept overnight at their office in Sukkur in the same sacks and in the morning were taken to be released in the Indus River, near Kalar Goth, some 15 kilometres away from Sukkur. Media personnel were kept in the dark about the release; however three journalists managed to reach the site of release and witnessed officials disposing dead turtles in the river.

As soon as the trucks carrying the turtles reached Kalar Goth, an argument sprung up between officials of the wildlife department and WWF-P regarding who will release the turtles first, informed a journalist from Sukkur, requesting anonymity.

During the argument, some turtles fell from the truck and were crushed when the trucks moved to be parked in another place.

According to reporters present at the site, more than two dozen turtles had died due to the mishandling by the officials and their bodies were mercilessly thrown into the river instead of being buried.

The turtles were already exhausted as they were stuffed in jute bags and should have been released immediately, said an official of the wildlife department, requesting anonymity. But they were unnecessarily kept overnight at the office so that a 'photo shoot' could take place in the morning, he added.

Last year, some black-spotted turtles were brought back from China, and were kept in a pool of water at the Dolphin Conservation Centre near Lab-e-Mehran, Sukkur, situated at the right bank of the Indus River, thus none of them had died, he explained.

The deputy conservator of wildlife department, Sukkur, Taj Mohammad Shaikh, said that the turtles were brought from Karachi by the field officer of the wildlife department, Adnan Khan, who had recovered the turtles last week from Karachi. A team of the wildlife department and officials of WWF Pakistan were also present at the site of the release, he said.

Shaikh also denied that any turtles had been harmed during the release process. When his attention was brought towards footage of crushed turtles at the site, he claimed to be unaware of the situation. WWF-P, Sukkur, senior project officer Imran Malik was unavailable for comments despite repeated attempts.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1181317/road-freedom-official-negligence-results-turtles-death/>

KMC CLAIMS HAVING DISPOSED OF OVER 1.7 MILLION OFFAL DURING EID

Dawn, September 16th, 2016

Bhagwandas

KARACHI: While the offal of hundreds of thousands of sacrificed animals were lifted and disposed of in the metropolis, some neighbourhoods received less attention of the civic agencies, it emerged during a visit to various parts of the city on Thursday which was the last day of Eid.

Over 1.7 million offal had been collected and disposed of till Thursday evening according to the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation deputy mayor Arshad Vohra though offal and other parts of animals were seen dumped in streets and at roadsides in some thickly populated areas. The deputy mayor claimed that the operation was still under way and would continue till the removal of all offal from across the city.

At many places where offal had been lifted but civic agency workers had neither carried out fumigation nor had sprinkled limestone, the air was pungent with the foul smell of animal waste. The areas from where offal had not been removed included Mausamiyat near Safoora Chowk on University Road and nearby Sachal Goth, Model Colony, Federal B Area Block 15, PECHS Block 6, Rashid Minhas Road near Jauhar Morr and Jouhar Complex, Gulistan-i-Jauhar Block 7, Gulzar-i-Hijri, Scheme 33, Gulshan-i-Iqbal Block 2, lanes behind Burns Road, Blocks D, L and H of North Karachi, Anda Pore in North Karachi, a ground in sector 5 in New Karachi, Nagin Chowrangi, Surjani Town, Ayesha Manzil, Liaquatabad Super Market and Korangi.

While briefing the media persons, Mr Vohra said that besides the regular staffers, the equipment, machinery and vehicles of the civic agencies workers and vehicles of the private sector were also hired for offal disposal.

He said around 602,000, 632,000 and more than 500,000 offal had been removed and disposed of properly on the first, second and third days of Eid, respectively. He said the offal disposal operation would continue.

Around 20,000 workers, including civic agency staffers and others who had been hired, and over 4,000 vehicles including those owned by the civic agencies and those hired from the private sector were used to lift the offal, he said.

The offal was transported from across the city first to around 74 collection points set up in different parts of the metropolis from where the offal were finally shifted to 27 landfill sites dug up in different areas for the purpose.

Regarding response to the complaints which had been registered at the central complaint centre, he said that 428 of the 542 complaints were solved on the first day and 316 of the 475 complaints were solved on the second day of Eid.

Last year around 1.7 million animals were sacrificed while this year the planning had been done to dispose of offal of around two million sacrificial animals, he added.

He said five vehicles along with pump, insecticides and fuel would be given to each district for a fumigation drive soon. Further assistance could be provided, if needed, to the district administrations, he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1283959/kmc-claims-having-disposed-of-over-17-million-offal-during-eid>

DECISION ON PLASTIC BAG BAN AWAITING IMPLEMENTATION

Dawn, September 17th, 2016

Mohammad Ashfaq

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has failed to implement its decision made a year ago to ban non-biodegradable plastic bags in the province.

After the ban decision, the government and manufactures had agreed on October 12, 2015, that non-biodegradable shopping bags would be replaced with biodegradable ones within three months.

The meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pervez Khattak had also decided on the introduction of strict and effective laws to cover all aspects of use and manufacturing of non-biodegradable plastic bags, food containers, bottles and such other hazardous products.

Besides, the government and manufacturers had also agreed on a plan to convert the machinery of making biodegradable shopping bags in three months.

However, even a year after that, non-biodegradable black shopping bags are still in use across the province.

The shopkeepers, vendors, and grocery shop owners continue to use non-biodegradable shopping bags without fear.

“No one has asked us to stop using black shopping bags,” said a vendor selling fruit on Ring Road. He said the black shopping bags were available on the wholesale market.

A staff member of the Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar told Dawn that non-biodegradable shopping bags choked drains during rain and thus, causing rainwater to inundate roads.

In May 2016, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Environmental Protection Agency had proposed rules to ban the use of non-degradable plastic products that it insists are the main cause of environmental pollution.

The proposed rules are called the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Non-Degradable Plastic Products (Manufacturing, Sale and Usage) Rules 2016.

The environment department forwarded the rules to the law department for vetting six months ago but the law department has yet to do the job.

Once the rules are approved, ban on the manufacturing of non-biodegradable black shopping bags will be imposed with immediate effect.

The rules will be applied to all disposable plastic products made of wholly or substantially of polyethylene, polypropylene or polystyrene.

These products include carrier bags or shopping-bags which consumers use to take away their purchases from a retail outlet. Bread bags, food packaging including frozen food packaging, garbage bags, shrink-wrap, pallet-wrap, bubble-wrap, agriculture mulching film, woven plastic bags, milk and water packaging etc

When contacted, PTI MPA Shaukat Yousafzai, who heads a committee formed by the chief minister to work on the matter, said manufacturers and wholesalers had sought additional time to consume the raw material used to make non-biodegradable shopping bags.

“The manufacturers would have faced big losses if the ban on non-biodegradable shopping bags was imposed earlier,” he said.

The MPA said the use of black and blue shopping bags would not be allowed in future.

He said the committee would meet next week with the possibility of the chief minister chairing it.

He said the decision on the banning of non-biodegradable shopping bags was at a ‘mature stage’ and that the matter would be decided in the next meeting.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1284271/decision-on-plastic-bag-ban-awaiting-implementation>

THREE CHINESE AMONG NINE GRANTED BAIL IN TURTLE SEIZURE CASE

Dawn, September 17th, 2016

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: While the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) is yet to take notice of the wildlife trafficking case involving three Chinese, nine out of 12 suspects, who were recently arrested with more than 700 freshwater turtles in the Defence Housing Authority (DHA), were granted bail on Friday.

The decision was taken by the second judicial magistrate, Malir district.

The suspects released on bail include three Chinese and their six helpers based in Faisalabad. Three other suspects, all drivers hailing from Sanghar and Nawabshah, are still in judicial custody.

“No doubt the wildlife law is weak and it’s aailable offence, but the bail application was filed only on behalf of the Pakistanis and not the Chinese,” claimed a wildlife official on condition of anonymity.

The FIA’s inaction and silence of the ministry of climate change in the case is being seen by wildlife circles as a major blow to the efforts to curb the illegal wildlife trade.

“Isn’t the responsibility of the FIA to interrogate foreigners involved in illegal activities in the country?” he asked.

The wildlife department officials complained that they had been left alone in the case to handle pressure from all sides to release the equipment and documents, including passports seized during the raid on a DHA bungalow.

There was no word from the prime minister's focal person on climate change Syed Rizwan Mehboob either, who was earlier actively pursuing the case, they said.

The official was not available for comments.

Upon contact, the federal Inspector General of Forests, who represents the state as the focal person or controlling officer to a number of international obligations, including the Convention on International Trade in Wild Species of Fauna and Flora, Syed Mehmood Nasir, said that relevant departments had been informed about the case.

"A letter in this regard has been sent to the FIA in Karachi. Perhaps, it's the Eid holidays that have delayed action (by the agency)," he said.

It may be recalled that a total of 780 freshwater turtles identified as black pond species (*Geoclemys hamiltonii*) were confiscated in a major raid on traffickers in the DHA area.

Twelve suspects, including three Chinese, were arrested and sent in judicial custody. Twenty turtles were found dead.

Investigations showed that the turtles were all trapped from the Chotiari Dam area in Sanghar. Two key wildlife traffickers, Pappu Punjabi and Nawab Khan, were declared absconders in the case.

The turtles, most of them females, were later released into the Kallar lake and the rest in the Nara canal, both located in Sukkur.

All freshwater turtle species of Pakistan are endangered and protected under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Balochistan wildlife protection acts and are included in the revised Sindh Wildlife Protection Act.

According to experts, illicit wildlife trade of freshwater turtles is escalating in Pakistan as there have been a number of cases in which these animals, particularly the black pond species, have been confiscated in large numbers in recent years.

Poaching and smuggling of freshwater turtles due to their demand in the East Asian countries, particularly in China, Hong Kong, South Korea and Vietnam, has led to a significant decline in their populations, they believe.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1284193/three-chinese-among-nine-granted-bail-in-turtle-seizure-case>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 5TH TO SEPTEMBER 10TH 2016

MEDICAL WASTE DUMPED IN OPEN POSES SERIOUS THREAT TO PUBLIC HEALTH

Faiza Ilyas

Dawn, September 5th, 2016

KARACHI: Despite being the largest public sector hospital in the city and among the few that have an incinerator, the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JMPC) at present doesn't have a proper system to dispose of its medical waste, a major potential threat to the safety of its staff, patients as well as the community at large, it emerged on Sunday.

During a recent visit to the JPMC's incinerator located on its premises, feral cats and birds were found scavenging among the piles of waste, which included hazardous medical refuse such as empty bottles, used needles, syringes, IV bags, blood bags and soiled dressings.

The incinerator was found non-operational.

Upon contact, deputy director of administration at the JPMC Dr Javed Jamali said the incinerator was operated only when sufficient waste was collected.

“It is operated daily but only for two to three hours. There are many healthcare facilities in the city which don’t even have this mechanism,” he said, admitting that hospital waste shouldn’t have been thrown out in the open.

The hospital incinerator, he said, was too old but couldn’t be replaced owing to a shortage of funds.

To a question whether the hospital has a system to segregate hazardous and non-hazardous refuse at source, he said: “This protocol is adopted only for high-risk patients, for instance, those who are diagnosed with hepatitis and Congo virus infection.”

Endorsing the opinion that most healthcare facilities in the city are operating without a waste disposal system, executive member of the Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases Society of Pakistan, Dr Altaf Ahmed said that such a mechanism existed at a few private hospitals only.

“The Abbasi Shaheed Hospital and the Civil Hospital Karachi, the two major government hospitals in the city, had also bought incinerators a long time back but I don’t know whether they are still being used,” he said.

Used syringes and IV bags in the refuse at the JPMC.—White Star

“Waste from hospitals including the Indus Hospital is lifted by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, which, I am told, incinerates the refuse at its two facilities.”

However, there were hundreds of laboratories and clinics operating in the city without any regulatory mechanism, he pointed out, questioning their waste disposal practices.

“There are millions of germs in a single bottle used for any microbiological test, which is just thrown away in the open. This reflects our apathy towards our environment.”

Hospital waste, he said, may lead to the spread of various diseases including those caused by antibiotic resistant bacteria, many of which evolve at health facilities.

“Scavengers get the disease first and become carriers of infections for diseases like hepatitis, diarrhea, food-borne illnesses, skin infections, tuberculosis, cancer etc.

“Besides, waste dumped in the open is a breeding site for mosquitoes as well as for flies. Liquid waste is routinely discharged into sewerage drains in hospitals that can contaminate drinking water in areas with a faulty sewerage system,” he added.

Hospital waste categorised as hazardous waste should be separated at source and treated in large “green autoclaves” that don’t cause air pollution.

“These not only sterilise the waste but also greatly reduce the size of the solid waste, which is then mixed with other material and disposed of at landfill sites,” he said, suggesting that the government should set-up such facilities and charge health facilities for the service.

Concerns over poor medical waste disposal practices have recently been highlighted by experts in a study carried out on food being sold in and outside 10 public sector hospitals of the city.

The Karachi University study has shown that the food was unfit for human consumption and that the germs contaminating it had resistance against a number of commonly used antibiotics.

The samples were picked up from the Civil Hospital Karachi, Landhi Medical Complex, Abbasi Shaheed Hospital, Sindh government hospital, Liaquatabad, Qatar Hospital, Sindh government hospital (UP Mor), Lyari General Hospital, JPMC, Dow University of Health Sciences (Ojha campus), and Sindh Social Security Hospital.

The study identified dumping of waste (especially medical waste) in the open, lack of infection control measures at healthcare settings, mixing of sewerage lines with water mains, and poor hygiene practices of food handlers as major contributors to the evolution of these germs and their spread.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1282049>

WASTE TREATMENT PLANT: DELAYS IRK SUPREME COURT

The Express Tribune, September 8th, 2016.

KARACHI: Taking strong exception to the authorities' failure to make progress in a 24-year-old case regarding the rising marine pollution, the Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday issued notice to the attorney general to explain why Islamabad was delaying completion of the Greater Karachi Sewerage Treatment Plant, commonly known as the S-III project.

Chief Justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali, who headed the two-judge bench at the SC's Karachi Registry, observed that the case was pending before the apex court since 1992, but the government was not taking any steps to control marine pollution.

The bench, which also comprised Justice Amir Hani Muslim, was hearing a case based on a human rights complaint regarding the rising environmental pollution in the coastal areas due to the discharge of poisoned industrial waste into the sea.

At the outset, the bench found out that no progress had been made regarding the installation of plants meant to treat waste before its discharge into the sea.

The bench summoned the Sindh chief secretary in person to explain the government's position in this regard.

Justice Hani directed Sindh advocate-general Zamir Ghumro to ensure that progress is made in the matter within a week otherwise the court will pass an appropriate order.

The chief justice remarked that inquiry commissions and committees are usually formed when the government is unwilling to do something.

He noted that filth was mixing in seawater but no one seemed bothered.

"The environmental pollution is posing threats to the lives of the inhabitants of Karachi and its coastal areas," added Justice Jamali.

Later, the chief secretary informed the court that various projects, including S-III, await the federal government's funding.

Justice Jamali observed that this issue is in the interest of the public at large.

The top judge noted that the population of Karachi had crossed 25 million, but no steps had been taken to save the densely populated city.

He further noted that sewage as well as the industrial waste was directly mixing with seawater as there is no effective system for disposal of sewage and industrial discharge in the city.

“The human as well as marine life is in danger,” he told the officers present in the court.

Adjourning the matter till Friday (tomorrow), the bench issued notices to the attorney general of Pakistan to explain what measures the federal government had taken so far to contain the growing environmental and marine pollution.

Meanwhile, it also directed the chief secretary to seek instructions from the provincial government as to the implementation of the court’s orders.

Justice Hani also made it clear to the officers that no further excuse will be accepted and that the court will be compelled to pass appropriate orders as provided under the law against those responsible for creating hurdles in implementation of its orders.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1178259/waste-treatment-plant-delays-irk-supreme-court/>

SC WARNS OFFICIALS IN MANCHHAR LAKE POLLUTION CASE

Dawn September 10th, 2016

Tahir Siddiqui

Karachi: The Supreme Court expressed extreme annoyance on Friday over the absence of the federal secretaries for finance, water and power and planning and development during suo motu proceedings regarding contamination of the Manchhar lake.

A two-judge bench, headed by Chief Justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali, became so irked by the repeated absence of the federal officials that it warned them that the court would issue non-bailable warrants for their arrest to ensure their attendance in the proceedings.

The bench, which also included Justice Amir Hani Muslim, ruled that the secretaries would not go on any foreign trip or attend any official meeting on the dates of hearing if they were put on notice to appear in court.

Justice Muslim remarked that warrants could be issued against the officials because they did not comply with the court’s order.

The bench observed that the performance of the federal and Sindh governments was not satisfactory with regard to the issue of the lake’s contamination.

A member of the bench said a project in this regard had not been completed in 24 years and the federal and provincial authorities were shifting responsibilities to each other and indulging in a blame game.

The chief justice observed that if the governments had any interest, the issues of public importance, including pollution, could have been contained.

The bench observed that people were getting contaminated water and the authorities were piling miseries on them by their non-serious and lethargic attitude towards the problem.

The Sindh chief secretary submitted a report on the S-III project and informed the court that two schemes had been chalked out for treatment of sewage in Malir and Hub rivers before being drained into the sea.

He said the projects had been re-designed and sent to the federal government for approval and release of funds.

However, the bench dismissed his explanation and observed that the performance of the provincial government in the matter was not satisfactory.

It remarked that pollution was a provincial matter and the Sindh government should have utilised all its resources to control it.

On a court query, an officer of the planning ministry said the federal government had received the re-designed schemes in June and millions of rupees were required for them.

Justice Muslim asked the official when the matter, pending at the planning ministry since June, would be decided.

He said Rs21 million and Rs50m had been released for the Lyari and Malir river projects.

The apex court had repeatedly asked the respondent officials to submit a detailed report over the delay in projects initiated to protect the lake from contamination, but in vain.

The federal officials were specifically asked by the court to explain the non-availability of funds reserved by the government for the installation of an effluent treatment plant to control the contamination levels in the lake famous for its floating bathhouses.

The bench had earlier issued a show-cause notice to the federal finance secretary to appear with an explanation of the non-availability of funds for the plant.

It put off the hearing till a date to be announced later and issued directives to the federal and provincial governments to submit their final reports so that appropriate orders could be issued.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1283210/sc-warns-officials-in-manchhar-lake-pollution-case>

CONTAMINATION CASE: SC WARNS GOVT OFFICIALS OVER NON-COMPLIANCE OF ORDERS

The Express Tribune, September 10th, 2016.

KARACHI: The Supreme Court (SC) warned on Friday all the government officials to remain careful and comply with the court's directives in letter and spirit. It also warned that strict action will be initiated against such officials for delaying action on the court's directives.

The warning came during the hearing of a human rights case relating to the increasing contamination in Manchar Lake, the largest freshwater reservoir in Asia.

Chief Justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali issued contempt of court notices on Friday to the secretaries of the federal finance, planning, water and power ministries. The bench also comprised Justice Amir Hani Muslim.

The SC further cautioned that bailable warrants of arrest will be issued for the three federal secretaries if they fail to appear before the court on the next hearing. The show-cause notices say why they should not be proceeded against for contempt of court over defiance of the court's directives for measures to contain the growing level of contamination in Manchar Lake.

The apex court had been expressing its displeasure over the failure of the federal authorities to issue funds for the completion of the Right Bank Outfall Drain (RBOD) project in compliance with its earlier directives. The RBOD is a canal designed to reduce salinity in the lake.

On August 24, the court had ordered the finance and planning ministries to ensure the required funds for the completion of RBOD-I and RBOD-III were released to complete the project in order to contain contamination in the lake.

During Friday's proceedings, the bench members were visibly irked as the secretaries for the three federal ministries remained absent. The additional attorney-general said that the court's order was duly communicated to the finance

secretary. This irked the bench members, who took strong exception to attitude of the senior officers towards compliance of the directives issued by the court. They observed that any officer found violating the court's directives and/or orders will not be allowed to leave the country.

Justice Muslim stated that the officers who will deliberately violate the court's orders cannot be allowed to serve on their posts.

Meanwhile, the chairperson of the Water and Power Development Authority informed the bench that the issue of provision of potable water to the residential localities surrounding the lake will be resolved with the completion of the RBOD-I and RBOD-III project.

The court warned thatailable warrants of arrest will be issued for the three secretaries through the Islamabad SSP with a direction to procure their attendance in the court.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1179554/contamination-case-sc-warns-govt-officials-non-compliance-orders/>

October 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 17TH TO OCTOBER 23RD 2016

SAHEL FOOD SECURITY THROUGH SUSTAINABLE WATER BIRD MANAGEMENT

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, October 17th, 2016

FAO and the French Facility for Global Environment will work together in a new partnership to improve the state of natural resources in the wetlands of Africa's Sahel region, in particular the sustainable management of migratory water birds which are crucial for food security for the local populations.

The agreement signed earlier this month between FAO and French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM), which co-funds one third of the 5m euros project, is specifically targeting the four main wetland areas in the Sahel region which are distributed between Chad, Egypt, Mali, Senegal and Sudan.

FFEM is a government initiative and works in promoting global environment protection in developing countries since 1994 by co-financing projects related to biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, desertification and persistent organic pollutants.

The 'Strengthening expertise in Sub-Saharan Africa on birds and their rational use for communities and their environment' (RESSOURCE) project will focus on wetlands situated in the Senegal River Valley, Inner Niger Delta, Lake Chad and the lower and middle reaches of the Nile. These are ecosystem sites of critical importance where the food security and livelihoods of nearly a billion people depend on agriculture, livestock and natural resource use, including fishing and bird hunting.

Many water bird species, including Garganey and Ruff spend the winter in the Sahel wetlands before returning to breed in Europe. Since 1960, the number of water birds in the area has declined by about 40pc — a dramatic fall that possibly relates to three main factors: the shrinking of flood plain size due to drainage, reduced rainfall and other climate change related events; changing plant biodiversity, including the introduction of invasive species; and, unsustainable hunting.

The project will be conducted in cooperation with the governments of the countries concerned and other key technical partners such as France's National Agency for Wildlife and Hunting Management (ONCFS), the French Agricultural

Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) and the Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds.

FAO, FFEM and the other project partners will promote sustainable management of migratory water birds through bird census and surveying, monitoring techniques, and capacity building activities. The results will support the creation or adaptation of a legal and regulatory framework, and foster policies aimed at sustainable hunting and enhanced bird conservation. These policies will be integrated with broader wetlands site management.

“This project is about improving management of wetlands, water birds and their habitats. It will eventually benefit local populations and for the first time we will work at the regional level mobilising multi-stakeholders partnerships” said Francois Xavier Duporge, general secretary of FFEM.

The work to improve water bird management including the protection of natural habitats, aims to benefit both the ecosystems and local communities that rely on them for food and other resources, including income.

In Chad and Senegal, for example local business people organise hunting on the wetlands sites – activities which, if managed sustainably, can continue to bring benefits to the local economy.

“Our goal is to adapt water bird hunting by promoting sustainable hunting management and bird conservation policies which will benefit those local communities who rely on birds for their livelihoods. In many Sahelian wetlands, hunting is crucial to local food security and the economy,” said Eva Muller, Director of FAO’s Forestry Policy and Resources Division.

FAO will be responsible for implementation and coordination of the project in close collaboration with all its technical partners as well as FFEM. —FAO

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1290371/sahel-food-security-through-sustainable-water-bird-management>

GERMANY APPROVES LAW FOR DISMANTLING N-PLANTS BY 2022

Dawn, October 20th, 2016

FRANKFURT: Germany on Wednesday paved the way for nuclear power plant operators to pay 23.5 billion euros towards managing atomic waste, in a deal critics say lets firms get off too lightly.

Under a draft law approved by the federal cabinet, the four firms — Vattenfall, EON, RWE and EnBW — will pay the money into a state fund for temporary and permanent nuclear waste storage by 2022.

Chancellor Angela Merkel declared the country would shut down all remaining nuclear plants by that date in the wake of Japan’s 2011 Fukushima disaster.

Her decision has left ministers and power companies wrangling over shutdown and waste management costs ever since.

Beyond the 23.5 billion euros (\$26 billion) for waste management, the firms will remain financially and legally responsible for shutting down and dismantling the plants and preparing all remaining nuclear waste for permanent storage.

The remainder of a total 40 billion euros of provisions they have set aside to cover the nuclear phase-out is earmarked for those costs. Eight power stations remain in operation in Germany.

Meanwhile, Berlin forecasts that investing the waste fund in financial assets will allow it to grow enough to cover the costs of temporary and permanent storage of the fuel remnants.

“Financing for shutdown, dismantling and waste management will be guaranteed for the long term without transferring the costs to society or endangering the economic situation of the operators,” energy minister Sigmar Gabriel said in a statement.

EON, which alone will contribute around 10 billion euros to the fund, also welcomed the deal. But Germany has yet to identify a final site to store the nuclear waste.

An expert commission warned in July that even plans to open a facility by 2050 were “ambitious” given the delay in finding an appropriate location.

The search for and construction of a permanent storage site could take many decades, with the costs hard to calculate, critics of the deal have warned.

“The companies made high profits for years and shouldn’t be released from overall responsibility,” energy policy expert Claudia Kemfert of the DIW economic think-tank said.

She added that the financially struggling energy companies may be unable to cover the costs of dismantling nuclear plants.

“With this pact only a fraction of the true costs will be covered, society will have to bear the rest,” she said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1291043>

ISLAMABAD ADOPTS UN ENVIRONMENT ACCORDS

Dawn October 22nd, 2016

ISLAMABAD: The federal capital became the 101st city in the world to adopt the United Nations Urban Environmental Accords after Mayor Sheikh Ansar Aziz signed the Green Charter at a ceremony on Friday.

Under the charter, Islamabad will adopt an action plan based on the UN Urban Environmental Accords to improve the overall environment and rectify the damages done to its natural settings by development.

The charter was signed by prime minister’s focal person on Green Pakistan, Syed Rizwan Mehboob, and the mayor, who is also the chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA).

Speaking at the ceremony, Minister of Climate Change Zahid Hamid described the moment as a landmark. He said the UN Environmental Accords were the principal instruments employed the world over for ensuring adherence to the rules of sustainable urban development.

According to the minister, the actions incorporated in the accords and the charter covered all environmental concerns and considerations vital to ensure the green future of any city.

“Islamabad has become the first city of the country to take up the challenge to improve and enhance the overall environments and rectify the damages in line with the action plan based on the UN Urban Environmental Accords,” Mr Hamid said, adding the accords consisted of 21 universally accepted environmental norms.

Mr Mehboob added: “As many as 100 cities of the world have achieved the goals set in accordance with 21 actions. Unfortunately, not a single city in Pakistan was among these cities.” He expressed the hope that other cities in the country would also accept the challenge.

He said a timeline would be set up for all actions but contributions from everyone would play a vital role not only in improving the environment but also in staying on the track in transforming the environment.

According to the mayor, the objective was to make the federal capital greener and environmentally sustainable.

“Islamabad is still somewhat better placed in terms of planning and development. However, there are certain challenges to overcome and gaps in the service delivery which will be urgently filled. The green character of Islamabad will be a guiding document and will help elevate the level of living in the capital city,” said Mr Aziz, vowing to translate the 21 actions into a reality to make the capital a green model city.

A documentary, “Islamabad the beautiful” was also shown on the occasion.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1291512/islamabad-adopts-un-environment-accords>

GREEN CHARTER: CAPITAL BLAZES NEW ENVIRONMENTAL TRAIL

The Express Tribune, October 22nd, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to improve the environment of the capital, the CDA and Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation (IMC) signed the Islamabad Green Charter with the Ministry of Climate Change MoCC to adopt the United Nation’s environmental accords to provide a clean, healthy and safe environment to the residents of the capital.

By signing the charter, Islamabad has become the 101st city in the world, and the first in the country to adopt 21 action plans based upon the UN Urban Environmental Accords to improve over all environment of the city.

The charter was signed on Friday by IMC Mayor Sheikh Anser Aziz and Prime Minister’s Focal Person on Green Pakistan Rizwan Mehboob at a ceremony held at a local hotel.

The ceremony was witnessed by Minister for Climate Change Zahid Hamid and other senior government officials, representatives of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industries and members of civil society.

Under the charter, the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Ministry of Water and Power (MWP), and Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) will adopt and implement a policy to increase the use of renewable energy to meet at least 10 per cent of the city’s peak electric load over the next seven years.

Furthermore, a citywide plan would be implemented to reduce carbon emissions in the capital by 25 per cent by 2030 in collaboration with MoCC, Enercon and CDA.

Moreover, CDA, Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA), and IMC will implement a user-friendly recycling and composting programme which aims to reduce per capita solid waste disposal at landfills and incinerators by 25 per cent in 10 years.

Additionally, CDA and IMC will ensure that there is an accessible public park or recreational open space within half-a-kilometre of every citizen’s residence in the city by 2020.

CDA, IMC and MoCC will also set a goal based on ecological and community considerations to plant and maintain tree, canopy coverage of at least 50 per cent of all sidewalk planting sites.

The CDA, IMC and MoCC will also pass legislations to protect critical habitat corridors and other key habitat characteristics.

CDA, IMC and the Capital Administration Development Division (CADD) would develop and implement a policy to expand affordable public transportation to residents in 10 years, while CDA and IMC will implement a policy to reduce the number of vehicles plying the roads with just one passenger onboard by 10 per cent over the next seven years.

CDA, IMC, MoCC, Pakistan Agriculture Research Council(PARC) and National Agriculture Research Council (NARC) will support locally-grown foods and kitchen gardens and ensure that 20 per cent of all city facilities (including schools) grow and use locally-grown, organic food within the next seven years.

To monitor the air quality in the capital, EPA, CDA and IMC will establish an air quality index and measure the level of air pollution and set a goal of reducing it by 10 per cent in seven years.

The CDA, IMC, EPA and MoCC will increase adequate access to safe drinking water, aiming at access for all by 2020. Simultaneously, Islamabad within its municipal limits, would adopt and implement polices to reduce water consumption by 10 per cent by 2020 through water conservation awareness campaigns and conservation technologies.

The city authorities would also be required to reduce the volume of untreated wastewater discharged by 10 per cent and adopt municipal wastewater guidelines in seven years through the expanded use of recycled water.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1205945/green-charter-capital-blazes-new-environmental-trail/>

GLOBAL DEAL REACHED TO PHASE OUT SUPER GREENHOUSE GASES

Business Recorder, October 22, 2016

In a major step toward curbing global warming, the world community agreed on Saturday to phase out a category of dangerous greenhouse gases widely used in refrigerators and air conditioners. Nearly 200 countries agreed to end production and consumption of so-called hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) under an amendment to the 1987 Montreal Protocol on protecting the ozone layer.

HFCs stoke climate change because they are super-efficient at trapping heat in Earth's atmosphere. By scrapping these substances, say experts, a massive step could be made towards achieving the UN's goal to roll back global warming. The agreement was greeted by applause from exhausted envoys who worked through the night in Rwanda's capital Kigali to put the finishing touches on the deal.

"Last year in Paris, we promised to keep the world safe from the worst effects of climate change. Today, we are following through on that promise," UN Environment Programme chief Erik Solheim declared.

US President Barack Obama said in a White House statement that the agreement was "an ambitious and far-reaching solution to (the) looming crisis" of climate change.

It adds powerfully to the 2015 Paris Agreement, due to take effect next month after crossing the threshold for ratification by signatory countries, Obama said. "Together, these steps show that, while diplomacy is never easy, we can work together to leave our children a planet that is safer, more prosperous, more secure, and more free than the one that was left for us."

Among green groups, WWF said the deal was "great news for the climate". "It sends a powerful signal that our governments are serious about tackling climate change," its climate spokeswoman Regine Guenther said. Under the agreement, rich countries will move faster than developing giants to scrapping HFCs – a concession that was a source of regret for some.

"It may not be entirely what the islands wanted, but it is a good agreement," said a representative of the tiny Pacific nation of the Marshall Islands, Mattlan Zackhras, whose country is badly exposed to sea-level rise. "We all know we must go further, and we will go further." Christian Aid's senior policy advisor, Benson Ireri, added: "It was a shame that India and a handful of other countries chose a slower timeframe for phasing down HFCs." But he said the international community had passed its "first real test" since the historic Paris climate deal.

The Paris Agreement aims to keep global warming below two degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit), compared with pre-industrial levels. Its principal target is carbon dioxide (CO₂), emitted especially by coal, oil and gas. As these sources are the mainstays of the world's energy supply, reducing carbon pollution has been a painfully slow and rancorous

affair, marked by bickering over who should shoulder the burden for energy efficiency and the switch to cleaner sources.

Right now, Earth is on track for several degrees of warming by century's end – a scenario that climatologists fear will doom the planet to worse droughts, floods, storms and rising seas. Eliminating HFCs – which are dealt with under the Montreal Protocol, not the Paris Agreement – could be a relatively swift and easy way to ease the warming and buy time, say specialists.

It could reduce global warming by 0.5 C by 2100, according to a 2015 study by the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development. HFCs were introduced in the 1990s to replace chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) that had been found to erode the ozone layer, the stratospheric shield which protects life on Earth from damaging solar radiation.

But it emerged that HFCs, while safer for the now-healing ozone layer, are potentially thousands of times worse for trapping heat than CO₂.

Swapping HFCs for alternatives such as ammonia, water or gases called hydrofluoroolefins could prove expensive for hot developing countries, where air-conditioner use is soaring. For India, this was one of the sticking points. “There are issues of cost, there are issues of technology,” said Ajay Narayan Jha of India's environment and climate change ministry before the deal was announced. “We would like to emphasise that any agreement will have to be flexible from all sides concerned. It can't be flexible from one side and not from the other.”

Under the legally binding deal, developed countries must slash their use of HFCs by 10 percent by 2019 from 2011-2013 levels, and then by 85 percent by 2036. A second group of developing countries, including China and African nations, are committed to launching the transition in 2024. A reduction of 10 percent compared with 2020-2022 levels should be achieved by 2029, to be extended to 80 percent by 2045. A third group of developing countries, including India, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq and Gulf nations, must begin the process in 2028 and reduce emissions by 10 percent by 2032 from 2024-2026 levels, and then by 85 percent by 2047.

<http://www.brecorder.com/weekend-magazine/0/95763/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 10TH TO OCTOBER 16TH 2016

PROTEST AT INCOMPLETE SEWERAGE PROJECT

Dawn, October 12th, 2016

GUJRANWALA: The residents of various localities blocked on Tuesday the main road in protest at the failure of Water and Sanitation Authority (Wasa) to complete sewerage and drain projects.

Residents of Asghar Colony, Faisal Colony and adjacent areas, led by union council chairman Haji Hanif Mughal, participated in the protest.

They said students would face a great deal of inconvenience to pass through sewage filled streets while Wasa had failed to drain it.

The Wasa chairman visited the protest scene and suspended from service two sanitary workers for negligence. He assured the residents that sewerage and drain projects would be completed soon.

ARRESTED: Up to 175 people were arrested by police for breaching ban on motorcycle pillion riding and their motorcycles were impounded on Tuesday.

The district administration has banned motorcycle pillion riding on Muharram 9 and 10. Elderly people, women and children are exempted from the ban.

Regional Police Officer Muhammad Asif and Muharram Peace Committee coordinator Mehmood Bashir Virk, also MNA, visited the control room and expressed their satisfaction over security arrangements. Army troops held flag march on city roads and in sensitive areas to maintain law and order on Youm-i-Ashur (today). Police have installed more than 200 surveillance cameras on the procession routes. Up to 5,000 police officials would man the route.

RAID: A food inspection team fined eateries Rs190,000 on Tuesday for unhygienic conditions.

A team, led by Additional District Collector Tariq Qureshi, raided 1 Chaman Ice Cream, Ice Tech, Pizza Collage and Pizza Hut.

The team served warning and a one-week deadline to Subway Restaurant (Liberty Plaza), KFC (Trust Plaza) and McDonald (GT Road) to improve both the food and the premises.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1289677>

STUDENTS OBSERVE HAND WASHING DAY

Dawn, October 16th, 2016

LANDI KOTAL: Hundreds of students from both private and government schools organised events to observe the Global Hand Washing Day here on Saturday.

The events were jointly organised by Khyber Youth Forum and Anmol Welfare Society which were participated by school students along with their teachers and parents. On the occasion, schoolchildren were informed about the health related benefits of keeping their hands clean.

Khyber Youth Forum general secretary Bakht Ali Shah and Anmol Welfare Society chairman Naseer Ahmad told participants that over 100,000 minor children died every year in Pakistan due to unhygienic habits.

On the occasion, demonstrations were made to students and their parents along with an advice to take the message along to their communities for a better and hygienic environment.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1290305>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 3RD TO OCTOBER 9TH 2016

COASTAL MANAGEMENT: MINIMISING BIODIVERSITY LOSS

Dawn, October 4th, 2016

Dr Pervaiz Amir

Rio+20, held in 2012, culminated with the agreement to focus on 17 goals as a build up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2030. All nations agreed to abide by a commitment to focus on these 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure a safe, sustainable and peaceful world that would continue to support life on earth for future generations.

The interpretation of these goals was to ensure they were action-oriented, concise and global in nature. Goal 14, aimed at the Integration of Oceans into the SDG framework, calls for Pakistan's commitment to ensuring the sustainability of oceans and marine life with special attention to the welfare of populations dependent on ocean life.

Pakistan has a 1,050 kilometre coastline, of which 250km falls in Sindh and 800km in Balochistan. In 2014, the World Maritime Organisation, having recognised Pakistan's rightful claim, extended its international waters by 50,000 sq km.

Pakistan has witnessed various happenings in its ocean fisheries environment, with numerous incidences of large mammals — sharks and whales — washing up dead on its coastlines, similar to the incidence of the whale deaths reported in Australia earlier this year. With seas and oceans being overpolluted due to human activity and serving as repositories of human waste, chemical pollution and dumping grounds for industrial non-useable outputs, our ocean has turned into a junkyard. This toll on marine life directly impacts the welfare and livelihoods of communities dependent on these resources.

Rapid socio-economic development calls for the need to protect natural resources and the environment. New coastal developments, such as the Gwadar port, are avenues of economic turnaround for Pakistan. Gwadar port and neighbouring India's investment in a new port located in Iran will result in a surge in marine transportation. This will also impact the sea waters surrounding Pakistan's coastline.

Potential new settlements on the shorelines, if uncontrolled, will become negative human externalities for seas and oceans. Adding to that is Pakistan's hidden desire to replicate development approaches similar to the Emirates. The nation's development aspirations will force it to look towards its coastline — with consequences for its marine environments. Such experiments should be undertaken with great caution and sensitivity to maintain ecological balance. A long-term perspective to ensure biodiversity is a prerequisite to such venturing.

Likewise, Pakistan's rapidly dwindling inland water resources (that started off with a healthy 5,000 cubic metres per capita water availability back in 1947) have declined to alarmingly less than 1,000 cubic metres in 2016. When push comes to shove, the country could look to the sea to meet its water demands. While seas and oceans are inexhaustible sources of water, that through desalination can become a long-term strategic asset, ensuring the wellbeing of coastal waters is imperative.

In June 2015, Pakistan witnessed an extreme climate change event in the form of a heat wave that killed nearly 2,000 people. The impact on Karachi and coastal populations was devastating because the Arabian Sea failed to provide traditional respite from this heat-wave in the form of a cool breeze. In India, the situation was no better when 10,000 lives were lost. Climate change has also resulted in an increase in oceanic temperature.

The anomalies it will create for marine life are to be feared: the large scale migration of species is one well-known example. A few years ago, coastal communities near Jiwani witnessed a surge in their fishing catch when they spotted a rather exquisite species previously not known of in the area. While it created a windfall for the fishermen, it left scientists baffled with this evidence of a shift in the pattern of life beneath the deep waters.

Such uncertainties will bring surprises and opportunities. Is Pakistan ready to handle and adapt to the consequences of climate change beneath the oceans? Last year's bumper catch could just as easily become next year's loss.

Pakistan's focus for SDG 14 should be to conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources. It should take actions that ensure continued health of oceans/seas by initiating a necessary regulatory framework, upgrade institutions for effective monitoring and join international efforts to achieve SDGs through agreed protocols.

It must engage with all stakeholders dependent on its coastlines to improve their livelihood and provide a level playing field to benefit from the ocean resources.

And it ought to engage with the international community to ensure a healthy and productive maritime environment with attention to integrative and multilevel governance, with actionable projects at the grassroots.

Pakistan should convene a national level task force to chalk out a strategy that fits into its long-term sustainable development vision. In particular, it should urgently assign organising such a task to its already existing National Oceanography Institute based in Karachi and the Marine Biology department at Karachi University. Likewise, the University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences, Lasbela should be engaged to establish joint projects along the coastline. Already, the World Wildlife Fund and International Union for Conservation of Nature have both worked with local communities along the coastline.

DEVELOPMENT VERSUS MANAGING ECOSYSTEMS: WHAT WILL PAKISTAN DO?

Dawn, 5 October 2016

Dr Pervaiz Amir

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15 focuses on protecting, restoring and promoting the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably managed forests, combating desertification, and halting and reversing land degradation and biodiversity loss. This goal is aimed at all eco-systems.

As such, it is highly relevant for Pakistan, which has extremely diverse ecologies spread over 12 district agro-ecological zones. From its highly glaciated mountains to its Indus Basin System, cradled in the civilizations of Taxila, Harappa and Mohenjodaro, life expands to its deserts: Thal, Cholistan, Tharparkar and vast Kharan Dasht. Its biodiversity of both flora and fauna is diverse and unique.

However, regrettably its forest resources are extremely meagre, a mere 4pc. Despite recent attempts and widespread pleas to reverse this situation, the scenario remains worrisome for policymakers. Mass, man-made destruction of forests by the organised timber mafia presents a gloomy picture.

To add, greed and irresponsibility of a special interest group has robbed Pakistan of its natural tree wealth. The direct impacts on agriculture are daunting because, with little farm forestry, soil health suffers and, with rising global warming, many farms without trees become uninhabitable for life on land. To preserve agriculture for a continued food supply, sensible actions aimed at drawing a balance between sustainable versus overburdened land use will be required.

Pakistan is poised for a turnaround of the system. Rapid action is needed to sustain populations with the erosion of land resources. A reversal is possible provided a science-based approach is followed along with institutional reform and resource mobilisation. Firstly, there is need to create mass awareness amongst all stakeholders; that sustaining life on earth in all forms requires a conscious effort. Overburdening the world with an imbalanced lifestyle – a hallmark of modernisation – needs deep reflection.

In Pakistan, a fundamental question while perceiving long-term survival is to examine where material supplies are procured. Can we forego our insatiable appetite to live with lesser luxuries and forest dependent products, like trees? Pakistan must increase this wealth to ensure enough and sustained resources for all times to come, and provide the needed space to maintain close harmony with nature.

Do we conduct business keeping in mind the needs of all biological life's safety and welfare? Or do we merely bulldoze whatever comes our way in the name of 'development'? Pakistan's new goals in development and mega projects like the China Pakistan Economic Corridor must be harmonised with Goal 15, and development should be guided by the determination to protect life on land.

Among Pakistan's woes is the impact of rapid transformation of its land and population from rural to urban. It is estimated that over next 25 to 30 years, over 60pc of Pakistanis will be living in urban or peri-urban settings. Competition for space will be high. In this process, Pakistan needs to ensure that damage to life on land is minimised and economic development aspirations refrain from trampling rights and entitlements of those dependent on its behaving responsibly — this is the obligation messaged by all religions of peace.

The government must take a closer look at its supply chain and ensure that as value is added upwards, all stakeholders learn that value additions should conform to helping individual welfare impacted by such business add-ons, starting from labour inputs, processing, movement of goods and services, and the final delivery to the consumers. Profitability

of businesses must bring into play the ethical reasoning of protecting the environment with minimal social, economic and negative externalities, which transcends national borders.

Goal 15 is only achievable if change starts from the grassroots. Policy and plans, are at best, intentions and statements and there is no guarantee that they will translate into action unless they come from those who will benefit from the outcomes. Pakistan should focus its energies on going green as a mission far beyond any government action.

Plans for territory falling in the 12 agro-ecological zones should be proofed with the sensitivity of sustaining life and providing a level playing field for all to survive. This will require introspection and revision of long-term plans. Conservation of natural resources, and ensuring long-term sustainability by protecting biodiversity, should feature high in development planning thinking. Likewise, equitable distribution of resources will be needed to ensure this goal is achievable on the ground by 2030.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1287106>

SHOULD THIS BE THE LEGACY WE LEAVE BEHIND?

Dawn, October 5th, 2016

Manzoor Ahmad

THERE is no dispute on the fact that the Sundarbans, a unique world heritage site and a lifesaver for the coastal people, is in grave danger, with or without the planned construction of the Rampal coal-based power plant.

Since the 1940s, the mangrove forest area has shrunk by three-quarters from around 40,000 square-kilometres to 10,000 sq-kms — with 6,000 sq-kms within Bangladesh. The culprits are many — from silting and rise of water salinity including the diminished flow of rivers caused by India's Farakka dam, encroachment of the forest by people seeking livelihood; poaching of animals and trees; navigation of freight carrying ships through forest channels; and inept enforcement of forest protection laws.

Can the Sundarbans survive another major onslaught in the form of the power plant — with the pollution of air and water, disposal of wastes, passage of coal barges, erosion of the river banks, movement of machines and material for construction and maintenance of the huge infrastructure; as well as the collateral influx of people, businesses, industries and traffic within 14 kilometres of the Sundarbans boundary?

The arguments for and against the power plant in close proximity of the Sundarbans parallel the debate between climate change deniers, such as Donald Trump, who reportedly said it is a Chinese hoax, and others including the mainstream scientific community who sees it as a looming disaster for humanity and the planet. The vast majority of people in the world, even if they are not sure of the worst case scenario, would like to see major global and national action to limit the damages, because the risk of not acting is too great and irreversible.

By way of full disclosure, I should say that I am not an expert on power generation or environment. But as a concerned citizen, who tries to make informed judgement about matters of paramount public interest, I am not convinced by the case for the coal-based power plant on the proposed site.

There are too many weaknesses and loopholes in due diligence about assessing environmental impact; preventing and mitigating the predicted damages to air, water, land and flora and fauna; the approval mechanism that seems to be designed to go ahead at any cost; and the absolute need for locating the plant on the designated site.

Promises about super-technology, super-regulations, and super-monitoring preventing the damages are mere promises that cannot be relied upon. Just look at the record of applying and enforcing all the laws and regulations in the book on environmental and other matters.

On the other hand, the independent scientific community within the country and outside, including Unesco and IUCN, has opposed building the plant on the proposed site. They have cited the risks and likely damages, and have cast doubt on the efficacy of the technological solutions mentioned, some as afterthought since the dangers were noted by the dissenters.

The dissenters have proposed alternatives, such as shifting the plant farther away and/or use of liquefied gas instead of coal as the raw material. Convincing and serious responses have not been provided by the government about why the suggested alternatives could not be considered.

What is worrisome is the position — political and administrative — that the plant as designed would be built no matter what and that those who oppose it are ignorant, misguided or, worse, against development of Bangladesh. The political and technical people at high level, who advise the prime minister, it appears, have failed to be sufficiently objective, professional, and mindful of the larger and longer term public interest.

The average life of a coal-based power plant is understood to be no more than 40 years and it would meet only a small fraction of the power need of the country during this period. The likely damage done and harm caused to the Sunderbans would be forever. The assault on its fragile and highly vulnerable ecology may be the last straw that breaks the camel's back — leading to virtual decimation of what is left of the Sunderbans.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1288123/should-this-be-the-legacy-we-leave-behind>

CONCERNS RAISED OVER GROWING MARINE POLLUTION

Dawn, October 5th, 2016

KARACHI: While discussing the impact of oil spills on the environment, speakers at a seminar held on Tuesday expressed serious concern over the increasing marine pollution and called upon civic agencies and sea-related organisations to play their role in ensuring proper disposal of waste and keeping the port and the sea clean.

The seminar titled 'Oil spill and its response mechanism' was organised by the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA).

The chief guest, vice chief of naval staff admiral Khan Hasham bin Saddique, said that marine pollution was a serious issue which required immediate attention from all stakeholders including the federal and the provincial government, the Karachi Port Trust (KPT), the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, and the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board.

Presently, he pointed out, 87 per cent of sewage was going directly into the sea without any treatment. "This shows the gravity of the situation and the need for improving waste disposal system. Proper treatment of sewage is a must and in this regard modern technology should be fully utilised," he said.

On his part, the Pakistan Navy, he noted, was ready to extend support as and when needed, he remarked.

He also spoke briefly in the context of the prevailing tension at the borders of Pakistan and India and said the Pakistan Navy was fully prepared to defend the country and would give a befitting reply to the enemy in case of any misadventure.

Earlier, director general of PMSA rear admiral Jameel Akhtar in his address talked about the need for public awareness on marine pollution.

"Marine life is hugely affected by marine pollution and we all must address this issue at every level," he said.

Emphasising the need for collaboration to tackle marine pollution, KPT chairman retired vice admiral Shafqat Javed said all stakeholders needed to discharge their duties to keep marine life thriving and safe as it is in everybody's

interest; a healthy sea would boost individual financial gains, the national economy as well as improve the quality of seafood.

Giving a presentation titled, 'Oil spill: impact on coastal communities and livelihood', technical advisor on marine fisheries at the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan Mohammad Moazzam Khan said since major fisheries in the country was restricted to the coastal and near-shore areas, it was important to keep the coast free of pollution.

"Out of the 13,000 operational fishing boats, around 10,000 boats are employed in the coastal waters. About 70 per cent of the landing comes from the coastal waters," he said, adding that oil pollution was a major cause of fish mortality.

Tracing the history of major oil spills that have so far been reported in the country, Khan said the Tasman Spirit disaster caused spillage of 67,535 metric tonnes of crude oil that led to the closure of the beach and ban on fishing in the area.

"It also caused reduction in the sea food exports and its demand in the local market," he observed.

In the long-term, oil spills, he said, could directly affect the fish and the marine ecosystem.

Mr Olof Linden, a professor at the World Maritime University in Sweden, presented a paper on 'Contemporary trends in oil spill for deriving contingency planning, response mechanism and preparedness', while seasoned environmentalist Shahid Lutfi spoke on the importance of institutional coordination during oil spill response.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1288005/concerns-raised-over-growing-marine-pollution>

WHY ASK US TO PLANT MORE TREES?

Business Recorder, 8 October, 2016

Nargis Khanum

Why ask us to plant more trees when hundreds are cut down by builders, developers, crime fighters, and even prize-winning gardeners who do not like falling leaves to destroy the manicured beauty of their lawns. Trees are lungs of earth. They take in carbon dioxide from the air to turn it into oxygen. They take in all the carbon emission from vehicles purifying the air we breathe. But, it appears, this city prefers cars and carbon to more trees.

Compared to the early days after partition, Karachi is very green, but the greenery is from small plants and bushes. Very few trees grace this city. There are no treelined avenues. The new housing societies plan to have parks in which they will put down lawns which are expensive to maintain and are water guzzlers. The building brochure will show a few trees but these are kept to the barest minimum.

It is also not surprising, despite the passage of thirty years (when the idea was floated), the city does not have a botanical garden. Only the old parks from British times have many trees and that includes the Zoological Garden. Karachi University has many trees but they are not the dominating feature of the landscape; they are there in forest-like clumps here and there.

Tree plantation and maintenance has never been given the attention vital for their healthy growth. Fruit trees are now rare. Once, nearly every garden had a mango tree or two, or a jamun tree, or custard apple or guava, all of which thrive well in Karachi. Now some private gardens have these fruit trees. Another tree which is virtually extinct in Karachi is the one with long woody pods we call the 'Sekta Phalli' the pods taste excellent as a vegetable dish and delicious in plain lentils (daal). Its tender leaves and sprigs are (or should I say were?) cooked as a vegetable dish too. But the tree makes an awful mess and is not pretty.

The greatest tragedy is the fate of neem trees. I was recently shocked to learn over 540 neem trees planted by the Sindh Forest Department (SFD) along the Superhighway between Toll Plaza and Wadi-i-Hussain graveyard were ruthlessly cut (August 4) in front of Askari Housing Scheme. This was illegal and an FIR was ordered by sessions Judge of Malir under section 379, 427 and 34 of the Pakistan Penal Code, but to date there is no further news of any action being taken or the culprits booked.

No one thinks cutting down trees is a criminal act. If a tree or trees stand in the way of road expansion they are mercilessly cut. It is possible to save the tree but there seems to be no proper equipment or even knowhow of how to transplant a full grown tree. A case in point are hundreds of datepalms trees brought to Karachi from the interior of Sindh and transplanted at various locations. Hardly a dozen of them have survived because of the inefficiency of the planters.

Trees are not only useful as the lungs of the city they are also havens of peace, which Karachi needs. If you have been to the Aga Khan University Hospital, there is a large quadrangle dotted with trees. If you sit under the trees you feel at ease.

People talk quietly. A lot of them are family members of patients, but sitting here seems to relieve the tension they feel. You will experience the same sense of peace sitting under a tree anywhere.

Try Frere Hall garden. In English literature poems are written about trees. In China wisdom is expressed in the planting of a tree which you will not live to enjoy but the future generations will. In south India every adult death is marked by planting a tree. In some places the birth of a child is marked by planting a tree.

Karachi is the worst victim of tree murder but it is pertinent to mention a beautiful avenue in another city to show mistreatment is universal. On my first visit to Hyderabad I was impatient to see Thandi Sarak which my mother used to talk about. Born in Mirpurkhas, she lived in many Sindh cities but the only one she loved to describe was Hyderabad, specifically the Thandi Sarak. There are no trees there now. It is not as if the trees were cut down to expand the road; they just died out of neglect or were chopped for fuel, I do not know what happened.

Have you any idea the number of trees cut down in Malir district to make way for housing societies and villages? Cement and concrete are our favorite materials for development, the good earth with tree roots deeply embedded in it is not. If we do not care for trees we do not really care for our city. It has no soul; the highrise buildings do not reach up in praise of God the Creator, they are monuments to the God of wealth.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/10/08/25-page/800862-news.html>

November 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 28 TH TO DECEMBER 4TH 2016

MINISTER WANTS SURVEY OF MARKHORS BEFORE INCREASING TROPHY HUNTING

Dawn, November 28th, 2016

Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is likely to increase the practice of trophy hunting of Markhors.

At a recent meeting of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) management authority, Minister for Climate Change Zahid Hamid directed representatives and conservators of the provincial forest and wildlife departments to conduct fresh and independent surveys before increasing the number of trophy Markhors hunted in the country.

“Only then can Pakistan take its plea in the next conference of parties of the international treaty to protect wildlife to increase the quota for trophy hunting of Markhors,” Mr Hamid told the officials.

Criticised by many, trophy hunting of Markhors is a legal business in Pakistan. Every year Pakistan issues 12 permits, which are marketed and auctioned by provincial governments for a base price of \$40,000. Hunters from around the world have, in the recent past, paid as much as \$100,000, to be in a picture, crouching over the dead mountain goat and for the biggest horns to mount on the wall of a study.

Found in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), the number of Markhor found in the wild is not known. Azad Jammu and Kashmir is also home to a very small population of the animal. Hunting Markhor in AJK, is however, prohibited.

Nonetheless, representatives of the provincial forest departments informed the meeting on CITES Management Authority that the population of Markhor had been increasing and Pakistan should plea in the next CITIES conference of parties to increase the quota of Markhor for Pakistan.

The meeting observed that the amount earned through the trophy hunting was spent on the welfare of communities and in better protecting the local wildlife.

It was decided that surveys should be conducted with the help of the provincial wildlife departments, WWF, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Higher Education Commission approved universities having zoology and wildlife departments.

It was also discussed that a province would communicate to the wildlife department at the federal level if its annual quota for trophy hunting was unutilised. The underutilised quota would be transferred to other provinces on a first come serve basis.

Chief Wildlife Conservator, Ministry of Climate Change, Umeed Khalid, told Dawn that Pakistan could not, on its own, increase the number of quota to hunt Markhors.

“Pakistan will have to convince the conference of parties on international treaty to protect wildlife for its approval to increase quota to trophy hunt Markhors.”

The official explained that permits were issued to hunt only very old/mature male Markhors. The older the animal the bigger are the horns.

According to the WWF, several factors have resulted in the population decline such as hunting for meat and sport (trophies), besides destruction to its habitat, encroachment, fencing and transferable diseases from livestock.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1299086/minister-wants-survey-of-markhors-before-increasing-trophy-hunting>

WILDFIRE DESTROYS FORESTS IN SHANGLA

Dawn, December 1st, 2016

SHANGLA: A wildfire gutted forests in Shahpur, Pir Khana and Chakesar areas of Shangla district here on Wednesday.

Residents of Pir Khana told Dawn that the fire broke out on Sunday and engulfed vast areas. They said the fire was still raging. These forests are privately owned.

The local people said after seeing the rising flames, they informed the forest department guards, but they were slow to react. They added that though a large number of people and volunteers were busy putting out the fire, it was beyond their control.

Meanwhile, residents of Khwar Shahpur said a wildfire destroyed precious forests in the area. They added that the fire broke out on Tuesday evening and was brought under control on Wednesday due to the hectic efforts of forest guards and local people.

Sub-divisional forest officer Waseem Ahmed told Dawn that the fire broke out in three different places — Larai Pir, Shahpur Khwar and Chakesar. He said dry weather was likely the cause of fire, claiming that it had been put out by forest guards at two places while efforts were on to extinguish the flame in the third place. He said local community was also cooperating.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1299811>

WILDLIFE DEPT'S COMMENT SOUGHT IN 'HAZARDOUS' RESERVOIR SHIFTING CASE

Dawn, December 1st, 2016

HYDERABAD: A division bench of the Sindh High Court, Hyderabad circuit, while hearing a plea seeking the shifting of a water reservoir from its present site, near Gorano village of Tharparkar, directed the additional advocate general on Wednesday to file comments of the wildlife department when it would take up the matter at 8:30am on Dec 6.

Petitioners Mr Lakho and 10 other residents of Islamkot have opposed the construction of the reservoir — projected to spread over an area of 2,700 acres — on the plea that

it would affect around 15,000 residents of about 15 villages located around the site. The villagers would also lose their source of livelihood [farming and livestock], ancestral graveyards, mosques/temples, the petitioners stated.

The petitioners stated that the respondents, the Coal Energy Board, Thar Coal Authority and M/s Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company the reservoir was meant for storing hazardous water that would destroy the lands and adversely affect people and their animals.

The bench comprising Justice Salahuddin Panhwar and Justice Mohammad Iqbal Mahar asked petitioners' lead counsel Advocate Zubair Abro to present his arguments.

As he was to start his argument, another petitioners' counsel, Advocate Aayatullah Khowaja, in response to a court's query about background of petition, informed the bench that saline water was planned to be disposed of into the reservoir being built using the 2,700 acres belonging to various parties including the petitioners and residents of Gorano and other villages. The reservoir site also houses graveyards, a wildlife sanctuary, schools, mosques and temples, he added.

The mining company's counsel, Mayhar Kazi, questioned the locus standi of petitioners citing the comment filed by the mukhtiarkar concerned in court that the present petitioners did not own the land. Advocate Sajjad Chandio, representing one of the petitioners, Mr Malyo, submitted in court a Sept 13 advertisement, published in a Sindhi newspaper, seeking lands and citing the Land Acquisition Act, 1894.

Under the law, he argued, land could be obtained for any public purpose but [in this case] while land had not been obtained yet, the work on the dam (saline water reservoir) was under way. He said that statements submitted in court by respondents were conflicting.

Justice Panhwar said that if petitioners' counsel insisted on the wildlife department's NOC, then the court would restrict itself to this permission. He asked the respondents' counsel to let petitioners establish their case first.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1299720>

AIR POLLUTION: VILLAGERS WANT STONE CRUSHERS IN HARIPUR CLOSED

The Express Tribune, December 1st, 2016.

Villagers in Haripur have threatened to block the Khanpur-Taxila road if their demands for the closure of stone crushers operating nearby and immediate repair of Hattar Road are not met.

Led by councilors and local leaders, villagers staged a short protest here on Wednesday. Haji Abdul Rehman, Muhammad Sajid, Waheed Ahmed and others said that at least six stone crushers have been working near Suraj Gali village for the last few years and due to constant crushing, residents of nearby villages had to breathe heavy volumes of dust every day.

They said the dust has made life miserable for inhabitants by causing breathing and chest complications for many people, especially children and the elderly.

“Every fourth person in the village suffers from health issues related to dust inhalation. Just two days ago, a minor girl died due to respiratory problems,” claimed Waheed Ahmed, a village councilor, adding that villagers faced a double-barrel dust assault.

He said that apart from the stone crushers, the Suraj Gali-Hattar Road has been damaged owing to heavy traffic plying to and from these crushers. He added that these trucks add to the source of dust.

Sajid, another councilor, said the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa mining and minerals department and district administration should take note that the Supreme Court had placed a ban on stone crushing and had ordered all such units across the country to be shut. However, despite the repeated applications, no action had been taken against the crushers.

They demanded early closure of stone crushing units and repairing of the Suraj Gali-Hattar Road. They threatened to protest and block the Khanpur-Taxila Road if their demands are not met.

The mineral development director was not available for comment.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1249926/air-pollution-villagers-want-stone-crushers-haripur-closed/>

KARACHI CLEAN-UP DRIVE

Dawn, December 2nd, 2016

KARACHI'S citizens will no doubt welcome the 100-day cleanliness campaign launched on Thursday by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation. The drive — initiated by Mayor Waseem Akhtar — intends to focus on the key areas of sanitation and road repairs. Anyone who lives in Karachi will testify that the metropolis is suffering from an advanced stage of urban decay. Despite being Pakistan's largest city and commerce hub, Karachi currently resembles a large garbage dump, with crumbling infrastructure and potholed roads. In fact, in the World Bank's Karachi City Diagnostic Report, the bank says that the metropolis confronts “severe environmental challenges” which include “a high incidence of air, land and water, including marine, pollution”.

Much of this, as the report says, is caused by inadequate waste management. The report observes that less than 60pc of Karachi's people have access to sewerage facilities, while the same percentage of solid waste is not collected and transferred to dump sites. In fact, much of the waste is either left rotting in neighbourhoods, or is burnt, which creates a choking miasma that envelops localities.

Keeping these grim details in mind, the mayor's effort is much needed, if much delayed, though it is also a fact that Karachi only received an elected city administration earlier this year after an eight-year gap.

The mayor says he is doing what he can with limited resources. What the city needs is a permanent waste-management system. However, the fact is that the Sindh government controls two key areas that should be under

municipal control: waste management and sewerage facilities. The city's problems are complex and deep-rooted, and nothing short of a sustainable master plan can address its woes.

But as an initial step, all civic functions, along with financial control, must be under the mayor's jurisdiction. Waseem Akhtar says the Sindh chief minister has assured him of support; the best way the provincial government can show its support is by transferring all municipal functions to the elected local bodies across Sindh.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1299901>

CIVIC UTILITY UNABLE TO CONTINUE ROUTINE CLEANLINESS WORK IN SUKKUR

Dawn, December 2nd, 2016

SUKKUR: About 80 per cent refuse removal vehicles have gone out of order but the management of the North Sindh Urban Services Corporation (NSUSC) is not ready to get them repaired citing a lack of funds, according to sources.

The sources in the corporation blamed cold war among officials for the worsening situation and disclosed that lifters and Quingqi rickshaws worth millions of rupees, which had been bought in 2011 to remove garbage had been parked over faults.

Some NSUSC officials told Dawn on Thursday on condition of anonymity that out of 11 side-loaders and rear-loaders meant for lifting garbage containers, only three were functioning and the rest were gathering rust in the open in SITE area.

The sources attributed the delay in getting the vehicles repaired to personal enmity and jealousy among officials who were busy pulling each others' legs.

NSUSC spokesperson Malook Baloch rejected the allegations of personal enmity among officials and said that all machinery and vehicles were in working condition.

Meanwhile, a large number of people took out rallies in several localities against the worsening sanitary conditions. The protesters held the officials responsible for the litter spread all over the city and the overflowing gutters.

They said the NSUSC had failed to do its job and the officials concerned were busy to serve their vested interests. They appealed to the chief minister to disband the utility and hand back the responsibilities to Sukkur Municipal Corporation.

Almost all sanitary staff had been striking four days a week over non-payment of salaries, incentives and other dues for the past seven months, which had also affected the cleanliness, they said.

In-charge of water works blamed unannounced loadshedding for hiccups in water supply to the city and warned there would be acute shortage of water from Dec 20 to Feb 10, 2017 because of annual closure of canals.

Work on water jetty for lifting water from left bank of the river had not been started even after passage of 15 years, he said.

The newly elected city mayor, too, has so far failed to improve conditions.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1299929/civic-utility-unable-to-continue-routine-cleanliness-work-in-sukkur>

CIVIC FAILURE: YEARS OF SEWAGE ACCUMULATED AT PIR MURAD SHAH GRAVEYARD

The Express Tribune, December 2nd, 2016.

SUKKUR: People in Pakistan often decry social injustice and discriminatory treatment by various departments towards the rich and the poor, which is quite right. The people of upper Sindh, however, have the good fortune of having at least one department that treats the living and the dead equally. The North Sindh Urban Services Corporation (NSUSC) has turned a blind eye to the accumulation of sewerage water in the Pir Murad Shah Graveyard in Old Sukkur for a long time. People have to wade through the muck to find dry patches where they can bury their loved ones.

The Pir Murad Shah Graveyard is one of the oldest graveyards in the city and supposedly dates back to pre-Partition times. The graveyard was once spread over a huge stretch of land but as encroachments started mushrooming, the graveyard's area shrank.

An elderly resident of Pir Murad Shah Colony, Ali Akbar, said that as there was no boundary wall around the graveyard, encroachers began constructing homes and shops after bulldozing graves. "This practice was so commonplace that a religious political party also constructed a seminary on the graveyard's land," he added. According to Ali, the residents of the Pir Murad Shah Colony have been protesting against the release of sewerage water into the graveyard for a long time, but nothing has been done.

Another resident, Yasin Mirani, said they have been facing difficulties burying their dead, because sewerage water is everywhere in the graveyard. "Hundreds of graves have disappeared due to the stagnant water," he lamented, adding that rainfall compounds the problem. Taking jibes at the NSUSC and district administration, Mirani said, "When the utility cares nothing for the living, why should it take care of the dead?"

It seems the poor in this country are born to brave miseries, he added. "I have been living in this area since 1981 and have seen the graves of my elders cave in due to the stagnant water," he lamented.

NSUSC spokesperson Malook Buledi said that the problem of accumulated sewerage water at the Pir Murad Shah Graveyard is old and the NSUSC was established only five years ago. "We don't have the authority to prevent encroachments and the encroachers are releasing wastewater into the graveyard," he explained. "They have also obtained water connections without the approval of the authority concerned."

Buledi said NSUSC plans to divert the sewerage water to the nearby Gadani disposal station. For the purpose, he claimed, 80% work has been completed and the remaining 20% will be completed within a couple of days. He also pointed out that, a religious political party has constructed its seminary on the graveyard's land and they, too, are releasing wastewater in the graveyard. He claimed that the stagnant water will be drained out by next week.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1250779/civic-failure-years-sewage-accumulated-pir-murad-shah-graveyard/>

PARTICULATE AIR POLLUTION GROWING IN PESHAWAR

Dawn, December 4th, 2016

Zulfiqar Ali

PESHAWAR: The Environmental Protection Agency claims the level of Particulate Matter (PM2.5), which increases the age-specific mortality risk, has breached the guidelines of the National Environmental Quality Standard (NEQS) in Peshawar.

"The PM2.5 at all sampling locations in Peshawar is higher than the limits of NEQS. The biggest impact of particulate air pollution on public health is understood to be from long-term exposure to PM2.5 (10-15 years), which increases the age specific mortality risk," says the EPA's findings.

Currently, the minimum level of PM2.5 in the air of Peshawar is 40 and the maximum 90, while the NEQS recommends that level of tiny particles in the air should not be more than 15 micrograms per cubic meter. Rise of PM2.5 in the air becomes hazardous for human health and also reduces visibility.

“The level of PM2.5 is four times higher in the air of Peshawar than the NEQS limit, which is alarming. It requires joint efforts to reduce level of pollution,” said EPA director general Dr Mohammad Bashir Khan.

He said: “We can’t blame single factor or sector for the soaring level of pollution in the air.

The vehicular emissions, waste burning, construction work, debris, dust, broken roads, poor collection of waste, smoke discharged from brick kilns are contributing to air pollution.”

The EPA tested air samples at 28 different locations in the provincial capital. According to the study level of Carbon Monoxide is within NEQS limits. Percentage of Nitric Oxide (NO) in the air is also within NEQS limits at all location except two area; Kohat Road and Ring Road because of high vehicular traffic.

Quantity of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) at all 28 points has exceeded NEQS limits. High percentage of NO₂ can cause lung irritation, and weaken the body’s defense against respiratory infections. However concentration of Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂) in the provincial capital is within limit.

Medical experts define PM2.5 a complex mixture of extremely small particles and liquid droplets that get into the air. Once inhaled, these particles can affect the heart and lungs and cause serious health effects.

Director Medical of Lady Reading Hospital Dr Mukhtiar Zaman Afridi said that excess of PM2.5 in the air could cause affect from nose to lungs. He said after inhalation, those tiny particles deposited in human body and caused different diseases.

“The duration of how long one remains in this environment is very important. It affects people like shopkeepers, policemen and residents who are exposed to PM2 for a longer duration,” he said, adding that heavy concentration of pollutants in the air caused high blood pressure and other complications.

“The number of patients is increasing because of air pollution in Peshawar,” said Dr Afridi, a pulmonary disease specialist. After passing through the respiratory system these tiny particles deposited in lungs, he added.

The EPA DG said thousands of light and heavy vehicles were running on the city’s roads on daily bases.

“Tiny particulates dispersed into the air as a result of tires rubbing off the road surface also pose threat to health,” he said, adding that heavy traffic especially unfit machines also discharged emission and created dust in urban areas.

The population of private vehicles is rapidly increasing in Peshawar and other urban centres and towns of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa statistics development, the total number of vehicles in Peshawar is 577,232 including 212,439 motorcycles and scooters, 95,703 jeeps and cars and 21,446 buses, mini-buses and coasters.

Brick kilns in the surroundings of Peshawar are considered main source pollution, discharging thick black smoke. Around 650 brick kilns operate around the city in which coal and used tyres are burned.

The heavy traffic, especially motorcycles, is considered another active agent of air pollution in the city. In the absence of proper transport system, motorcycles have become basic and affordable means of transportation.

Officials in the excise and taxation department said on average, 110 motorcycles were registered in Peshawar every month.

Dr Bashir suggested that the government bodies and citizens work together to control dust and reduce vehicular emissions to keep air clean from pollutants otherwise heavy smog could envelop Peshawar in next few years.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300411/particulate-air-pollution-growing-in-peshawar>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 21ST TO NOVEMBER 27TH 2016

‘20PC OF COUNTRY’S WOOD IS BURNT TO ROAST TOBACCO’

Dawn November 21st, 2016

Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: Around 20pc of total wood production in Pakistan which makes for about 2.5 million tonnes, is burnt for tobacco roasting, which leads to deforestation and causes pollution, according to the Capital Administration and Development Division (CADD).

In a presentation, available with Dawn, CADD has claimed that tobacco industries contribute to deforestation in a number of ways, such as the clearing of forests for tobacco cultivation and the burning of 2.5 million tonnes of wood for curing or roasting tobacco.

The report claims that forest resources are also used for packing tobacco including tobacco leaves and cigarettes, which consumes about 30 million tree barks.

According to the report, tobacco industry engage in what it has termed the battle of minds, by initiating various projects for the preservation of the environment as part of their corporate social responsibility such as one tobacco company offering to establish a 641 acre botanical garden in Banigala’s reserved forest area in 2015.

Talking to Dawn, CADD Deputy Director General Health Minhajus Siraj said tobacco is burnt in a barn and that the process takes from eight to 10 days and requires the burning of 1,000 kilograms of wood.

“There are some 35,000 barns in the country and of the 12 million tonnes of wood produced in the country, 2.5 million tonnes is used in barns,” he said.

“We have a forest cover of 4.5pc according to various government documents when we should have a 15pc forest cover. We lose more and more wood and forest to the tobacco industry, which also adds to environmental problems,” he added.

If the tobacco companies care about the environment, they should pack up their businesses, and that is the only way they can really help preserve the environment and forests, he said.

The ministry is taking steps for discouraging the use of tobacco and its sale, he added.

“We are registering vendors under the Tobacco Vendor Act 1958 and ensuring that cigarettes are not sold near educational institutes. We are also trying to stop people from smoking in public places,” he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1297686/20pc-of-countrys-wood-is-burnt-to-roast-tobacco>

HYDERABAD’S CONTAMINATED CANALS

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, November 21st, 2016

Mohammad Hussain Khan

THE contamination of the Kotri barrage’s four main canals continues unabated as a result of the inflow of domestic, municipal and industrial wastewater.

These canals, including old and new Phulelli, Akram Wah and Kalri Baghar feeder, supply water to the population that lives downstream the Kotri barrage.

The people of Tando Mohammad Khan, Badin, Thatta and Sujawal district are dependent on these freshwater bodies both for domestic and agricultural purposes. Not only this, but the Kalri Baghar (KB) feeder is a vital source of freshwater supply for Keenjhar lake, that feeds Karachi directly.

Industrialists and civic agencies — responsible for such discharge — are now realising the gravity of the situation, but measures to stop untreated wastewater remain elusive.

Wastewater — mixed with trash, garbage and often the carcass of dogs — goes into the canal. Effluent from industrial units based in the Sindh Industrial Trading Estate (SITE) area of Hyderabad also flows directly into the channel.

According to SITE chairman Mian Amir, 140 units are working in the food, textile, pulses and paper sector. Wastewater of these units is considered hazardous. Sindh's environment minister has set Feb 8, 2017 as the deadline for these units to prepare their environmental management plan (EMP) and establish internal treatment plants in their factories.

The industrial units are also said to be working on EMPs in consultation with water technologist Dr Ahsan Siddiqui.

Entire municipal, domestic and industrial waste is thrown into old Phulelli canal, at a central point, which is managed by the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA).

WASA runs the sewerage pumping station at Darya Khan village to release wastewater into the channel canal which then takes it to areas located downstream the Kotri barrage.

It is busy setting up the eastern treatment plant at a huge cost but the plant's completion has been exceptionally delayed for want of release of funds from the federal government, leading to cost overruns. The project was started between 2007-08; but the pace of fund releases slowed in the subsequent years.

A WASA source says that the project's cost would certainly escalate to Rs1,500m from Rs990m. "Once this plant starts working, WASA will be releasing water into the canal which will be treated potable", says an officer.

The Darya Khan pumping station gets 80pc of the sewage water of Hyderabad and Latifabad, while that of Qasimabad is diverted to the western treatment plant where, after treatment through oxidation ponds, it eventually goes into the river Indus.

Hyderabad needs a master plan as the old civic utilities system outlived its life several years ago.

In the absence of a solid waste management plan, heaps of uncollected garbage either finds its way into manholes or is dumped on the banks of the said water channels.

Dr Ahsan Siddiqui says that the pulses processing units in Hyderabad's SITE area use different chemicals — cadmium red and cadmium yellow having a toxic concentration — which are hazardous. Same is the case with the textile, paper and dyeing industries in the area.

A safe assumption is that these freshwater canals are getting around 5m gallons per day (mgd) of wastewater if the 60mgd supply of water to Hyderabad's urban settlements and SITE area are taken into account.

SEPA's recent findings of industrial wastewater samples in Hyderabad reveal that their values of biological oxygen and chemical oxygen demand, hardness and salinity don't meet the provincial quality standards defined in the Sindh Environmental Protection Act, 2014.

Things are no different in case of the KB feeder's contamination. It gets untreated effluent in Kotri at different locations. A combined effluent treatment plant (CETP) — built after much hype — is still said to be dysfunctional ever since it developed leakages. The plant was established by provincial industries department almost three years back.

The KB feeder gets the municipal waste of Jamshoro, Kotri and wastewater from government hospitals at different spots.

According to Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) officer, Munir Abbasi a recent visit by Sepa's team to CETP revealed it is not efficiently working. "We will again analyse samples of effluent from the Kotri industrial area that is treated at CETP for release into the KB feeder. But even for the naked eye the that quality of wastewater is bad", says Abbasi.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1297522/hyderabad-contaminated-canal>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 14TH TO NOVEMBER 20TH 2016

MINING COMPANY TRIES TO STOP THARIS FROM OPPOSING 'HAZARDOUS' RESERVOIR

Dawn, November 14th, 2016

Hanif Samoon

MITHI: The top executive of the firm that has undertaken coal exploration for power generation in the Thar coal project sites on Sunday tried to address the strong reservations being expressed by residents of Islamkot and its adjoining areas over the laying of a water reservoir, feared to contain hazardous elements threatening human life and land fertility. Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company chief executive officer Shamsuddin A. Shaikh arrived at Thar Press Club in Mithi and held a press conference to allay the fear.

He said he was there to assure the protesting people that whatever his company would do in the area would be in the best interest of their future and beneficial to the district in respect of development.

He held out the assurance that for the laying of the reservoir, the company would not displace any legal inhabitant of the area, and said that a 37km-long water pipeline was being laid to supply 37 cusecs daily to the area from the Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD).

The CEO said his company was ready to hold talks and consider compensation to be paid to any affected individual if relevant documents in support of claims were provided to it. He said that for most of the land being used for the reservoir, the company had already deposited the amount with the revenue department.

He said the water reservoir would be completed by Oct 2017 and it would have an effluent disposal scheme.

Mr Shaikh said that after one year of operation, the coal explored at Thar would be much cheaper than the imported coal. He said that a feasible study confirmed that mining at Thar was technically, economically and environmentally viable. Only block-II reserves could be used to produce 5,000 MW for 50 years, he added.

Economically, he said, this \$2 billion project of Thar would surely bring multi-faceted benefits for the people of the impoverished region. The project would open up employment and entrepreneurial opportunities while development and industrialisation would bring about a marked improvement in the socio-economic conditions of Thar, he added.

Meanwhile, residents of the Thar coal project sites and their adjoining areas continued their protest outside the Islamkot Press Club for the 23rd consecutive day on Sunday against the construction of the reservoir. If the site of the water reservoir was not changed, more than 12 villages and thousands of acres of their agriculture and grazing lands would be destroyed, they apprehended.

They repeated their view that the subsoil water to be stored in the over 2,500-acre reservoir would adversely affect the ecology and the environment in thousands of acres of the land of this district.

They urged the Sindh government to persuade the company to change the site of the reservoir to a place away from population and cultivable lands for which alternative sites had already been identified.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1296147/mining-company-tries-to-stop-tharis-from-opposing-hazardous-reservoir>

SEPA TAKES UP ANOTHER POWER PROJECT AMID SERIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Dawn, November 16th, 2016

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: Stakeholders at a public hearing conducted by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) on Tuesday questioned the need for a proposed power project in environmental conditions already compromised due to lack of regulatory control on industrial emissions and discharge of untreated effluent in the Port Qasim area.

The project's criticism forced Sepa to announce another meeting of selective audience, whose concerns remained unanswered at the hearing, on the project.

There was also a demand that Sepa share and hold a public hearing on the recent International Finance Corporation (IFC) study that examines the cumulative impact of the many development projects, which have either been built or coming up in the Port Qasim area.

The study document, according to Sepa, is currently with the Port Qasim Authority (PQA), which had no representation at the public hearing on Tuesday. It was dedicated to a 450-megawatt re-gasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG) combined-cycle power plant by the Engro Powergen Limited (EPL).

The programme took off with an introduction of the project according to which imported fuel would be transported from an LNG terminal to the project site via an underground pipeline, which would either traverse along the southern boundary wall of the existing Engro Polymer and Chemicals Limited and Engro Zarkhez complex or outside the western and northern boundary wall of the same complex.

The \$405m power plant would include gas turbines based on a combined cycle configuration with heat recovery steam generator and steam turbine. Seawater to be supplied through an intake channel between the plant and Gharo Creek would be treated using a reverse osmosis filter plant.

"There is no freshwater consumption and the total seawater requirements for the project will be 1,201m³ per hour whereas the daily gas requirement is estimated to be 70m standard cubic feet per day," said Farhan Ahmed Khan Lodhi representing the EPL.

The power plant to be built on the latest technology would be the most economical and efficient in the country, he contended.

The Engro group, he said, had done extensive CSR (corporate social responsibility) work across the country especially in the areas of education and skill development and the same would be replicated in the project area.

"It will also generate employment opportunities as the company plans to hire over 800 people during its peak construction period," he said.

Giving a presentation on the EIA report, Hussain Ali representing the Hagler Bailly Pakistan, which conducted project's environmental impact assessment, said that it's a clean venture.

“[Due to massive industrial activities] ecological disturbance in the project area is already high. There is no fishing activity in the area, therefore, there will be no adverse impact on livelihood of fishing communities. No threatened species was found during the survey,” he remarked.

Though he did point out that the EIA team held consultative meetings with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan, he didn't share with the audience the suggestions, if any, given by experts of these organisations to the EIA team.

Also, there was no representation of fishing community at the public hearing. Members of the fishing communities were apparently contacted during the consultative process and their photos were shown in the presentation.

According to Ali, brine water (a highly concentrated solution of the salts and contaminants to be generated by the RO plant in this case) would be treated before discharge into a storm-water drain called Badal Nullah.

Air emissions would remain well within national and international standard limits, he said.

During the question-hour session, officials representing Sepa criticised that no consultation had been done with it and the fisheries and wildlife departments before or during the EIA process. These departments, too, had no representation at the hearing.

On hazardous emissions, Saquib Ejaz Hussain, an environmentalist, said the air-shed of Port Qasim area had already saturated owing to massive industrial activity and more development projects like these would worsen environmental conditions.

He also questioned the specific brine limit selected by the consultant for the EIA (there is no brine water limit in the Sepa rules).

“The Badal Nullah is a storm water drain and shouldn't be used for waste disposal. The drain has been illegally redirected,” he said, asking the project proponent for alternatives if Sepa refused to allow waste disposal into the drain.

Concerns over safe gas transfer from the jetty to the project site were also raised and it was explained that the Pakistan Liquefied Natural Gas Limited would be the custodian of all gas import while physical infrastructure and safety measures were already in place at the Engro terminal.

In his remarks, Sepa director general Naeem Mughal said the PQA was the custodian of all projects operating or being developed on its land and the authority needed to share the recent study that had evaluated the cumulative impact of upcoming ventures.

“The PQA needs to take solid measures to ensure and prevent disaster,” he said, agreeing with the idea that the cumulative impact study should be publicly discussed first before the agency took up more development projects in the Port Qasim area.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1296552/sepa-takes-up-another-power-project-amid-serious-environmental-concerns>

CPEC POLITICS: APC WARNS GOVT AGAINST PREFERRING EASTERN ROUTE

The Express Tribune, November 16th, 2016.

Fawad Ali

PESHAWAR: An All-Parties Conference (APC) has described the federal government's preference for the eastern route over the western route as “usurpation of the rights of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan” and resolved that the people of the two provinces would not be deprived of a “once-in-decades economic opportunity”.

It demanded of the federal government to construct the western route of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor laced with all accessories and components, railway lines, economic zones, fibre optics and transmission lines first.

The APC convened by the Jamaat-e-Islami on Tuesday also gave a detailed infrastructure roadmap along the western route, demanding construction of a six-lane Peshawar-DI Khan motorway and railway line, and replacement of transmission lines across Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa to carry the required load.

The JI's APC held at the party secretariat Al-Markaz-e-Islami was attended by provincial heads of 16 political parties with the exception of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz.

The participants of the conference also demanded allocation of \$5 billion for the construction of hydropower projects to generate 10,000MW electricity. The APC also demanded construction of the Peshawar-Torkham railway line and the Orange Line train for Peshawar under the CPEC project.

Besides, the construction of the Bajaur-Waziristan Motorway and three-link motorways connecting western route with Fata-Afghanistan and Central Asian states was also demanded.

The APC also asked the federal government to construct the Khwazakhela-Bisham and Chakdara-Chitral motorways under the CPEC.

“We all know that the CPEC is a game-changer, but not only for one province (Punjab),” said Awami National Party's Mian Iftikhar Hussain.

The participants through a declaration said that they were neither against the Chinese investment nor the CPEC. “We accept the CPEC; therefore, we are demanding our due share and we would not compromise on K-P's rights,” JI provincial Ameer Mushtaq Ahmad Khan said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1232834/cpec-politics-apc-warns-govt-preferring-eastern-route/>

HIGH-QUALITY PETROL TO REDUCE EMISSIONS

Dawn November 17th, 2016

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said on Wednesday the new range of high-quality petrol introduced by Pakistan State Oil (PSO) is beneficial for consumers as well as the country's economy at large.

To prevent adulteration, the colour of Altron Premium and Altron X High Performance has been kept different from other fuels, the minister said while inaugurating the high-quality petrol at PSO outlets in Lahore and Karachi.

Altron Premium and Altron X High Performance were already put on sale earlier this month at PSO petrol stations nationwide.

The higher-grade RON results in extended engine life and reduced maintenance costs.

The two fuels reduce the environmental impact due to lower emissions. Additional benefits of the new product range include better mileage and enhanced engine performance.

Talking to journalists in Lahore, Mr Abbasi said industries will get uninterrupted gas supply during the winter season, according to APP.

The minister said the government is trying to ensure smooth gas supply to domestic consumers as well. “We have ample storage of gas and have a comprehensive strategy to meet its high demand during winter,” he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1296766/high-quality-petrol-to-reduce-emissions>

GARBAGE BURNING PERTURBS KU TEACHERS

Dawn, November 17th, 2016

KARACHI: Like rest of the city, open-air burning of garbage has become a common practice in Karachi University (KU), where a number of teachers have recently complained about it to the administration.

Speaking to Dawn on Wednesday, the teachers said that the problem was getting worse with each passing day as the administration was yet to realise the gravity of the situation.

“It’s a major nuisance on the campus that has the potential to turn into a disaster. Twice fire was lit near my house, apparently to dispose of the garbage piling up there for months. But, this practice continues unabated all over the campus,” said Dr Qadeer Mohammed, a senior KU teacher, adding that the vice chancellor had also been informed about it in writing.

According to the teachers, trash is often burnt on Sundays, which compounds their misery. “Our entire house was recently filled with smoke when someone set heaps of garbage on fire in the surrounding area. We got extremely worried and tried to call the relevant staff but no one picked up the phone,” said another teacher on condition of anonymity.

The elderly, small children and people with respiratory ailments suffered the most in such conditions, she said.

“Besides, there is a dire need that the administration develops a proper sewerage system for the university.”

Sources said that there were at least two garbage-fire cases last Sunday that spread scare on the campus while last year the administration had to call fire engines to put out the fire.

“Such fires can easily get out of control on the campus that has extensive growth of wild flora,” said another teacher.

Sharing concern over burning trash in the open, Dr Shamsul Zafar Iqbal, senior ecologist and professor at Karachi University Institute for Environmental Studies, pointed out that the practice carried serious environmental and public health hazards as trash and garbage emitted substantial amounts of poisons and toxins into the air.

“In principle, trash must not be burnt anywhere. But, if one has to, garbage should be burnt far away from populated areas,” he said, regretting that the practice was common all over the city.

Upon contact, KU registrar Dr Moazzam Ali Khan said that the recent cases of garbage-burning would be taken up on Thursday. “The university had banned burning of garbage on the campus through a notification issued months ago. At that time, some sweepers were also caught found involved in the malpractice.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1296776/garbage-burning-perturbs-ku-teachers>

PAKISTAN LACKS PLAN TO COMBAT DROUGHT-LIKE SITUATION

The Express Tribune, November 18th, 2016.

Sehrish Wasif

Islamabad: The on-going dry spell across the country has caused a drought-like situation but, unfortunately, Pakistan lacks a comprehensive drought management plan to reduce risk of its impact on humans, crops, forestry and livestock.

Experts have termed the drought-like situation alarming and fear that if there’s no rainfall by the mid of December, then Pakistan will face serious consequences –both in the short and long term.

An official working in the water sector, who wished not to be named, said: “The issue of a drought-like situation is far more important than the Panamagate scandal.

“It is expected that it will have adverse impact on the economy, agriculture, forestry and people’s health. But it is being ignored both by the government and opposition political parties.”

The official said at present there is a need to have a proper water recycling system in the country to use around three million acres feet of water which is wasting every year.

“Currently, Pakistan does not have water recycling plants to help overcome the issue of water scarcity,” said the official.

Meanwhile, Dr Muhammad Ashraf, Chairman Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), told The Express Tribune, “The on-going dry spell is already affecting our winter crops and a slight delay in rains in rain-fed areas will have an adverse impact on it which will definitely affect our economy.

“However, to overcome water shortage, people are massively using groundwater due to which its level is also declining at an alarming rate and if it will continue then time is not too far when people living in urban areas will face difficulty to consume water for drinking and other purposes at home,” he said.

Dr Pervaiz Amir, environmental, forestry and water expert, said, “Smog along with dry spell is affecting the country, but no one is taking it seriously. This situation is more devastating than a flood as it has long-term impact.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1235083/environmental-degradation-pakistan-lacks-plan-combat-drought-like-situation/>

RARE LEATHERBACK TURTLE FOUND DEAD

Dawn November 19th, 2016

KARACHI: A rare marine leatherback turtle was found dead in the Miani Hor lagoon near Sonmiani, Lasbela district, on Thursday, the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWF-P) reported.

“The scars on the carapace indicate that the turtle died due to a boat strike,” said a technical adviser on marine fisheries to WWF-P, Mohammad Moazzam Khan, adding that the turtle carcass was 1.4 metres long.

The leatherback turtle, he said, was the rarest among the five marine turtle species found along the Pakistan coast and recent studies revealed that the population of this species was declining precipitously throughout its distribution range, including Pakistan.

“These turtles solely feed on jellyfishes, which are found in abundance in Miani Hor. Annually about 1,500 metric tonnes of jellyfish are harvested here and processed in Damb and Sonmiani,” he explained, adding that probably the turtle was hit by a boat while it was searching for food.

According to the WWF, there have been six authentic reports of occurrence of this species in Pakistani waters in past years.

Two dead leatherback turtles were reported by the Sindh wildlife department in the 1980s from the coast of Karachi whereas one dead turtle was reported from Gwadar (West Bay) in 2012.

For the first time a live turtle became entangled in a net in 2013 when a group of fishermen operating monofilament gillnet caught a large leatherback turtle in Gwadar near Surbandar village.

The turtle was safely released by WWF-Pakistan staff.

The second giant live leatherback turtle was again caught in gillnet in Surbandar, Gwadar, which was also released back in waters. The third leatherback turtle was entangled in tuna gillnets near Ghora Bari offshore waters in October this year, which was released after a very long struggle.

“It is believed that leatherback turtles are highly migratory and make really long migrations across the oceans, which make them prone to be hit by boats or ships,” Mr Khan said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1297291/rare-leatherback-turtle-found-dead>

QATARI PRINCE ISSUED PERMIT FOR HUNTING PROTECTED HOUBARA BUSTARD

Dawn November 20th, 2016

KARACHI: The federal government has issued a number of special permits to hunt the internationally protected migratory bird houbara bustard in Punjab during the hunting season 2016-17, according to sources.

They said that Qatari prince Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al-Thani is among those in whose name the permits have been issued.

According to the sources, this is not the first time that a special hunting permit has been issued to the Qatari prince.

The prince has lately been in the news following the submission of his letter in the Supreme Court in connection with the Panamagate case.

In his letter he has described his father’s business relations with the family of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his involvement in the London apartments that are at the centre of the Panama Papers controversy.

The houbara bustard is not only protected under various international conventions and agreements signed by the country but its hunting is also banned under the local wildlife protection laws. Pakistanis are not allowed to hunt it but it is much sought after by Arab hunters.

According to the sources, the areas allocated for hunting to Prince Hamad are Punjab’s Bhakkar and Jhang districts. He has been allowed to hunt down 100 birds during a 10-day period.

The permit was sent to the prince through Qatar’s diplomatic mission in Islamabad.

The letter sent to the Qatari embassy (DCP (P&I)-19/6/2016-17 Allocation) says: “The ministry of foreign affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan... has the honour to state that the Government of Pakistan has conveyed its recommendation to the authorities concerned in the province for the allocation of following areas — Bhakkar and Jhang districts in Punjab province — to Prince Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al-Thani, former prime minister of Qatar, for hunting of houbara bustard for the season 2016-17.”

The code of conduct for hunting — sent along with the foreign ministry’s letter — said the three-month hunting season began on Nov 1 and would conclude on Jan 31, 2017.

The sources said that copies of the hunting permit had been sent to various government officers, including Umeed Khalid, the conservator for wildlife, Climate Change Division, Building No 144, F-8 Markaz, Islamabad, for information and appropriate action.

[http://www.dawn.com/news/1297470/permits-issued-for-hunting-protected-bird?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+dawn-news+\(Dawn+News\)](http://www.dawn.com/news/1297470/permits-issued-for-hunting-protected-bird?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+dawn-news+(Dawn+News))

COAL PLANTS, LIKELY DOUBLE-DIGIT GROWTH: GOVT ACKNOWLEDGES INCREASE IN GHG EMISSIONS

Mushtaq Ghumman

ISLAMABAD: Federal government has acknowledged that coal-fired power plants and a (government) projected double-digit growth during the next 10 years would increase Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, well-informed sources told Business Recorder.

Ministry of Climate Change recently informed the Federal Cabinet that the 21st session of the Conference of Parties (COP-21) adopted the Paris Agreement, which has been signed by Pakistan,

The sources said, every member country of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was required to submit to the secretariat its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) towards stabilization of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. Pakistan's INDCs was an interim response in the form of a brief document due to lack of data that could have allowed the estimation of future GHG emissions.

The cabinet was further informed that after COP-21 and with the approval of Terms of Reference (ToRs) by the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Climate Change Division, along with a team of experts, undertook exhaustive consultations with stakeholders and prepared an INDC report.

The Prime Minister also constituted an Inter-ministerial committee to critically examine the INDC report, which endorsed the draft. The steering committee constituted under the approved ToRs of the INDC project, endorsed submission of the INDC document to the UNFCCC Secretariat.

According to sources, three key elements of the INDC report were also shared with the cabinet. Firstly, GHG emissions from 405 million tons of CO₂ equivalent in 2014-15 were projected to increase to 1,603 million tons CO₂ equivalent by the year 2030. Secondly, Pakistan had the potential to reduce emissions by 20% but this was subject to availability of about \$40 billion (at current prices); and finally, estimate of adaptation needs ranged from \$7 to 14 billion per year over the period 2010-50.

On queries whether the GHG emission estimates in the report had factored in the setting up of several coal-based power generation plants and double digit growth for the next 10 years which would substantially increase the GHG emissions, it was pointed out that these two factors had already been taken into account while preparing estimates in the report.

The source said, in terms of rule 16(1)(j) of the Rules of Business 1973, Ministry of Climate Change sought approval of the cabinet for submission of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) to UNFCCC.

After detailed discussion, the federal cabinet approved the report and allowed the Ministry of Climate Change to submit the report to the UNFCCC.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/11/20/18-page/818974-news.html>

POLLUTION CRACKDOWN

The Express Tribune, November 14th, 2016.

The City District Government Lahore (CDGL) has moved rather swiftly in attempt to mitigate environmental pollution hovering over Lahore that causes heavy smog, poor visibility, and various health concerns among children and adults every year. A ban on factories without emissions control practices has been established with some factories having been ordained to shut down operations altogether.

While the stringency is good news for Lahore's atmosphere, the two-month grace period given to factories to implement pollution control measures is quite harsh. A major undertaking such as this should be supportive of

factories installing emissions control equipment, and the government, instead of pressurizing industrialists, should encourage and facilitate them in installing the best and most effective equipment that would prove worthy in the long-term.

Such an issue of high national importance cannot be discussed superficially and measures executed haphazardly for the matter requires deep thought and input by environmental experts and policymakers to institute practices that will be suitable for decades to come.

This is not to say that the quick government action is unwelcome. It is an important matter because the live of Pakistan's 182 million people are in danger, on account of inhaling noxious air. The pollution is also affecting the foods we eat, and considering the axiomatic saying, "we are what we eat," the pollution is impacting us in more than one way, paving the way for genetic mutations for our future generations.

Also, with recent trade and industry boosts, now is an opportune moment to implement environmental protection laws with boldly outlined consequences for factories that do not follow them. Environmental impact should be a part of health and safety training to spread awareness among all levels of factory workers because they are all stakeholders in creating a greener Pakistan.

The need for measures such as the ones CDGL has introduced is twofold: one, because for any nation, human health and safety must be a top priority and two, because all citizens should bear the responsibility of contributing towards keeping one's environment as green as possible.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1229891/pollution-crackdown/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 7TH TO NOVEMBER 13TH 2016

ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS BEING VIOLATED IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Dawn, November 7th, 2016

Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: There exists a law on environmental issues that comes into force only when development projects are more than halfway through.

This is particularly true for small and mega projects started by the CDA, such as the dualisation of the G-10 and F-10 service roads.

The project was initiated in violation of section 12 of the Environment Protection Act 1997 the same way as the Zero Point Interchange in 2008 and the ongoing widening of Islamabad Highway had been started.

The act, authored by Minister for Climate Change Zahid Hamid of the PML-N, clearly states that no construction project can be initiated until an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) is prepared following the prescribed guidelines in consultation with all stakeholders and presented and approved at a public hearing.

Though the dualisation of the service road starting from the roundabout in G-10/2 to Khayaban-i-Iqbal in F-10/2, commenced in April 2016, Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) has still not approved the project.

An EIA report submitted by the CDA after initiating the project was rejected.

"The report was rejected for the blatant violation of environmental laws," said Pak-EPA Director General Farzana Shah.

After receiving complaints from the residents, Pak-EPA has now scheduled a public hearing on Thursday to take advice from experts and listen to the concerns of the residents and set conditions before approval by the environment watchdog.

While the service road is intended for local traffic, some feel that heavier traffic would expose the residents to high levels of noise, dust, pollution, and safety issues.

“Noise and dust levels are already so high that living has become difficult,” said service road resident Vaqar Zakaria.

He said the residents had conducted tests for dust and noise levels on their own. The results showed the noise and dust levels already exceeding the National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS) by a wide margin. Heavy dust particles were higher by 67pc (PM10), 275pc for fine dust (PM2.5) and 35pc for nighttime noise.

The report was submitted to Pak-EPA which has done little to address the environmental concerns.

The residents complained that they were surprised over the Pak-EPA working which was entrusted with protecting the environment and upholding the law.

“This service road was more than 50pc complete and only now has the CDA been forced to submit a poorly prepared EIA report to Pak-EPA in response to written complaints and public interest litigation,” said Ayesha Ahmed, another resident of F-10.

The residents complained that the post-facto action nullified the entire purpose of an EIA which sets a dangerous precedent.

“Future developers will simply wait for their construction projects to arrive at an irreversible stage and then send environment reports to Pak-EPA to get a post-facto stamp of approval.”

When the Pak-EPA chief Farzana Shah was asked about violations of the environmental law, she said: “Pak-EPA is in the process of strengthening the process to penalise violators. Concerns taken up during the public hearing will be included in the no-objection certificate (NOC) as conditions.” The residents, nonetheless, maintained that the CDA’s recent history in environment management and Pak-EPA in protecting showed willful non-compliance and persistent neglect.

Vaqar Zakaria added: “Citizens had to litigate to stop the construction of an unauthorised electric grid station in the F-9 Park. The EPA recently held a public hearing on Islamabad Expressway which is already under-construction. The EPA/CDA permitted the construction of restaurants, shops and car parks in the Margalla Hills National Park, defined as a sensitive area in the EPA guidelines.”

About the dualisation of the service roads, CDA spokesperson Malik Saleem explained: “Upgrading roads are for the convenience of the residents. New road upgradations are a part of the Master Plan of the city.”

For rehabilitating natural settings affected by the development projects, Mr Saleem said, the CDA had recently developed a standard operating procedure to plant 10 trees in place of one cut down.

The CDA has also planned to dualise Attaturk Road from Khayaban-i-Suharwardy to Khayaban-i-Margalla and service roads in E-11, he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294770/environmental-laws-being-violated-in-development-projects>

FIVE KILLED, FOUR HURT IN FOG-RELATED ACCIDENTS

Dawn, November 7th, 2016

SAHIWAL: Five people died and four were critically injured in fog-related accidents in the district in the last 24 hours.

Afzal (23) was travelling on a motorcycle along with his mother Zainab and daughter Sakeena on the Bunga Hayat Road when a donkey cart appeared on the road. Afzal could not spot the donkey cart due to fog and his motorcycle rammed into its rear. He died instantly while Zainab and Sakeena got critically injured. The injured were shifted to the district headquarters (DHQ) hospital.

In another accident, two motorcyclists, identified as Riaz and Imran, collided with each other near Kot Allah Din and Murad Ka Kathia locality. Imran had his son, Nasir, on his motorcycle too who died on the spot. Riaz and Imran were seriously injured and they were shifted to hospital.

A car collided with a mini-truck because of fog at Sahiwal bypass the previous night. The couple in car died on the spot while truck driver Gulam Rasool (45) received critical injuries. He was shifted to the DHQ hospital because of severe head injuries where he died on Sunday.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294740/five-killed-four-hurt-in-fog-related-accidents>

GOVT FAILED IN SENSITISING CITIZENS TO SMOG'S HEALTH HAZARDS: LHC
Dawn, November 8th, 2016

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court chief justice on Monday observed that the Punjab government had failed to create a timely public awareness about smog that engulfed several parts of the province for many days affecting citizens, especially children.

Punjab Environment Secretary retired Capt Saif Anjum, Special Secretary of Specialised Healthcare and Medical Education Department Dr Sajid Mahmood and Chief Meteorologist Muhammad Riaz appeared before the court on a short notice.

Chief Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah questioned the working of departments in sensitising the citizens about the harms of the smog and their remedies when they (citizens) were forced to visit hospitals following respiratory problems.

The environment secretary said the government did get the cautions/warnings published in newspapers but could not present any copy of such an advertisement.

Justice Shah asked the functionaries to tell specifically "what the government was doing exactly when children were facing problems due to the smog?" the chief justice observed that there had been a great lack of communication between the relevant departments of the government.

The court was told that citizens did throng hospitals during the smog days but the smog was not the main reason behind their sudden illnesses.

The secretary environment told the court that the smog had been decreasing with slight increase in wind speed.

He said the smog was a regional phenomenon and burning of at least 32 million ton of rice crop's remains in the Indian Punjab had aggravated the situation this year.

He said the provincial government had banned the burning of crop remains in the wake of the poor weather situation.

Justice Shah observed that Pakistan was hit by climate change that had become a major health hazard for the country. However, the authorities concerned were yet to take up the issue, he regretted.

The chief justice directed the authorities to submit reports about steps taken to deal with the prevailing weather condition due to dense smog. The chief justice also summoned secretary information on next hearing along with record of the public awareness campaign through media claimed to have been carried out by the government.

He said Lahore was now considered as one of the most polluted cities in Asia.

He said the government should be directed to enforce pollution charge rules 2001 and direct the Environmental Protection Agency to perform its statutory obligations.

The petition was filed by Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's Lahore president Walid Iqbal. Further hearing was adjourned till Dec 14.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294987/govt-failed-in-sensitising-citizens-to-smogs-health-hazards-lhc>

VAST FOREST GUTTED AS WILDFIRE BREAKS OUT IN LOWER DIR

Dawn November 9th, 2016

Halim Asad

TIMERGARA: A wildfire gutted more than 45 acres of forest in Amlook Darra and Gumbat areas of Lower Dir district.

District administration and local residents told Dawn that the fire broke out on Sunday evening on Amlook Darra side of the forest and later engulfed Gumbat and Kana Shamsi Khan areas. They said that the fire was still raging.

“The blaze broke out on Sunday evening on Amlook Darra side, however, it was not visible as the area lies behind a ridge,” a local resident said. He added that local people saw it on Monday morning when sky rising flames raged on Gumbat side near Talash.

On Tuesday, the flames also reached Kana Shamsi Khan area near Talash. The local people said that inaccessibility was hindering efforts to put out the fire as the affected area could be only reached on foot.

Hundreds of forest owners and volunteers rushed to the area soon after the fire broke out and strived to extinguish the fire but to no avail. The forests are owned by residents of Amlok Darra, Gumbat and Shamshi Khan areas.

Malik Taj Mohammad, a forest owner said that fire was still spreading in all directions. He said that the flames turned thick bushes, foliage and hundreds of old pine trees into ashes. “The fire has destroyed forest spread over four kilometres of area,” he said. However, district administration contradicted him and said that the fire destroyed over 40 acres of forest.

Malik Attaullah, a resident of Amlook Darra, said that the fire destroyed trees standing within four kilometres radius. He said that district administration failed to put out the fire. He said that the fire broke out on Sunday but district administration started attempts on Tuesday to extinguish it. He said that forest owners suffered losses worth millions of rupees.

Rashid Khan, a sub-divisional forest officer, told Dawn that district administration, Dir Levies, civil defence and a large number of volunteers were trying for the last two days to control the blaze. He said that they managed to protect several patches of dense forest from the flames.

Mr Khan said that species of dodonea, Indigofera, pines' needles and bushes were destroyed by the fire. He said that pine and oak trees were partially damaged and could grow again once the fire was put out.

About the cause of fire eruption, the official said that it seemed a deliberate attempt. He said that forest department would properly investigate the matter and those involved in the crime would not be spared.

Deputy Commissioner Irfanullah Wazir said that workers remained busy for the whole day on Tuesday to control the fire. He said they had been facing difficulties due to inaccessibility of the area and shortage of water. However, he hoped that the fire would be extinguished within the next 48 hours.

Timergara tehsil nazim Riaz Mohammad along with Assistant Commissioner Mohammad Ayaz Mohmand spent the day in the forest and facilitated workers in controlling the flames.

Talking to this reporter, Riaz Mohammad said the district government would leave no stone unturned to bring the culprits to Vast forest gutted as wildfire breaks out in Lower Dir book. He said that government would also try to compensate the affected forest owners.

A spokesperson for Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) said that the fire was raging within a radius of about two kilometres and they had directed the district administration to investigate the matter.

He said that the terrain was difficult and it was about two kilometres long trek to reach the mountain top from the nearest road. The fire brigade vehicles could not reach there, he added.

The PDMA spokesperson said that firefighters managed to put out fire in Gumbat area on Tuesday another fire broke out in Shamsi Khan locality and district administration was trying to control the blaze.

Provincial Finance Minister Muzafar Said, who also belong to Dir, told Dawn that NDAM would provide the province with two helicopters to put out the blaze on Wednesday.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1295185/vast-forest-gutted-as-wildfire-breaks-out-in-lower-dir>

UNABATED POLLUTION: SMOG LAYS BARE EFFICACY OF ENVIRONMENT LAWS
The Express Tribune, November 9th, 2016.

Mariam Shafqat

LAHORE: While the environment authorities have sprang into action in the wake of the thick blanket of smog covering Lahore, environmental laws in Punjab have proved largely ineffective over the years.

Since November 2, a thick blanket of fog loaded with pollutants and dust has engulfed Lahore and its adjoining districts, causing breathing problems and disrupting normal traffic.

On November 5, the provincial authorities ordered a crackdown against factories said to be contributing towards smog in the city and shut down 19 units in one go. Since then at least 38 industrial units have been closed down on charges of burning coal powder, tyre scrap, used plastic and other harmful substances.

The Environmental Protection Department has penalised the factories under the Punjab Environmental Protection (Amendment) Act, 2012 that amended the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act of 1997.

The four basic provisions relating to pollution control are contained in Sections 11, 13, 14 and 15 of the PEPA 1997.

Section 11 prohibits discharge or emission of any effluent or waste or air or noise pollution in excess of the established ambient standards for air, water or land. Section 12 makes it mandatory to get an initial environmental impact assessment report for any construction project. Section 13 contains an absolute, blanket prohibition of import of hazardous waste. Section 14 prohibits the handling of hazardous substances except under licence or in accordance

with provisions of any local law or international agreement. Section 15 prohibits operation of motor vehicle from which air pollution or noise are being emitted in excess of the allowed limits.

The question remains, however, will the environmental departments, tribunals and the legal apparatus be able to curtail smog?

Industrial and commercial activity is one of the leading sources of volatile organic compounds (VOC), nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and sulphur oxides (SO_x) while unburned petrol is a major source of carbon monoxide.

According to environmental attorney Sardar Asif Sayal, every month thousands of new vehicles are added to the roads, but the certification system for new vehicles is inefficient. This results in lack of concrete data on emissions, which is important in tracking pollutants.

Similarly, there are no strict regulatory measures against industrial emissions and the mechanism for environmental impact assessment prior to a development activity is largely ineffective.

Theoretically speaking, Sayal says, the environment protection laws in Pakistan are well-written but their implementation is poor. "The role of EPA as a regulatory authority has been extremely unproductive," he believes.

The Environmental Protection Agency has the authority to penalise any industrial unit violating the laws and forward the cases to the Punjab Environmental Protection tribunals. The erring industries can be fined up to Rs5 million.

The Punjab environmental tribunal, Sayal says, has been rendered ineffective for the past 18 months because the EPA has not forwarded even a single case. He was of the view that the EPA's role as per the law was to mitigate and eliminate pollution but given the current situation, the body has turned into an authority which is somewhat protecting the pollution-causing industries.

According to EPA spokesperson and director Nasimur Rehman Shah, about 300 industrial units are operating in Lahore and the department has managed to take action against majority of them.

"These units run on gas and electricity but resort to using substandard fuels like rubber and tyres during load shedding that generates toxic fumes," he said.

The EPA, he claimed, sent cases to the tribunal against these industries and as a result about 200 units were forced to install wet scrubbers to eliminate toxic emissions.

"We have [also] asked the agriculture department to put a ban on stubble burning," he said. The waste management company has also been directed to take strict measures.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1224798/unabated-pollution-smog-lays-bare-efficacy-environment-laws/>

DISTRIBUTORS OF MUTUAL FUNDS: SECP APPROVES SIMPLER REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT
The Express Tribune, November 9th, 2016.

Karachi: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has approved simplified regulatory requirements for distributors of mutual funds to increase their outreach and improve the penetration of retail investors.

SECP Chairman Zafar-ul-Haq Hijazi said that in order to make the country's economy grow, it was imperative to encourage mobilisation of savings and investments through the capital markets. For this, the mutual fund industry was expected to play its due role in promoting a culture of savings and investment, according to a press release.

According to the new framework, distributors selling mutual fund units of a single asset management company (AMC) will not be required to obtain licence from the SECP or register with the Mutual Funds Association of Pakistan (MUFAP). A new cadre of retired government and semi-government officials, retired bank officers and insurance agents would be eligible to act as distributors of mutual funds.

The SECP expects that the proposed measures would be helpful in encouraging qualified individuals to act as distributors to promote mutual funds as a preferred choice of investment. They can play a critical role in long-term growth of mutual funds industry and development of capital market, which was linked with the participation of investors, in particular with retail investors in the mutual funds industry.

Moreover, the proposed framework has the potential to create many jobs for fresh graduates as well as for experienced professionals.

The SECP has made necessary amendments to the Non-Banking Finance Companies and Notified Entities Regulations, 2008.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1224902/distributors-mutual-funds-secp-approves-simpler-regulatory-environment/>

KARACHI RANKS 14 AMONG 20 MOST POLLUTED CITIES IN THE WORLD

The Express Tribune, November 9th, 2016.

Sheharyar Ali

Karachi: Though Karachi is less likely to experience smog, if it does strike then the situation in the city will be more disastrous than that in Lahore, claimed environmental consultant Nadeem Arif while talking to The Express Tribune.

A thick cloud of smog, as defined by Karachi regional meteorological director Shahid Abbas, comprising nitrogen oxide, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and other aerosols – as a result of cold high pressure in the upper atmosphere – has already engulfed Lahore and parts of Punjab after it originated from India.

In World Health Organisation's Urban Ambient Air Pollution database, Karachi has been ranked at number 14 among the 20 most air polluted cities of the world.

Karachi has been suffering since several years as environmental issues have never been a priority for the successive governments, said Urban Resource Centre joint director Zahid Farooq.

More than 12,000 tonnes of solid waste is generated by the city, out of which only 4,800 tonnes reaches the landfill site, while the remaining 7,200 tonnes is set on fire, which that remains in the atmosphere, said Farooq.

Emphasising the need to create a proper solid waste management system, Farooq said that the city has only two landfill sites that are located far away from the city and, therefore, in order to save fuel and budget, the municipal authorities burn the garbage wherever it suits them.

Along with the solid waste generation, the four million vehicles emitting dangerous fumes also contribute to air pollution, said Farooq. Pollution from industrial areas is also a major contributor, he added.

One plus point will save the city from getting affected from smog, said Arif, while referring to the sea breeze.

Elaborating his point, Arif said that although the city's air pollution is far more dangerous than that of Lahore, the sea breeze blows away the toxic fumes emitted from the industries, vehicles and the burning of solid waste from the city.

Dr Seemin Jamali of the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre advised citizens to use masks to protect their face and to cover their hands frequently. Though smog has not yet affected any citizen of Karachi, it can cause irritation to the

eyes and lung infections that will cause breathing issues, said Jamali. People already suffering from issues related to lungs should avoid going outdoors in such situations, she added.

Meanwhile, Abbas told The Express Tribune that there are fewer chances for smog to prevail in a city like Karachi as the weather condition of the city does not suit smog.

In the case of Lahore, there are many industrial cities around Lahore and it is surrounded by the toxic fumes of the industries.

However, Karachi does not have any industrial city in its surroundings, except the suburbs. Therefore, there are less chances that Karachi will get affected from smog as the industrial fumes generated from Karachi are blown away by the sea breeze, said Abbas, while explaining how Karachi is safe from smog.

However, ecologist Rafiul Haq said that in 2015, we saw that the same sea breeze was at a freeze and that caused more than 1,000 deaths in the city. The plus point of sea breeze can itself become deadly when it is not available, said Haq. It is better to control pollution rather than relying on sea breeze, he emphasized, adding that the high-rise buildings in the city have become a barrier for the winds blowing in the lower density areas, therefore one cannot solely depend upon sea breeze.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1224780/call-cleaner-environment-karachi-ranks-14-among-20-polluted-cities-world/>

55 FURNACES, RE-ROLLING MILLS SEALED FOR 'CAUSING SMOG'

Dawn November 10th, 2016

LAHORE: The Environment Protection Department (EPD) has sealed 55 units of furnaces and steel re-rolling mills in the provincial capital in the last five days for creating pollution that contributed to the "smog" that has been enveloping the region for many days.

The sealing operations were also conducted in Sheikhpura and Gujranwala districts.

Those associated with these businesses complain that the sealing operation has been carried out without serving any prior notices to the owners, which they say resulted in halting their daily production, rendered thousands of daily-wagers jobless and caused hike in iron and steel products' prices.

District Officer (environment) Anjum Riaz told Dawn on Wednesday that officials had sealed 55 units out of the total 337 in Lahore district.

He said the action had also been taken against the units which failed to make their scrubbers functional to control emissions.

Mr Riaz said the department was already continuing campaign against the industrial units emitting toxic fumes in the atmosphere and not adopting safety measures.

He said the cases against the sealed units would be sent to courts for legal action.

A couple of owners of furnaces and re-rolling mills said the discriminatory action against their businesses was resulting in an increase in the prices of billet and other products.

According to them, a furnace unit produces on an average 150 tons of material per day and provides employment to around 700 daily-wagers who work in three shifts.

They said the furnaces were not the sole culprit causing air pollution or smog as other various industries and traffic on roads were also among contributing factors.

They claimed the furnaces were the biggest consumers of the Lahore Electric Supply Company (Lesco) and had less transmission losses.

They demanded the government should stop harassing the owners and unseal their furnaces and re-rolling mills to save the industry from “looming crisis”.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1295405>

DIR WILDFIRE PUT OUT AFTER 60 HOURS

Dawn, November 10th, 2016

TIMERGARA: The wildfire in Talash forests was put out after more than 60 hours of hectic efforts by army, Dir Levies, forest department, civil defence and hundreds of local volunteers on Wednesday.

Provincial Minister for Finance Muzaffar Said along with Forestry, Environment and Wildlife Secretary Syed Nazar Hussain Shah, Chief Conservator Sher Nawaz, Conservator Mushtaq Ahmad, Deputy Commissioner Irfanullah Wazir, Divisional Forest Officer Mohammad Farooq and SDFO Mohammad Rashid visited the affected forests and appreciated the firefighters for putting out the blaze.

The wildfire engulfed more than two-kilometre area of thick forests in Gumbat and Shamshi Khan Talash. Talking to Dawn, Mr Nazar Hussain said that the fire was extinguished owing to hectic efforts of firefighters and district administration. He directed the officials of forest and civil defence departments to remain present in the jungle until fire was extinguished completely.

The provincial minister for finance, who belongs to the district, said that provincial government had already mobilised all available resources to protect Talash forests. The minister said that visit of secretary forestry, chief conservator and conservator to the affected area was an evidence of government’s sincerity.

About damage assessment, SDFO Mohammad Rashid told Dawn that fortunately big pine trees remained safe. He said that the fire burnt thick bushes, small plants and some local species of dodonea and indigofera.

JIRGA SYSTEM: Speakers at a function here on Wednesday demanded of the lawmakers to legislate about jirga system so that decisions taken by authorised jirgas could not be challenged.

The function was organised by Talash Dushkhel Qaumi Jirga, a body of elders representing four union councils of Talash valley, in Ziarat. District nazim Mohammad Rasool Khan presided over the function.

The district nazim administered oath to newly elected cabinet members of the jirga. Talash Dushkhel Qaumi Jirga president Mohammad Israr, general secretary Dr Noor Mohammad, former president Mohammad Ibrahim, Adenzai Qaumi Jirga president Khurshid Ali Khan, Malik Taj Mohammad and Malik Abdur Raqeeb Khan also spoke on the occasion.

They said that Talash Dushkhel Qaumi Jirga was a non-political forum that worked for maintenance of peace and out of court settlement between rival parties. They said that so far it had resolved hundreds of disputes.

The speakers said that jirga system had a long successful history in Pakhtun culture. They said that jirga also helped courts by resolving disputes.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1295381>

ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION: FACTORY OWNERS TOLD TO MEND WAYS OR FACE ACTION

The Express Tribune, November 10, 2016

LAHORE: As part of measures to curb environmental pollution, the City District Government Lahore (CDGL) has decided to impose a permanent ban on factories polluting the environment.

The district administration has given two month grace period for installation of emissions control equipment to factory owners that are willing to improve their manufacturing practices, The Express Tribune learnt on Wednesday.

In a meeting with representatives of different industries, Lahore DCO Muhammad Usman said the government would not allow anyone to pollute environment. "All factories running on coal have to install emissions control systems," he said. "The government will conditionally allow operations for two months to factories that will provide undertaking for installing this equipment in their units."

He said the factory owners had been ordered to provide a weekly report to the DCO Office on the progress of development works for controlling harmful emissions. "If any factory fails to introduce these systems in a given time it will be sealed again," he added.

The DCO maintained it was a collective responsibility of all citizens to keep the city's environment clean otherwise the government would be compelled to take stern action against violators of environment laws.

He directed the officials to open those units that had provided undertaking to make their manufacturing practices environment friendly.

On November 5, the provincial authorities ordered a crackdown against factories said to be contributing towards smog in the city. Since then at least 38 industrial units have been shut down on charges of burning coal powder, tyre scrap, used plastic and other harmful substances.

The action came after a thick blanket of fog loaded with pollutants and dust engulfed Lahore and its adjoining districts, causing deadly traffic accidents and health problems.

Amid growing concerns over smog in Lahore, the Punjab environment authorities sealed several steel industries for contributing to the unusual weather.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1226064/environmental-pollution-factory-owners-told-mend-ways-face-action/>

SATELLITE MONITORING: WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES TO BE MAPPED THROUGH GIS

The Express Tribune, November 11th, 2016.

LAHORE: Under the Green Pakistan Programme, a laboratory with geographic information system (GIS) will be used to monitor wildlife sanctuaries. An amount of Rs284 million has been allocated for the Punjab Wildlife and Parks Department under the programme.

This was shared in a consultative meeting of the officials of the wildlife and parks department held to discuss how wildlife and their sanctuaries could be protected. There are four national parks, 37 wildlife sanctuaries as well as 24 game reserves in Punjab.

At the meeting, Planning and Development Department's Agha Waqar Javed said the Punjab government planned several development projects for the promotion of wildlife department and funds had been allocated for the implementation of the projects.

The government has allocated Rs550 million in the yearly budget for the annual development programmes of the wildlife sector in Punjab.

The issues of wildlife protection, depleting breed of animals, use of scientific methods to protect animals and preservation of wildlife and its management were discussed in detail in the meeting.

The officials also talked about measures that should be taken to stop illegal hunting of animals and setting up of check posts through information technology to protect wildlife and also classify wildlife sanctuaries and wildlife game reserves and bird sanctuaries through GIS laboratory.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1227316/satellite-monitoring-wildlife-sanctuaries-mapped-gis/>

A HEAP OF GARBAGE: WHILE DMC SOUTH SLEEPS, CLIFTON BLOCK 5 WEEPS

The Express Tribune, November 13th, 2016.

KARACHI: In the concrete jungle of Karachi, rarely does one stumble upon islands of greenery. They are like oases. One such oasis can be found in Clifton Block 5, in the neighbourhood that lies between the British Consulate and the junior section of the Karachi Grammar School.

This vast island of greenery is a conglomerate of parks that stand adjacent to one another. The five parks in this residential area include Aunty Park, Shaheed Hosh Muhammad Sheedi Park, Moin Akhtar Park, Bagh-e-Rustom and Family Park.

Yet all is not well in this mini urban paradise. Those who frequent these parks will notice the heap of garbage outside the eastern boundary of Aunty Park as well as the southern boundary of Shaheed Hosh Mohammad Sheedi Park. The two spots are designated dumping grounds and collection points of garbage in the neighbourhood. But ‘collection’ rarely occurs. Bagh-e-Rustom, on the other hand, not only has litter, but encroachments as well.

Clifton Block 5 falls under the jurisdiction of District Municipal Corporation (DMC) South. DMC South chairman Malik Muhammad Fayyaz said, “Both Aunty Park and Shaheed Hosh Mohommad Sheedi Park happen to be the garbage collection points for this particular neighbourhood.

There is, generally, a vast backlog of garbage collection in many other areas, such as Block 2 and Jehangir Park in Saddar. We are currently in the process of clearing these areas up.” Taking account of the situation in Block 5, he said that he will visit the area and ensure that it is cleared up within two days. What is needed, however, is a regular system of collection.

The chairman went on to explain, “On October 24, 2016, the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board signed an agreement with a Chinese company, under which the job of garbage collection has been outsourced to the latter. This agreement will come into effect in three to four months. The Chinese company will bring in its new machinery for garbage collection. The employees of the sanitation department of DMC South will remain the same – the only change will be that they will be supervised by the Chinese company. It will help if people don’t litter and use bins to throw their trash.”

Amber Alibhai, the general secretary of non-governmental organisation Shehri – Citizens for a Better Environment said, “It takes two to tango. Public servants as well citizens have to work in tandem and lessen the load. The citizens, who are the actual owners of this godforsaken city, should play their part and throw their garbage responsibly as well as recycle.”

Despite the generous bestowment of appointments to an already overstuffed Sindh cabinet, it would appear that there isn’t a single person willing to take the initiative of ensuring that basic functions such as garbage collection are enacted.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1229067/heap-garbage-dmc-south-sleeps-clifton-block-5-weep/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 31ST TO NOVEMBER 6TH 2016

DECIMATION OF WILDLIFE

Dawn, October 31st, 2016

It is widely recognised that supporting humanity is extracting a heavy toll on the planet. Even so, on Thursday came a report that is nothing less than damning: since the 1970s, nearly three-fifths of all vertebrates — fish, birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals — have been wiped out directly as a consequence of human appetite and activity.

If the prevailing trend continues, by 2020 — which is only four years away — the planet would have lost two-thirds of its wildlife stock. These are the findings of the conservation groups WWF and the Zoological Society of London, published in their joint biennial Living Planet report.

Sadly, there is no mystery about why this is the case: with the human population having more than doubled in number since 1960 to the current 7.4bn, humans are simply eating, crowding and poisoning our planetary cohabitants out of existence.

To make matters worse, while this particular study involved the tracking of changes in wildlife population sizes and not the number of species threatened with extinction, experts are in agreement that Earth has entered its sixth “mass extinction event” — when species disappear at least 1,000 times faster than usual — over the last half a billion years.

If humanity has a conscience, these findings ought to galvanise the world into action. There is, of course, an urgent need to save and conserve wildlife habitats, and an argument can also be made for mankind to change its dietary patterns. But many countries need to start with making their populations aware of the need to protect wildlife, Pakistan being a case in point.

Our own record of conservation on the whole leaves much to be desired. From the snow leopards in the north to the marine life in our oceans, depletions and habitat loss are occurring, without people tuning in to the fact that this will take an environmental and economic toll on human communities as well. Can the trend be reversed? Only time will tell.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1293241/decimation-of-wildlife>

SAVING BUSTARDS FROM GOING BUST

The Express Tribune, October 29th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: The government’s decision to establish an endowment fund (EF) for migratory birds has been appreciated by wildlife conservators and zoologists.

The prime minister had approved creation of the endowment fund for migratory birds including the MacQueen’s bustard – also known as the Asian houbara – in Pakistan around three weeks back. The fund will initially be capitalised by the finance division with a Rs250 million allocation, and will be augmented through additional resources in the future.

“The endowment fund was designed to provide a lasting solution for conservation and habitat protection of migratory birds in Pakistan,” Prime Minister’s Focal Person on Green Pakistan Programme (GPP) Rizwan Mehboob said while explaining the functions of the endowment fund.

He said it would develop conservation, propagation and artificial breeding initiatives for bustards and other migratory birds, manage and restore migratory bird habitats, such as protected areas and conservancies, protect endangered species of migratory birds, their habitats and ecosystems, and support wildlife management and security operations by provincial governments.

He added that it would also facilitate community-based participatory wildlife management and benefit apportionment initiatives while supporting research, censuses, knowledge product development, and communication activities for the benefit of promoting and propagating the cause of migratory bird conservation and scientific management.

Javed Ahmed Mahar, a wildlife conservator in Sindh, said the establishment of the endowment fund was encouraging, while also stressing on capacity building of wildlife departments with respect to anti-smuggling operations across provincial as well as international borders, besides promulgation of anti-poaching laws at federal level under CITES and the trade control act, and establishing wildlife counters at all exit routes.

“The sea route is a favourite of smugglers and proper watch must be kept on it,” He said. He added that bustards were not as threatened by falconry as they were by poaching and smuggling.

He said that in Sindh and Baluchistan, habitat loss was due to petroleum sector development. He said bustards were now available for sale from poachers for Rs30,000 to Rs45,000.

Mahar said petroleum companies have made extensive network of gravel roads in deserts, which badly damaged bustard habitats. He claimed that they never implemented environment management plans (EMP) and this could be addressed easily using funds from their respective corporate social responsibility (CSR) operations.

Ministry of Climate Change Biodiversity Director Naem Ashraf Raja said, “We must consider both biological and social sustainability before venturing in to any programme for conservation of migratory birds and stressed to be conservative before starting any sustainable use initiative. He said that the rate of population decline of bustards was approaching levels that would qualify for classification as an endangered species.

He said that the review of the global conservation status of the Asian houbara reports a population of between 79,000 and 97,000 individuals globally.

Raja said that the population of Asian houbara had been in steady decline since the early 20th century and overexploitation remained the foremost threat to the species, primarily as a result of unsustainable levels of hunting and poaching.

The number of birds migrating from Siberia has also declined drastically in recent years.

Many birds fly south to India to escape the harsh Russian winter, but on their way, they make stopovers at different lakes and water reservoirs in Pakistan, including Tanda Dam in Kohat, and Haleji, Keenjhar and Lungsee lakes in Sindh.

A WWF official who is engaged in conservation work in Sindh said the number of migratory birds making stopovers at Keenjhar Lake had declined from 205,000 to 13,706 over the last two decades.

In 1987-88, about 65 species of waterfowl were recorded at Keenjhar Lake. A census carried out in 2010 revealed that a large number of waterfowl had avoided visiting the lake and the total number of birds had also declined drastically, he explained.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1215553/habitat-destruction-saving-bustards-going-bust/>

300 MILLION CHILDREN BREATHE HIGHLY TOXIC AIR, UNICEF REPORTS
International New York Times, OCT. 30, 2016

Geeta Anand

MUMBAI, India — About 300 million children in the world breathe highly toxic air, the United Nations Children’s Fund said in a report on Monday that used satellite imagery to illustrate the magnitude of the problem.

The vast majority of these children, about 220 million, live in South Asia, in places where air pollution is at least six times the level that the World Health Organization considers safe, Unicef said.

The agency said the children faced serious health risks as a result.

“Children are uniquely vulnerable because their lungs are still developing,” said Nicholas Rees, the author of the report.

“Early exposure to toxic air has lifelong consequences for them,” he said.

Among the most dangerous pollutants are air particles known as PM2.5, which are a small fraction of the width of a human hair.

They can be released from fossil fuel combustion and industry, and include natural sources like dust.

The ultrafine particles enter the bloodstream through the lungs, worsening cardiac disease and increasing the risk of stroke and heart failure, in addition to causing severe respiratory problems, like asthma and pneumonia.

Early studies also suggest a possible link between pollution and children’s cognitive function, the Unicef report noted.

It also cited numerous studies connecting chronic exposure to high pollution with an increased risk of miscarriage and early labor in pregnant women, and low birth weight.

Globally, about seven million deaths are linked to air pollution, 600,000 of them children under 5, the Unicef report said, citing World Health Organization studies in 2012 and 2015.

Air pollution is linked to one in 10 deaths of children under 5, the W.H.O. has reported.

But in its report, Unicef also argued that the effects of toxic air go well beyond early mortality, in particular for children, on whom the lifelong effects are only now being understood.

Beyond the children living in the most toxic air, about two billion children in the world, constituting the vast majority, live in places where air pollution exceeds the level that the W.H.O. considers unhealthy, the report said.

And Unicef warned that children’s health could be increasingly at risk in the ensuing decades as the most populous countries rapidly industrialize, a factor that historically has been accompanied by rising rates of air pollution.

But the future doesn’t have to be that way, Ramanan Laxminarayan, a senior research scholar at the Princeton Environment Institute, argued in an interview.

He noted that China, where air pollution soared during industrialization, has radically changed course.

“China is investing significantly in clean-air technology on a scale unprecedented,” Mr. Laxminarayan said.

Air pollution is about as severe in India, he said, but the causes are in some ways more easily correctable, like the burning of paddy straw by northern Indian farmers after they harvest it.

“This is just gross stupidity,” Mr. Laxminarayan said, and alternative ways of disposing of the crop can easily be found without compromising India’s economic future.

Industry isn't yet as big a source of air pollution in India, where development so far has come from less-polluting industries like pharmaceuticals, giving India a choice of whether to take a different route to future development, Mr. Laxminarayan said.

India has taken some steps toward charting a cleaner road to development but needs to be much bolder if it is to protect its children's health, he said.

"India could have been a country to get rich without China's type of industrial pollution," he said. "It is throwing away that opportunity."

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/31/world/asia/unicef-children-toxic-air.html?_r=0

STUDENTS CLAIM FINDING A SOLUTION TO POLLUTION

Dawn, November 2nd, 2016

PESHAWAR: A team of students, who have won a bronze medal in the international genetically engineered machines (iGEM) championship in the US, gathered at Cocos University Peshawar here to showcase their achievement to solve the most pressing environmental challenge of pollution the country is facing.

The team consisted of five girls and seven boys from across the country, including Karachi, Hyderabad, Lahore, Kalat, Swat, Waziristan, Mardan and Peshawar, according to a statement issued here on Tuesday.

Dr Faisal Khan, principal investigator and international genetically engineered machines team supervisor, who is also the director of the institute of integrative bio-sciences at Cocos University, said,

"We have been waiting for this moment to introduce synthetic biology in Pakistan to give students the opportunity to do cutting edge biotechnology research."

The international genetically engineered machines Peshawar team worked on a bio-based sensor that will detect poisonous gases in the air.

It is based on a bacterial cell with genetic circuits made of synthetic DNA that the students designed and fabricated to produce different colours in response to the presence of carbon monoxide, nitrous oxide or both.

They had a molecular biology refresher and an intense synthetic biology crash course in their first month before they brainstormed what problem to solve using the 'designer bug' they would create.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1293799/students-claim-finding-a-solution-to-pollution>

CHINESE FIRM TO LIFT GARBAGE IN DISTRICT SOUTH

The Express Tribune, November 2nd, 2016

KARACHI: The Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) will not get functional in District South until February 2017, despite inking an agreement with the Chinese company, Changyi Kangjie Sanitation Engineering Company, to lift garbage door-to-door in the district.

District Municipal Corporation (DMC) South is the first municipality in the city to have signed any such agreement. According to DMC South chairman Malik Fayyaz, a council resolution was needed to sign such an agreement. He said that it was already obtained by the Sindh government through the former administrator of DMC South, but local government minister Jam Khan Shoro wanted the resolution to be passed through the elected local government.

Fayyaz told The Express Tribune they passed the resolution after obtaining a briefing from the SSWMB on how they will operate in their district through a Chinese company. He added that the agreement was made last week with the Chinese company.

However, Fayyaz said, despite inking THE agreement, it will take at least three months for the Chinese company to start their work on THE ground. “The project involves huge investment,” he said, adding that the Chinese company will bring 70% of their machinery and 20 per cent of the existing machinery of the DMC South will be purchased by the SSWMB while 10% of the DMC South’s machinery will be taken on rent.

For this particular project, around 1,000 labourers will be needed, Fayyaz said, adding that the DMC South will provide its staff to the SSWMB, who will work under the Chinese company. According to him, this entire process of asset management will take three months or more, which also includes the construction of two modern Garbage Transfer Stations (GTSS) by the SSWMB.

For Saddar area, he said that the GTS will be constructed near Mewa Shah Graveyard and for Clifton the GTS will be built near Hijrat Colony. The GTS will be properly covered with boundary walls, Fayyaz explained.

According to him, the DMC South produces 1,300 tons of garbage every day and for each ton, the Sindh government will pay the Chinese company \$26. The amount of money that the DMC South gets from the Sindh government for garbage collection is around Rs25 million per month and this new project will cost Rs100 million per month, which would be paid by the Sindh government. The DMC South will stop receiving any amount for garbage collection thereafter.

The company will also wash the arteries of the DMC South and will transfer the garbage from every house to the community dustbins and then to the GTS’, from where the garbage will be transferred to the landfill sites.

No official of the SSWMB was available for comments.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, Shoro said that they want to ink a similar agreement in DMC East but are waiting for approval from their local council. The agreement will get delayed for a year if the DMC East’s council fails to give their approval in six to seven days, he said. However, DMC East chairman Moeed Anwar told The Express Tribune that in a day or two his council will give the approval.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1217820/next-year-chinese-firm-lift-garbage-district-south/>

‘SINDH GOVT TO PROVIDE POLLUTION-FREE ATMOSPHERE’

Business Recorder, 3 November, 2016

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Government has decided to ensure solid waste management under which landfill sites will be allotted for disposal of waste with objective to provide health environment and save the people from different deadly diseases like cancer, hepatitis and polio.

This was stated by the Commissioner Hyderabad Qazi Shahid Pervez while holding meeting with the Managing Director Solid Waste Management A.D. Sajnani, Deputy Director Imdad Ali Shah, Additional Commissioner-I Sajjad Haider Shah and Deputy Commissioners of Hyderabad and Jamshoro districts here at his office on Wednesday.

Under the plan, he informed that pollution free atmosphere would be provided to residents of Hyderabad, Kotri and Jamshoro by safe disposal of waste of these cities at the safer places.

He also emphasized upon the residents of these cities to extend their full cooperation with the municipal workers and to dispose of the waste at the selected points and ensure cleanliness of their streets.

He asked the Deputy Commissioners to conduct survey and select proper landfill sites where the waste could be duped and disposed accordingly.

The Managing Director Solid Waste Management while briefing the meeting informed that the government has planned to implement this project in all over the province so that the pollution free atmosphere could be provided to the people with protection of their lives from deadly diseases.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/11/03/9-page/811536-news.html>

LAHORE CHOKES AS SMOG REACHES NEW HIGH

The Express Tribune, November 3rd, 2016.

Dawn November 3rd, 2016

Xari Jalil

LAHORE: A blanket of smog which had been hovering over Lahore in the last few days thickened on Wednesday, causing thousands to complain about breathing problems, eye irritation and reduced visibility on roads.

The Met Office has released a weather warning describing the smog — comprising nitrogen oxide, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and other aerosols — as a result of cold high pressure in the upper atmosphere.

The office states that suspended matter accumulates in the lower atmosphere, colliding with water vapour which causes a chain reaction that produces smog.

The duty forecasting officer said this weather was likely to persist for the next two or three days in Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Gujranwala, Faisalabad, Okara, Sahiwal, Pakpattan, Multan and Khanewal districts.

People may experience eye irritation, respiratory problems and skin irritation. Road and air traffic could be affected due to low visibility, the Met Office has said.

Urban areas were worst hit by smog in winter, said Nasimur Rehman, an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) official who used to be based in Lahore.

The situation is particularly bad at Yateem Khana Chowk, Azadi Chowk, and the busier traffic junctions in the city. “The World Health Organisation has set the benchmark for suspended particulate matter at less than 150 micrograms per cubic metre. In these areas, it can exceed 270.”

Long hours of traffic jams, especially on the main arteries of Lahore, including The Mall and the Canal Road, can trigger a smog situation. Mr Rehman added that factories, inside and around the city, also aggravated pollution levels. “Especially when they end up burning rubber for fuel because of a shortage of availability of natural gas.”

Emissions from factories and cars result in high levels of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and carbon monoxide, the three main gases that contribute to dangerous levels of air pollution.

Rafay Alam, an environmental lawyer, said there was no precise empirical evidence of air quality in the city because either the government did not have the necessary equipment, or it did not make use of it.

He said there was always more pollution in winter, because of low wind levels and high particulate matter. To add to the problem, Alam said, the EPA had been in “disarray” since its director general was sacked recently.

Syed Nihal Asghar of Seal Laboratories said his firm owned air quality measuring equipment. “We measured air quality on Wednesday morning when the level of carbon monoxide was 4ppm (parts per million), it rose to about 5ppm in the evening. It should be less than one ppm.”

The EPA had been given measuring instruments by a Japanese firm and they had been installed in some places including the Town Hall and Regal Chowk, but workers had not been trained to operate them and the machines just rusted away.

He added that coal factories were mostly upwind and when the direction of the wind changed, both Lahore and New Delhi were affected. “The wind has pushed the particles and gases into Lahore, and for now, it is trapped within city limits.”

Dr Awais of Mayo Hospital’s ENT Ward said most patients had visited the hospital on Wednesday complaining of severe breathing problems. “We suggest that people, especially those on motorcycles, cover their noses and mouths and wear protective glasses and helmets.”

Dr Nasim said the traffic police would have to take extraordinary measures to control traffic jams and factories would have to take care not to burn plastic, wood or rubber for fuel.

Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif formed a high-level committee to monitor the issue and announce precautionary measures.

The committee will look into an emergency plan in view of the smog. It will also issue guidelines for schoolchildren and preventive measures in case of traffic accidents.

The initial report is to be presented to the CM on Thursday.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1293995/lahore-chokes-as-smog-reaches-new-high?fromNewsdog=1>

PAKISTAN DEMANDS \$42B TO CUT CARBON EMISSIONS

The Express Tribune, November 3rd, 2016.

Shahzad Anwar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday ratified the Paris Climate Change agreement.

Federal Minister for Climate Change Zahid Hamid also announced that the cabinet had approved the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) and Climate Change Bill.

Briefing the media over the background of the Paris agreement, Hamid said that an expert study group was constituted to formulate the INDCs report. “This report forecasts how much emission is expected as a result of future development till 2030,” he said explaining that the country’s current carbon emissions were 405 million tons, 135th highest in the world.

“We intended to reduce our carbon emissions by 20 per cent but that will depend upon the availability of funds from the Green Climate Funds (GCF),” Hamid said, adding that Pakistan has demanded \$42 billion to meet the country’s target.

The minister further said that Pakistan would send the INDCs to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat before COP-22, likely to be held from November 7 to 18 in Morocco.

Hamid also informed the media that the cabinet had approved the Climate Change bill.

Shedding light on the salient features of the bill, he said that according to the proposals a 'Pakistan Climate Change Council' would be established. The body would be a high climate change decision making body which will either be chaired by the prime minister or a person nominated by him.

The federal government may appoint federal and provincial ministers, chief ministers, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan chief secretaries as members of the council.

Different projects will be prepared under this authority and will be implemented by the provinces.

"We are among the few countries that will have this authority. It will also be responsible to implement Kyoto protocol and Paris agreement," he added.

He also highlighted Green Pakistan Program and told the media that 20% target has already been achieved. He said that this is a red-letter day to achieve three major climate change developments.

The bill, he said, has addressed 24 areas.

According to the minister, a section of the bill deals with the cost of litigation. Currently, it is mandatory to pay the cost of litigation to the winning party.

Under the new bill, it will be mandatory to pay the cost of litigation to the successful party which has been linked with benchmark interest rate of the State Bank of Pakistan.

Hamid said that further legal reforms were on the cards and soon electoral reforms would also be introduced.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1219118/paris-deal-ratified-pakistan-demands-42b-cut-carbon-emissions/>

16 DIE IN ACCIDENTS CAUSED BY FOG IN PUNJAB

Dawn, November 4th, 2016

Intikhab Hanif

Lahore: At least 16 people were killed while travelling on the motorway on Thursday morning due to extremely poor visibility caused by thick fog that has prematurely developed over the plains of Punjab.

In Lahore, the intensity of the health-threatening smog let up on Wednesday night and Thursday morning due to night cooling and enhanced relative humidity in the air. It nevertheless, resurged as the temperature arose in the afternoon, especially affecting the heavily dusty under-construction path of the metro train from Thoker Niaz Beg to GT Road near Batapur, around the steel mills that are polluting air by using trash like used tyres as fuel and the busy roads that remain choked with traffic.

People, especially those who travel by motorcycles, have been complaining of severe irritation and burning of eyes, noses and throats since Wednesday because of smog which has also greatly affected those already suffering from asthma.

Adviser to the Punjab Chief Minister Khwaja Salman Rafique, who heads a committee constituted by CM Shahbaz Sharif to suggest how to tackle smog, said at a news conference that it was not caused by development works in Lahore. It developed all over the province and if required schools would be closed to prevent children from getting affected by the phenomenon.

Motorway authorities said that a caravan of around 300 to 400 vehicles from Peshawar was moving towards Raiwind to take part in a tableeghi congregation here. It continued to move towards Lahore despite a strict warning to abandon

the motorway before Sukheke near Hafizabad where travel had become dangerous because of zero visibility caused by dense fog.

The driver of a pick-up ahead who had ignored the diversion indicators suddenly applied brakes after getting confused in the thick fog in the middle of the motorway, leading to a pile-up of vehicles. As a result 12 travellers were killed and five injured critically.

Meanwhile, a woman and her son were killed at Faisalabad's Chiraghabad interchange after two cars collided with each other on the fogbound motorway.

In Sheikhpura, two people were killed and 12 other injured in two fog generated pileups.

Unconfirmed reports indicated more deaths in other parts of the province in road accidents caused by thick fog.

Officials of the Motorway and Highways Authority said that the Multan Road from Lahore to Mian Channu remained blanketed with dense fog on Wednesday night, reducing visibility to zero. A senior Lahore Met Department official said a fresh westerly wave over the northern areas also contributed towards lessening of smog by changing the direction of the upper air.

A high-pressure area had made the upper air static and turned it into a canopy, preventing the pollution at the lower level from escaping upwards. The mixture of these suspended pollutants with medium level moisture created smog as a result.

Chief Meteorologist Riaz Khan said that fog or smog would lessen in the next two to three days because of the rain and clouds to be generated by the westerly wave mainly over the upper parts of the country. But they would persist with varied conditions till December because of the expected less or no rain.

The plains of the country witness mist at this time of the year. But it has now become smog over Lahore because of extraordinary amount of pollution in the air.

Environment Secretary Saif Anjum said dust and emissions from factories using trash as fuel were adding to pollution in Lahore and said enforcement of environment laws were going to be strictly ensured not only here but also in other parts of the province.

An official said there were 300 steel mills in north Lahore and up to Batapur, all using trash, including used tyres, as fuel.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294136>

SMOG-GED OUT!

The Express Tribune, November 4th, 2016.

Sehrish Wasif

Islamabad / Lahore: The thick smog hanging in the air in Lahore and its adjoining districts has disrupted routine life, causing health problems and fatal road accidents as well as flight delays.

Heavy smoke particles interact with water vapour in the atmosphere to create smog, which is a combination of volatile organic compounds and harmful gases. Usually smog is formed in the upper atmosphere but conditions are ripe for heavy particulate matter to accumulate in the ground atmosphere with the onset of winter season.

Prof Dr Sajid Rashid, principal of Punjab University's College of Earth and Environmental Sciences, says the prevailing condition is not a natural phenomenon.

“This (smog) is the result of persistent and unsustainable burning of carbon-based fuels in the region and the situation has been building up over the past few years,” he said. “Numerous coal-fired power stations in Indian Punjab have come online that have also contributed to the smog.”

Dr Sajid said the practice of setting fire to the fields to get rid of remaining stalks post-harvest might also be considered as one of the major trigger factors. “It is our social and moral responsibility to develop sustainable habits, and consider the consequences of our actions on not just the local level,” he added.

Although the Met Office said the smog had reduced in Lahore as compared to Wednesday, attendance at private and public schools remained thin as parents complained about low visibility, pollution and health issues of children and preferred to keep their children indoors.

Asma Nazeer, a private school teacher, said only a few children in her class showed up on Thursday and parents called the school to tell them that they would not be sending their children.

Imran Ahmed, a parent of two, said he did not send his children to school because of the pollution and low visibility. “I cannot take the chance as children are getting sick because of this weather,” he added.

At least seven flights of Pakistan International Airlines were delayed and another two were diverted from the Allama Iqbal International Airport owing to low visibility in Lahore and its suburbs.

Two international air carriers, Turkish Air and Qatar Airways, diverted their Lahore-bound flights to Karachi due to the prevailing smog.

The Civil Aviation Authority, however, said the runway at Lahore airport was not closed as last year the authority installed the Instrument Landing System, which allowed flights to land at a visibility of as low as 50 metres. But only aircraft having the system and trained pilots can manage that.

The situation might improve after some rainfall, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). Weather experts have predicted light to moderate showers at isolated places in eastern Punjab during the next 24 hours.

PMD chief Dr Ghulam Rasul told The Express Tribune that lack of rainfall over the past few months was the prime reason behind having dense smog in November.

According to the Met Office, the visibility level in Lahore on Thursday had improved than a day earlier. At 10am on Wednesday, the visibility level was recorded at 500m while at the same time on Thursday it was 1,200m. By 7pm, the visibility level in Faisalabad was recorded at 900m; Joharabad 600m; Bahawalpur and Multan 2,000m; and in Jhang it was 1,000m.

Former director-general of the Environmental Protection Agency (DG) Asif Shuja Khan said the country’s agencies either did not have the equipment for monitoring air quality or were non-operational.

“It is the need of the hour to declare an environmental emergency in the areas worst-hit by the smog,” he added.

Given the density of smog, doctors were expecting an influx of patients but not many people turned up at hospitals.

“The situation is normal at all hospitals in Lahore,” said Dr Farhan of Services Hospital. “There is no [state of emergency] at ENT wards.”

However, Dr Owais Samee, an ENT specialist at Mayo Hospital, believed the people must be using home remedies for now as it was a common practice among masses.

“In our society, even when people are suffering from diabetes and heart diseases they visit quacks for treatment. Why would they come to hospital over irritation in the eyes or throat,” he said, adding only asthma patients were coming to hospitals.

“I bet there would be many people on the streets, consuming the toxic air and feeling irritation in their eyes and soreness in their throats,” Dr Owais said.

About precautionary measures, child specialist Dr Shehbaz Umer at Lady Willingdon Hospital said children, who have asthma running in the family, must be kept indoors during the season. “Schoolchildren must commute in covered vehicles and wear masks at all costs,” he said, adding parents should ask their children not to rub their eyes in case of irritation.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1220201/smog-ged-out/>

GOVT GIVES UP OVER 1,000MW OF IMPORTED COAL-FIRED POWER PROJECTS

Dawn November 5th, 2016

Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: The government has decided to give up more than 1,000 megawatts of imported coal-fired power projects to contain reliance on imported fuels and reduce foreign exchange loss.

Under two separate but related decisions, the government has shunned a 660MW imported coal-based power project of the Hub Power Company (Hubco) under the “actively promoted projects” of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Also, Karachi-based Siddiqsons Energy has been asked to set up its 350MW plant on domestic coal from Thar instead of imported coal.

A senior government official told Dawn on Friday the two decisions were taken by the board of directors of the Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB) — a one-window arrangement for private investments in the power sector — led by Minister for Water and Power Khawaja Mohammad Asif.

In November 2014, the PPIB approved processing of 1,320MW imported coal-based power project at Hub, Balochistan, by Hubco. That decision led to formation of a joint venture between Hubco and China Power International Holding Company. In June 2015, the PPIB issued a letter of intent (LoI) to the joint venture.

Based on that letter, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) approved the upfront tariff for the power project in February this year. The joint cooperation committee of the CPEC included a 660MW unit of the project in the list of ‘priority projects’ and the remaining 660MW in actively promoted projects under CPEC framework agreement of Nov 8, 2014.

The PPIB also issued letter of support (LoS) to the project in April this year on the basis of Nepra tariff and performance bond of \$6.6 million at the rate of \$5,000 per megawatt with the financial close deadline of Jan 12, 2017.

The LoS required the project company to negotiate and sign implementation agreement with the PPIB and power purchase agreement (PPA) with the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) by Oct 11, 2016 to enable signing of the agreement by the January 2017 deadline.

The existing 1,292MW Hubco project was also required under an agreement with the government signed at the time of clearance of circular debt in May-July 2014 to convert its thermal machines to coal-based generation. This did not materialise as planned.

The failure of the China Power Hub Generation Company to execute these projects within the stipulated time was to become “a default” and require the PPIB to encash performance guarantee. The negotiations for implementation and power purchase agreements continued until the end of August 2016 and the company demanded signing of the implementation agreement to avoid default.

In the meanwhile, the PPIB board decided in June this year to stop processing of power generation based on imported fuels because of substantial capacity already contracted that was enough to meet power demand until 2022 and to remain watchful of considerable foreign exchange erosion. This led to the decision of signing implementation and power purchase agreements with China Power Hub Generation Company for only 660MW instead of 1,320MW.

Likewise, Siddiqsons Energy Ltd (SEL) has been asked to set up its 350MW project proposed at Port Qasim on Thar-based coal or else its LoS for the project on the originally envisaged project based on imported fuel would not be allowed to continue.

Originally, the SEL was required to achieve financial close by Aug 31, 2016. But the State Bank of Pakistan disallowed the company to sign Rs45 billion financing agreement with the United Bank Ltd to avoid foreign exchange erosion and instead bring foreign financing. As a result, the SEL declined to achieve financial close and demanded one-year extension.

Consequently, the SEL was compelled to convert to local coal if it wanted to continue with the power project and bring foreign financing. The negotiations led to agreement on extension in financial close deadline until August 2017 without doubling the performance bond and issuance of a letter of consent by the CPPA and National Transmission And Despatch Company Ltd and modification in tariff accordingly.

Interestingly, after delaying one project and giving up another for being imported fuel based, the PPIB in a recent meeting floated a 1,200MW project on imported liquefied natural gas. An official said that with a tight schedule for the proposed LNG based project, only a contractor that already has the plant available could meet deadline, unlike original manufacturers.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294281/govt-gives-up-over-1000mw-of-imported-coal-fired-power-projects>

CHOKING SMOG MAY ALSO SHUT PUNJAB FACTORIES

The Express Tribune, November 5th, 2016.

LAHORE: The Punjab government says it may have to temporarily shut factories — particularly furnaces and brick kilns — as a persistent spell of dense toxic smog continues to choke parts of Punjab, particularly its provincial capital, causing deadly road crashes, skin allergies and other infections.

Environmental experts are attributing the thick smog to growing air pollution, industrial emissions in particular, but images said to be from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration making rounds on social media show the colossal amount of toxic fumes are rolling into Pakistani atmosphere from Indian Punjab.

Farmers in Indian Punjab and Haryana have been setting fire to paddy stubble in their fields after harvesting the crop as part of the slash and burn. This is adding to the particulate matter which is unexpected to dissipate anytime soon.

According to the Pakistan Met Office, the smog will continue to remain a problem until the first rainfall of this winter, which again is unlikely until the end of this month. But chief meteorologist Muhammad Riaz says the smoggy weather condition may prevail in December too.

Khawaja Salman Rafiq, adviser to the Punjab chief minister, told BBC Urdu that if the smog persists, the government would have to consider shutting factories, particularly furnaces and brick kilns. “The government may announce temporary closure of schools to prevent vulnerable children from toxic smog,” he added

However, he claimed that the smog situation has improved considerably compared to November 1 and 2. He admitted that the particulate matter was engulfing other districts of the province. “The smog is now also covering Toba Tek Singh.”

Khawaja Salman also lent credence to media reports that the smog and particulate pollution was originating from India. He clarified that burning of paddy stubble in both halves of Punjab contributed to the already brittle situation. “The particulate matter is clearly visible in the air,” he added.

According to sources, smog has caused scores of road crashes in all 36 districts of Punjab over the past couple of days in which 20 people have been killed and hundreds wounded.

About the health effects of the poisonous smog, Khawaja Salman said that based on the statistics compiled by the provincial health department and hospitals, the situation was not worrisome.

“I am constantly in touch with hospitals,” he said. “A couple of days ago, there were reports of eye infection/irritation, but the number of cases have now gone down.”

“People (in urban areas) must take precautionary measures ... And authorities concerned have been told to act swiftly to deal with accidents on the motorways and other major highways,” he added.

He said that four days ago, a committee had been formed to deal with the situation, which included experts from Met Office, health and environment departments as well as representatives from rapid response services, including 1122 and traffic police. The committee, he said, was overseeing the situation on a day-to-day basis.

Meanwhile, stocks of face masks and artificial tears are running out in Lahore because of an unprecedented demand for protective accessories to counter eye and throat infections.

A number of citizens, especially motorcyclists, are complaining that disposable face masks and eye drops have disappeared from the shelves of most medical stores and pharmacies. The asking price for the items has also witnessed a sharp rise.

Complaining about the shortage and price hike, Muhammad Mukhtar said the green-coloured mask, which generally sells for Rs3 in normal days, was selling for up to Rs20 depending on the store’s location and the physical appearance of the buyer.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1221250/choking-smog-may-also-shut-punjab-factories/>

WAPDA CHIEF FOR DEVELOPING ENERGY, WATER RESOURCES

Business Recorder, November 05, 2016

The WAPDA Chairman Lieutenant General Muzammil Hussain (Retd) has said that energy and water are two cardinal sectors of the national security, which concerted efforts are needed to develop water and energy resources in the country.

He was talking to a delegation of National Security and War Course of National Defence University (NDU) Islamabad, headed by NDU Chief Instructor Major General Muhammad Naeem Ashraf visited Friday WAPDA House and attended briefings on the water and power sectors of the country.

Addressing the delegation, he said that WAPDA is constructing a number of projects in water and hydropower sectors including Neelum Jhelum, Tarbela 4th Extension, Golen Gol, Dasu (Stage-I), Kurram Tangi Dam and Nai Gaj Dam etc.

He said that three of the under construction hydropower projects with cumulative generation capacity of 2485 MW will be completed in 2018. Besides the under construction projects, Bunji Hydropower Project with generation capacity of 7100 MW and Diamer Bhasha Dam with generation capacity of 4500 MW and gross water storage capacity of 8.1 MAF are among the projects which are ready for construction.

He said that Diamer Bhasha Dam is the most essential project for Pakistan, being a multi-purpose project to store water and generate electricity. He said that WAPDA enjoys a very good credit rating for raising funds for its hydropower projects.

The Chairman said that apart from its services for water and power sectors, WAPDA can take pride for its contribution towards promotion of sports in Pakistan and its patronage of engineering discipline in the country.

WAPDA Advisor (Diamer Bhasha Dam Project) Dr Izhar-ul-Haq and PEPCO General Manager (Revenue and Commercial Operation) Muhammad Saleem briefed the delegation about water and power sectors respectively. In the briefing about water and hydropower sector, the delegation was briefed about annual water flows and storage capacity, per capita availability of water, impact of climate change on water resources, water management challenges, water conservation and hydropower potential of the country.

In another briefing about power sector, the delegation was appraised about power sector reforms, electricity crisis and issues relating to power sector. The delegation was also informed of the Government's efforts to overcome the electricity shortages in the country.

Following the briefings, a question-answer session was also held, wherein the queries about water and power sectors raised by the participants were responded to. Later, WAPDA Chairman and NDU delegation head exchanged the souvenirs as memento to the visit.

NTDC Managing Director, Permanent Commissioner for Indus Waters Pakistan, WAPDA Members, WAPDA Managing Director (Administration), WAPDA Secretary, and other senior officers also attended the briefings.

<http://www.brecorder.com/fuel-a-energy/193/100001/>

WHY PUNJAB'S SMOG HAS AGGRAVATED THIS YEAR

Dawn, November 6th, 2016

Xari Jalil

LAHORE: The latest smog situation has left Lahore in a choking haze, but even in the past environmental experts and activists have been vocal about air pollution issue. Now NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration) has pointed out that burning of crop stubbles may be a major reason for a smog blanket in New Delhi, and also in Lahore, as the map shows several places in West Punjab that have thermal emissions.

Both East and West Punjab have two growing seasons — one from May to September and the other from November to April. In May and November, Punjab farmers typically sow crops and vegetables for the next season; but before sowing, they often set fire to fields to clear stubbles of previous crop and make them suitable for next sowing.

Experts' views vary on the matter.

“While burning is a major problem... I don't believe this is the reason why the smog has seen a spike this year,” says environmentalist Aleem Butt. “Action should definitely be taken for burning crop stubbles, but in the meantime we are being invaded by noxious gases from coal power plants. Another very big cause which is being ignored is the high level of deforestation this year. Too many trees were cut down first for the Kalma Underpass and now the Orange Line.”

As for an alternative method for crop stubble burning, the best method is to plough the stalks back into the earth where they can decompose into humus.

Environmentalist and researcher Noman Ashraf says that labs of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are not operational, and without any empirical evidence, there can hardly be any crackdown on factories and other offenders.

“There are third-party labs which are doing this work, but the EPA has not bothered to renew their collaborative licences with them either,” he says.

According to him, the Air Quality Index monitors were installed at five points during the last decade, but because the instruments were not calibrated they eventually became useless. “If we look at China and India, they at least have figures to go by,” says Mr Ashraf.

“If the EPA claims to have regular readings then, under the public’s right to know, these figures should be uploaded on a website or publicised through media.”

EPA argues that it has state-of-the-art labs and regular readings. “We only had one purchasing issue... otherwise all our equipment is working just fine,” says an official of the EPA. Now with air pollution levels high enough to cause concern, EPA has worked out readings of between November 2 and 4.

And these reveal some startling figures.

For example, nitric oxide should not be more than 40mcg per cubic metre but during this period Mall Road saw over 306mcg/cubic metre, and Mohlanwal (near Bahria Town) 332mcg/cubic metre.

Particles less than 2.5µm (micrometres) are called PM2.5. They are approximately 1/30th the average width of a human hair. The benchmark for PM2.5 should be 35mcg/cubic metre, but none of the figures recorded during the period fell within this range.

Readings were similar for PM10, whose levels should have been below 150, but were recorded to be higher in Shahdara area (264). However in other places levels were below 150.

Sulphur dioxide, which should be well below 120mcg per cubic metre, was seen highest in Mominpura, an appalling 1,373mcg per cubic metre. The carbon monoxide levels, which should have been below 5msg/cubic metre, were recorded at 21mcg/ cubic metre on Mall Road, and 17mcg/cubic metre at Mohlanwal, while at other places the levels were slightly higher than 5.

Meanwhile, Ashraf says the issue of crop stubble burning may have been misinterpreted. “This is nothing new in the region and has been happening for decades. But this recent spike is because farmers in East Punjab, who had originally been selling their wheat stalks for biomass plants, burnt their agri-waste this year after their requested price was turned down by the biomass plants.”

A sharecropper farmer of Okara area says that seeds and other agriculture inputs are so costly nowadays that it is inconceivable to buy more land only in order to plough the stalks back in the ground. “Burning is much more convenient for us.”

Naseemur Rehman Shah, a spokesperson for EPA, says his department has urged the agriculture department to take notice of the problem, but no action has so far been taken.

He too doesn’t agree with the view that crop burning is the major reason behind the smog. “Climatic change is happening at a global level, and every region is affected. Smog or fog that used to come later in the year has happened earlier this time.”

But when asked about the trees cut down in Lahore because of various development projects, Rehman says the EPA did not disallow it because that was the last resort. "The government has announced that for every public sector project one per cent of the total cost has to go into tree plantation," he says.

He adds that even corridors like the Motorway are having trees planted along them. "Sometimes tree cutting has been allowed because it was the need of the day," he says.

There are also other factors contributing to air pollution and one of these is factories, he says. "While crop stubble burning is a serious issue, most of the fumes are coming from East Punjab; but at the same time from within Lahore, we have factories that cannot use natural gas and therefore burn all kinds of materials including rubber to create fuel."

He says that around 300 units have been shut down by the Punjab government in the recent past and these include large- and small-scale industries.

Regarding air pollution, Rehman says that currently there are about 3,000 cases under trial in environment tribunals from all over Punjab.

But apart from industries, there is the huge issue of traffic as well.

Rehman says that traffic congestion, bad roads, increasing number of vehicles, old vehicles with bad engines, and banned vehicles were main causes and many were still operating. The two-stroke auto and cycle rickshaws both are seen running despite being banned.

"We are fully aware of the situation and the ban is being implemented slowly. After all changes cannot happen overnight. A decade ago we were worried about how the air pollution issue was being neglected but by introducing alternative transport projects like the Orange Line... the government is moving in the right direction."

"These projects are most environment-friendly," says Rehman. "Orange Line will run on electricity, new LTC buses will use CNG and other Euro 2 and 3 standard buses will use good quality diesel."

Rafay Alam, an environmental lawyer, says unless there are proper metering systems, not just in Lahore but all over Punjab, no one could make any conclusive claims.

"First off, monitors are needed to tell us what the pollution levels are," he says. "When we get accurate data the pollutants will be precisely identified and so a proper response can be formulated."

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294579/why-punjabs-smog-has-aggravated-this-year>

CITIZENS FEEL SOME RESPITE FROM SMOG

Dawn, November 6th, 2016

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: Weather conditions improved a great deal in Lahore on Saturday as moderate north-westerly wind considerably pushed back the smog producing pollutants to India from where they had emanated after the burning of crop residue by the mechanised East Punjab farmers.

People at large sighed with relief after finding atmosphere much less irritating than it had been in the last three days. Many were still seen wearing masks to prevent against the pollution being generated locally by factories and vehicular traffic.

Masks appeared in the city mainly on Friday after persistent fog raised alarm, forcing people to think of their safety.

Chief Meteorologist Riaz Khan said the pollutants might again return to Pakistan in two to three days but in less quantity. The pollutants had either been spreading over vast areas in India and Pakistan or settling down in the last three days. They were also absorbed by the upper air while being pushed towards India, he said.

Fog, in the meanwhile, continued to persist in central and adjacent towns of south Punjab for the fourth day running, making travel on the motorway and national highway risky especially during last night.

In Faisalabad, two policemen on a motorcycle were crushed to death as an oil tanker reportedly turned onto its side while negotiating a turn during dense fog. Rafiq and Mubarak were on routine patrol duty.

The provincial environment department officials said that wind finally provided much relief to people in Faisalabad and Gujranwala regions also as it pushed back the extremely irritating hydrogen sulphide, produced after eastern Punjab farmers burnt crop residue, to India.

Secretary Environment Saif Anjum said his department was also concentrating on reducing pollution being caused by factories, mainly steel, in north and north-east Lahore. These factories were another major source of pollution and were being constantly checked by officials of his department and the district administration, he said.

Chief Minister's Adviser Khwaja Salman Rafique, who also heads a committee formed after smog created panic in Lahore on Wednesday, said various steps were being taken to protect people from smog and educate them on how to handle it. "Pollution will have to be taken seriously to save ourselves from its dangerous effects," he said.

According to spokesperson Imran Shah, the motorway was closed from Lahore to Sial Mor and from Faisalabad to Pindi Bhattian, and to Gojra during the early hours of Saturday because of dense fog. It was nevertheless opened to traffic at around 9am.

A blanket of thick fog also covered the National Highway reducing visibility to zero particularly from Lahore to Khanewal and Multan. Fog also covered G. T. Road from Lahore to Jhelum but it was moderately dense, Mr Shah said.

The Met department forecast mainly dry weather in most parts of the country in the next 24 hours. However rain-thunderstorm with snow over the high mountains is expected at a few places of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Smoggy/foggy conditions are expected over plain areas of Lahore, Gujranwala, Sargodha, Faisalabad, Sahiwal, Multan, Bahawalpur and Sukkur divisions during the morning/evening hours.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294552/citizens-feel-some-respite-from-smog>

December 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 26 TH TO JANUARY 1ST 2016

FOG CAUSES CHAOS ON ROADS, TAKES 10 LIVES

Dawn December 26th, 2016

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: At least 10 people were killed and several others injured in accidents on roads blanketed by dense fog that continued to disrupt life in Punjab on Sunday.

According to the meteorological department, thick fog also hung over the plains of upper Sindh, disrupting traffic.

Temperatures have sharply dropped in the areas since fog began to blanket them on Friday night.

In Lahore, fog forced closure of the airport, disrupting air traffic since Saturday night till the morning.

There was a huge backlog of flights which the authorities were struggling to clear all through the day, giving little relief nevertheless to the waiting passengers.

According to the Rescue 1122 service, six people were killed and 10 others injured when a bus overturned in Hafizabad because of poor visibility. Many other passengers were administered first aid.

A man was killed and seven others were injured after two trucks and a bus collided with each other at Khanewal's Puthi Morr.

A motorcyclist was killed and another injured when a car hit their motorcycle in Manawala. Another motorcyclist lost his life and two accompanying women were injured after a truck hit them at Sucha Sauda on Sargodha Road.

In Sahiwal, a man died while two were injured after their motorcycle hit a donkey cart which they could not notice due to dense fog on Qutab Shahania Road.

The motorway from Lahore to Kot Momin, Pindi Bhattian and Faisalabad was closed to avoid accidents. It reopened in the morning after the fog got cleared.

National Highways and Motorway Police spokesman Imran Shah said the national highway from Lahore, particularly from Multan to Rahim Yar Khan, remained covered by very dense fog that reduced visibility to zero for most of the night and the morning, making travel highly risky.

Vehicles moved slowly and those not using fog lights were warned.

The spokesman advised people to avoid travelling after sunset, especially on the motorway and highways.

They should also drive carefully on city roads, always using fog lights while travelling after sunset, he said.

The Met department forecast persistence of the foggy weather conditions in the plains of Punjab and the adjacent region of Sindh because of persisting dry weather in the country.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1304541>

36 TURTLES, TORTOISES CONFISCATED FROM SUNDAY BAZAAR

Dawn, December 26th, 2016

Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: The Wildlife Management Board confiscated 36 endangered turtles and tortoises from the Sunday Bazaar.

A team from the department raided a stall at the weekly bazaar after a citizen registered a complaint with the authorities concerned.

The team, however, could recognise only two species – the fresh black spotted pond turtles and smiths turtles.

In the absence of an expert on Sunday, the brown tortoises have not been identified.

Wildlife Management Board Chairman Dr Anisur Rehman explained that turtles were endangered species in Pakistan, and their numbers in the wild were not known.

“Trade and possession of endangered species is prohibited both by local laws and under the international conventions that protect wildlife.”

He said both the species were extremely important in their habitats as cleaners of ponds and rivers as well as the natural surroundings.

“Turtles are highly demanded in Southeast Asian countries where its shell soup is considered a delicacy. However, in Islamabad, laws are being enforced to completely ban the trade and possession of endangered species,” he added.

The Wildlife Management Board was formed under the Wildlife Act and has the mandate to protect national parks in Islamabad, its wildlife besides managing the Margazar Zoo.

Mr Rehman recently convinced a senior magistrate of the Capital Development Authority to reconsider his earlier decision to release an endangered Himalayan black bear cub to its owner.

In his new directions, the CDA magistrate allowed the wildlife conservation department to keep the bear cub.

Its nose ring has been removed and now it has a bigger enclosure in the zoo.

“With its teeth pulled out, the bear cub cannot be released into the wild. The cub will now be released in a bear sanctuary in Chakwal where it will have a bigger space to move freely,” said Mr Rehman.

However, the confiscated turtles and tortoises will have a better future once their species has been determined, he said.

“The turtles and tortoises will be returned to the wild where they will continue with their role in nature,” he said.

According to an official from the wildlife department of the zoo, the individual selling the endangered reptiles would walk away but with a complete ban on his business activities in the Sunday Bazaar.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1304518>

CRACKDOWN CONTINUES: SEPA CLOSES SUGAR MILL IN THATTA

The Express Tribune, December 26th, 2016.

HYDERABAD: Continuing its crackdown against sugar mills, the Sindh Environment Protection Agency (Sepa) closed another mill in Thatta district. The drive started on December 21 and so far four sugar mills have been shut down. Sepa regional director Munir Abbassi said that the production process of the Abdullah Shah Ghazi sugar mill has also been stopped. In July 2015, Sepa had served a notice to the mill giving it six months for the installation of an in-house effluent treatment plant. Among the four mills shut so far, three obtained stay orders from the Sindh High Court and later resumed their production processes.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1274797/crackdown-continues-sepa-closes-sugar-mill-thatta>

TRAIL OF TRASH: GARBAGE DUMPING SPOTS ADJACENT TO SCHOOLS WORRY STAFF

Oonib Azam

The Express Tribune, December 27th, 2016.

KARACHI:

Garbage dumping sites are ubiquitous in Shah Faisal Colony, like any other area of the city. Unfortunately, most of these spots are adjacent to the boundary walls of schools and colleges in the colony.

With the aim to give the city a neater look, mayor Wasim Akhtar kicked off a 100-day cleanliness campaign from Shah Faisal Colony No 2 on December 1, along with District Municipal Corporation (DMC) Korangi officials.

Almost 25 days later undesignated garbage collection points, near the boundary walls of the colony's schools and colleges still continue to deface the area.

Just adjacent to the Khurshid Girls College, a huge pile of litter is strewn on the street. A few young trash pickers can be seen scavenging through the waste. Meanwhile, a man with a trolley comes and dumps more trash there. "This is the garbage dumping point," he said. The man is a worker of DMC Korangi.

He remarked that for three consecutive days the DMC workers dump the area's garbage in front of the college and afterwards a vehicle comes, lifts half of it and goes away.

A similar situation can be observed at the Girls Boys Agro Technical School, which is situated a street away from Khurshid Girls College. Just in front of the entrance of the school, garbage is strewn on almost half of the road and from it comes an obnoxious smell.

"Just when the school starts, the district officials come to lift the garbage," said the guard of the Girls Boys Agro Technical School, when The Express Tribune visited the area.

The principal of the same school, Syeda Mahnaz, remarked that the school administration has time and again requested the district staff not to lift the garbage during school hours, as it emits an extremely unpleasant smell and poses a health hazard for the students. The children are extremely vulnerable to diseases due to the huge pile of garbage present in front of the school, according to Mahnaz.

"We have also written applications to the administration to move the garbage collection spots away from the schools but no one pays any heed to it," she lamented.

An official of District Korangi's education department, Fahad, pointed out that there are 11 schools and colleges in the area, which have been affected by the trash piled in front of their buildings. These schools include the Girls Boys Secondary School, Girls Boys Secondary School, Government Girls High School, Senior Model Girls Boys Secondary School, Girls Boys Primary School — Education Centre and Anjuman-e-Mufaad-e-Niswan School among others.

The mayor's campaign seeks to target districts East, Korangi and Central in the first phase and he also plans to construct a hospital, school and park in a few of the union committees in these districts.

However, almost a month after the launch of the campaign and there has been no drastic improvement in the cityscape due ill-planning and the campaign's inability to change the spots for garbage collection.

Fahad remarked that Akhtar's campaign has failed to bear any fruit. "The garbage which used to be lifted after weeks or months is now lifted at least once a week," he said. However, it has not made the situation any better due to the amount of trash which gathers in the area on a regular basis, he explained.

Meanwhile, an official of DMC Korangi, requesting anonymity, said that after Shah Faisal Colony was incorporated into District Korangi, all of its machinery was shifted to District Malir. Due to this, there is dearth of machinery to clean Shah Faisal Colony, he pointed out.

District Korangi chairman Nayyer Raza did not respond despite repeated calls for comments.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1275661/trail-trash-garbage-dumping-spots-adjacent-schools-worry-staff/>

BAHRAINI KING, FAMILY MEMBERS GET PERMITS TO HUNT PROTECTED HOUBARA BUSTARD

Dawn, December 28th, 2016

Bhagwandas

KARACHI: The federal government has issued at least seven special permits to dignitaries of Bahrain, including King Sheikh Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, to hunt the internationally protected bird houbara bustard in the country during the 2016-17 hunting season, according to sources.

Among those who have been given the permits to hunt the migratory bird in Sindh and Balochistan are an uncle of the king, his defence adviser, a field marshal and armed forces chief, and other members of the Bahraini royal family, according to the sources.

The sources said that not only was Pakistan a signatory to various international nature conservation conventions that restricted the bird's hunting but the country's wildlife protection laws also prohibited its killing. The Pakistanis were, therefore, not allowed to hunt the protected species.

The hunting permits signed by the foreign ministry's deputy chief of protocol, Naeem Iqbal Cheema, have been sent to the members of the Bahraini royal family through Bahrain's embassy in the federal capital.

The letter Mr Cheema sent to the Gulf kingdom's diplomatic mission in Islamabad says: "The ministry of foreign affairs of Pakistan presents its compliments to the Embassy of Kingdom of Bahrain in Islamabad and has the honour to state that the government of Pakistan has conveyed its recommendations to the authorities in the provinces concerned for allocation of following areas to the dignitaries of Kingdom of Bahrain for hunting of houbara bustard for the season 2016-17."

According to the letter, King Sheikh Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa has been allocated Jamshoro district (Thano Bula Khan, Kotri, Manjhand and Sehwan tehsils) in Sindh.

The king's uncle, Sheikh Ebrahim bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa, has been allocated Shah Bandar tehsil and Janabad and Sonda union councils in Thatta district. The king's defence adviser, Sheikh Abdullah bin Salman Al-Khalifa, will hunt birds in Jati tehsil of Thatta district.

Field Marshal and Commander-in-Chief of the Bahrain Defence Forces Sheikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa will hunt the bird in Toisar tehsil of Musakhel district in Balochistan. The king's first cousin and interior minister, Lt Gen Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa, will hunt the migratory bird in Jaffarabad district of Balochistan.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1304947>

CURBING MARINE POLLUTION: FEDERAL GOVT FORMS THREE-MEMBER COMMITTEE

The Express Tribune, December 28th, 2016.

KARACHI: A three-member committee was formed by the federal ministry of ports and shipping to look into marine pollution, during a meeting held at Karachi Port Trust (KPT) head office on Tuesday.

Federal minister for ports and shipping Mir Hasil Bizenjo presided over the meeting, which was attended by federal ports and shipping secretary, port and shipping director-general, KPT chairperson vice-admiral Shafqat Javed and Pakistan National Shipping Corporation chairperson, Port Qasim chairperson and Sindh Government officials. The committee has been directed to submit a report in two weeks, after reviewing progress of Sewerage S3 project, marine pollution issue and suggest solutions for it.

The three-member committee comprises Pakistan Navy Fleet Commander Ariful Hussaini, KPT chairperson and a representative from the Sindh government, who will be handpicked by the provincial government.

“Most of the sewage water is carelessly dumped into the Arabian Sea,” Bizenjo said, while addressing the meeting.

According to an official estimate, he said around 500 million gallons of waste water is produced per day by Karachi alone.

One-fifth of the waste-water is coming from industries located in the city, while the rest is domestic or municipal sewerage.

It is a well-known fact that the waste-water that is dumped into the sea is affecting the marine life and fishing activities.

“The committee will forward its findings and decisions will be taken based on them,” Bizenjo said, while directing them to report its findings within a fortnight. The minister invited Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah to share his input and help formulate recommendations, on which provincial and federal governments can collaborate further.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1276620/curbing-marine-pollution-federal-govt-forms-three-member-committee/>

PUNJAB QUIETLY ALLOWS HOUBARA BUSTARD HUNTING

Dawn, January 1st, 2017

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: The Punjab cabinet has allowed hunting of the houbara bustard mainly by Arab rulers for a period of two months amid estimation by the wildlife department that the migratory birds are not endangered.

The approval was quietly given during a cabinet meeting held on Friday to mainly approve a new district administration system and financial award for local councils in the province.

The cabinet allowed the hunting by approving shifting of the bird from the list of non-hunting to the hunting list of the Punjab Wildlife (Protection, Preservation, Conservation and Management) (Amendment) Act, 2007, said Wildlife Director General Khalid Ayaz Khan on Saturday.

The list will automatically be changed after the hunting season is over.

He said the wildlife department’s secretary had been doing this under the law since 1974 when hunting by Arabs was first allowed. The matter was placed before the cabinet under a Supreme Court ruling that the actual government (decision-making authority) was the cabinet and not the chief minister or the secretary of a department.

According to Mr Khan, those having permits will be able to hunt the houbara bustard with falcons. There was no permission to hunt the birds with firearms or net them. The permission is allowed every year and the method is prescribed to limit the hunting.

The wildlife department has already allowed the hunting from Dec 1 to Jan 31. There are seven special permit holders — three Qatari royals, three UAE rulers and a Saudi minister. Each permit carries a daily allowance of 10 houbara bustards.

The Qatari royals are allowed hunting in Khushab, Bhakkar and Jhang, those from the UAE in Rahim Yar Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur. Chakwal was reportedly allotted to the Saudi interior minister, Mr Khan said, adding that

the 'guests' worked for the betterment of local communities during their stay here. They had so far completed 251 welfare projects and recently inaugurated a 50-bed hospital, he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1305695>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 19TH TO DECEMBER 25TH 2016

FELLING OF TREES CONTINUES UNABATED IN G-B REGION

The Express Tribune, December 22nd, 2016.

Shabbir Mir

The illegal felling of trees in the Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) region continues unabated, causing irreplaceable and devastating damage to the ecosystem of the area.

According to latest reports from Khan Muhammad Qureshi, a local activist in Chilas, some illegal felling has been reported in Diamer valley.

About 200 trees in the Babusar top area have been felled this month. "Unfortunately a strong group of illegal loggers is behind this onslaught," Qureshi said on Wednesday. "This isn't the first time 200 trees have been cut, they have done it in the past as well," Qureshi told The Express Tribune on Wednesday.

According to available statistics, approximately 295,000 from 640,000 hectares of forest has been denuded in the last 20 years due to callous cutting of trees and illegal transportation down-country.

The current onslaught has further shrunk the forest cover – causing deeply impacting the ecosystem which is resulting in climate change that has caused widespread rains and landslides in the region over the years.

"This year trees in other valleys have also been cut by the loggers and we brought this to notice of public representatives," said Qureshi.

The deforestation of woodland in Diamer also echoed in the G-B assembly this week, where opposition leader Shah Baig accused successive governments of tampering with official timber figures for a decade to benefit the loggers. "Timber in Diamer actually totals 14,000 feet, but it is being shown as 40,000 feet to benefit the loggers," Baig said in the assembly on Tuesday. On this, Forests Minister Imran Wakil assured the house that action would be taken against the responsible officials if lawmakers can support such allegations with evidence.

G-B government spokesman Faizullah Faraq confirmed fresh felling had been reported and said a team has been sent to the area to collect firsthand information.

"We are on it," Faraq told The Express Tribune.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1271063/ecosystem-impact-felling-trees-continues-unabated-g-b-region/>

WILDLIFE DEPT DEFENDS PERMITS TO QATARI FAMILY

Dawn, December 23rd, 2016

LAHORE: The Punjab Wildlife Department told the Lahore High Court on Thursday that Qatari dignitaries were issued permits for hunting houbara bustard owing to increased growth of the bird.

During hearing of a petition challenging issuance of hunting permits to the Qatari royal family's members, Wildlife Director General Khalid Ayaz Khan told the chief justice that the foreign dignitaries were allowed hunting of 100 houbara bustards in 10 days.

Petitioner's counsel Sardar Kalim Ilyas pointed out that houbara bustard was an internationally protected bird and allowing its hunting amounted to killing the whole race of the bird. He said the hunting of the bird was in violation of international agreements/conventions.

He argued that the government issued the hunting permits without approval of the cabinet.

Chief Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah directed a government law officer to manage reports from the climate change ministry and foundations of the UK and UAE established for conservation of houbara bustard.

The chief justice adjourned further hearing till first week of January and also directed the law officer to submit summary approved by the cabinet for the permits.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1303975/wildlife-dept-defends-permits-to-qatari-family>

RESIDENTS APPROACH HUMAN RIGHTS BODY AGAINST GARBAGE DUMPING

Dawn, December 23rd, 2016

Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: Dumping of garbage was once considered to be a common issue only in urban areas. But now people living in the rural areas are also complaining about it.

A delegation of residents from Fatehjang on Thursday approached the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), saying the environment in their area was being polluted by the dumping of garbage.

NCHR Chairman retired Justice Ali Nawaz Chohan told Dawn that a clean environment was one of the major human rights and the matter would be taken up with the authorities concerned.

Mohammad Munir Butt, the chairman of the Citizen Forum Fatehjang, told Dawn that he and other residents held a meeting with senior NCHR consultant Mirza Idrees Baig and informed him about the dumping of garbage by the Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA).

“The TMA has started dumping garbage in the open, creating a foul smell in the area,” he said.

“Moreover, we use underground water through wells which are located on the path of the rainwater. Now the rainwater would pass from the garbage before reaching the wells. Within a few years, the underground water will become polluted,” he said.

Another resident, Malik Amir Afsar, said last month the NCHR took notice of the matter after which the TMA stopped throwing the garbage in the open. However, on Wednesday they again started dumping the garbage in the same site.

“We visited the office of the NCHR where the senior consultant advised us to write a complaint and he would contact the TMA representatives and the residents to take a decision on the matter,” he said.

When contacted, Tehsil Municipal Officer Fatehjang Khan Badshah said the TMA had stopped dumping garbage on the directions of the NCHR.

“We are trying to find a new site but residents of not a single village are ready to allow us to dump the garbage of the city near their area. Currently, we don't have any dumping place and are looking for a site away from villages,” he said.

Dumping of garbage has become a big issue across the country. In Karachi, even collection of garbage has become a problem.

In Islamabad, garbage was dumped in Sector H-11 for long but the high court took notice and stopped the practice a few years ago.

Later, when the garbage was being dumped in the National Park area, the Supreme Court took suo motu notice and stopped it too. A project to establish a landfill site at Kuri could not be implemented due to the concerns among environmentalists that the underground water would be polluted.

Senate Functional Committee on Government Assurances is also hearing a same issue on the calling attention notice of Senator Chaudhry Tanveer Khan of the PML-N. The senator claimed that the garbage of Islamabad and Rawalpindi was dumped in the Nullah Leah.

Justice Chohan added that dumping of garbage was not a solution to the issue as the country cannot find so many landfill sites.

Developed countries such as France, Germany and even Turkey have stopped dumping and are recycling the garbage and making energy and fertilizer from it, he said.

“Pakistan is a signatory to the Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. So we need to make a national policy to address the issue,” he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1303968/residents-approach-human-rights-body-against-garbage-dumping>

STOP HOUBARA HUNTING: PROTESTERS

Dawn, December 25th, 2016

Tooba Masood

KARACHI: A small group of protesters stood in the street outside the Karachi Press Club on Saturday afternoon shouting slogans against Arab hunters and the federal government and asked them to stop killing the threatened houbara bustard.

They were squished between two other protests that were going on at the venue — one against the chief minister of Sindh and another by the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum.

“The houbara bustard is a vulnerable bird,” said Naeem Sadiq, a protester. “We are protesting against those who hunt the bird. Pakistan is the only country in the world which allows this. We should stop this.”

The houbara bustard is not only protected under various international conventions and agreements signed by Pakistan, but its hunting is also banned under the local wildlife protection laws. Pakistanis are not allowed to hunt it but it is much sought after by Arab hunters, who believe the bird is an aphrodisiac.

“People from abroad are allowed to hunt this bird in Pakistan as a form of bribe. It is unlawful and animal cruelty,” he said.

“We are trying to save the environment and our society”, he said and added “they are trying to ruin it all”.

He added that they were protesting and raising their voices on behalf of the voiceless birds.

A few days ago the finance division released Rs250 million for a ‘Houbara bustard and migratory birds endowment fund’ upon the directions of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

This comes after the federal government issued several licences to princes from Saudi Arabia and Qatar to kill up to 100 houbara bustards in the hunting season — which will go on till the end of January 2017. This has led to some confusion and a provincial/federal dispute, where the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa rejected the request of the federal government to allow Qatari princes to hunt in the province.

According to Asad Kizilbash, another protester, the houbara bustard is not yet extinct, but it will be in the next 10 years or so.

“The government is supposed to obey the laws of the land and it is very tragic that just for personal interests, they are giving these permits,” he added.

Atif Hayat was standing with a placard inscribed with ‘Say no to animal cruelty’ with other members of civil society. He said that the houbara bustard was a rare bird found in mountainous areas of Balochistan.

“We are here today to protest because we want the government to put a ban on hunting this bird — for everyone, including Arab sheikhs,” he said, adding that they wanted to save the bird.

Another protester, Mr Aziz, said this was a bird that was protected under international law.

“It comes here to lay eggs in the winter and if you kill them over here, their population gets depleted,” he said, adding that harming them was the worst thing anyone could do.

Standing tall in a crowd of adults, a five-year-old protester summed up the demonstrators’ demands: “don’t kill the birds”.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1304244/stop-houbara-hunting-protesters>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 12 TH TO DECEMBER 18TH 2016

SNOW, RAIN INTENSIFY COLD; FOG DISRUPTS TRAFFIC

Dawn, December 12th, 2016

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: Light rain and snowfall over the hills added to the severity of winter on Sunday and a thick blanket of fog, stretching from Gujranwala all the way to Sukkur, disrupted traffic on the National Highway and the motorway, making travel highly risky.

Six members of a family, including four brothers, drowned when their car plunged into a canal near Shujaabad due to poor visibility caused by dense fog. They were travelling from Multan to Shujaabad.

An assistant sub-inspector of police (ASI), two constables and their driver, all posted in Lahore, were injured on Saturday night when their vehicle collided with another vehicle in Farooqabad, Sheikhpura, where they had gone to arrest some outlaws.

According to weather reports, Murree, Swat, Mansehra, Chitral, Kaghan, Naran, Kalam, Malamjabba and Azad Kashmir received the first snowfall of the season on Sunday. Although the snowfall, accompanied by rain, was light, it brought down temperatures in the country’s mountainous regions.

The Lowari Top pass was closed after the snowfall. The pass leads to Chitral and reports indicated that 15 inches of snowfall had fallen there. The Met department said Kalam received 5 inches and Malamjabba 1 inch of snowfall.

Icy winds buffeted Balochistan after rain on Saturday. The minimum temperature in Kalat was -5 degrees Celsius and in Quetta it was four degrees below Celsius.

In the north, Skardu recorded a temperature of -4 degrees Celsius, Hunza and Gupis -3 and Malamjabba -2.

A dense fog developed over the plains of central Punjab and Sindh late on Saturday night, reducing visibility to virtually zero at many places. This made driving on the highways, motorway and link roads risky and difficult.

People had no option but to drive their vehicles slowly. The situation was even worse on the National Highway, which is used by heavy transport vehicles.

Authorities had to close down two stretches of motorway and the highway from Gojra to Faisalabad and from Faisalabad to Pindi Bhattian due to poor visibility.

Motorway spokesman Imran Shah said there was a “crisis-like situation” on the National Highway from Gujranwala to Sukkur because of the fog. “We could not close the highway, but remained on our toes to meet any eventuality,” he told Dawn.

The Meteorological Department said Pattan (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) received 19mm of rain on Sunday, Malamjabba 14, Kalam and Drosh 10, Dir and Saidu Sharif 9, Balakot and Kakul 7, Chitral, Mirkhani and Rawalakot 4, Muzaffarabad and Gupis 5, Lower Dir, Garhi Dupatta and Astore 3.

According to the Met Office, the weather will remain mainly cold and dry in most parts of the country on Monday. However, scattered rains and thunderstorms are expected in Malakand, Hazara, Quetta and Zhob divisions, upper Fata and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Dense foggy conditions are likely to prevail over the plains of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and upper Sindh.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1301987>

K-P SLAPS BAN ON HOUBARA BUSTARD HUNTING

The Express Tribune, December 12th, 2016.

Peshawar: Authorities in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa have imposed a province-wide ban on the hunting of the Houbara bustard, a prized migratory bird that is designated by conservationists as a protected species.

A notification was issued to this effect by the adviser to the Chief Minister on Environment and Forests, Ishtiaq Urmar, on Sunday.

“No one, local or foreigner, will be allowed to violate the law, as hunting of the internationally-protected bird is not allowed under the law in the province,” the notification stated.

The K-P government issued the notification reminding hunters of a ban on hunting of Houbara bustard in the province after news channels reported that the federal government had allowed Qatari Royal Prince Sheikh Abdullah bin Ali al Thani to hunt the bird during the hunting season 2016-2017.

The indiscriminate hunting of Houbara bustard has led to an alarming decline in their population. The species was declared vulnerable after its global population dwindled by more than 60 per cent.

Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Imran Khan on Sunday through a tweet earlier stated that he would advise the K-P chief minister not to allow anyone to hunt the endangered bird in the province.

“It is a protected bird and hunting them is illegal.” The handout also pointed out that in the wake of the 18th Amendment, all provinces had the right to protect their flora and fauna, adding that Houbara bustard had been declared a protected bird internationally and, therefore, its hunting would not be allowed in the province for local or foreign persons.

All violators will be strictly dealt with in accordance with the relevant laws, it said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1260806/k-p-slaps-ban-houbara-bustard-hunting/>

FEDERAL GOVT ALLOWS THREE SAUDI PRINCES TO HUNT 100 HOUBARA BUSTARDS

Dawn, December 16th, 2016

Bhagwandas

KARACHI: The federal government has issued special permits to three princes from Saudi Arabia to hunt the internationally protected migratory bird, houbara bustard, in Balochistan and Punjab during the hunting season, it was learnt on Thursday.

According to sources, the hunting permit holders include the governor of Tabuk and two sons of the former King of Saudi Arabia, the late Saud bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. Residents of colder Central Asian regions, houbara bustards migrate every year to spend winters in a relatively warmer environment like Pakistan.

Sources said Prince Fahad bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the governor of Tabuk, was allocated Awaran district and Noshki (not Noshki city) and Chaghai district (excluding the northwest).

Prince Mansoor bin Saud bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and his brother Prince Mishal bin Saud bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud were allocated Layyah district in Punjab.

The federal foreign ministry's hunting permit, DCP (P&I) 19/6/2016/17 (Allocations/KSA), sent to the permit holders through the Saudi Arabia's embassy in Islamabad, said: “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan presents its compliments to the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Islamabad and has the honour to state that the government of Pakistan has conveyed its recommendations to the authorities in the provinces concerned for allocation of following areas to the dignitaries of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for houbara bustard for the season 2016-2017.”

The code of conduct was sent along with the permits, issued by the deputy chief of protocol of the foreign ministry, and copies of which were sent to, among others, the wildlife conservator at the Ministry of Climate Change to inform the provinces to facilitate the hunting. The permit holders have been allowed to hunt 100 houbara bustards in 10 days during the hunting season which started on Nov 1 and will conclude on Jan 31, 2017.

Governor Fahad attracted attention when the media highlighted that he had hunted approximately 2,100 houbara bustards during his trip in Chaghai between 2014 and 2015.

After several protests and judicial intervention, the federal government did not issue any hunting permits to Arabs in the following hunting season. However, Prince Fahad visited Chaghai with many of his falcons in the 2015-16 hunting season. When the media questioned the government about this, it said the prince was in the area to visit and monitor development work.

The federal government usually issues hunting permits to Arabs in all four provinces, and the ruling elite, including politicians and bureaucrats from Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan, welcome them to their areas to hunt the protected bird.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1302648>

HUBCO ALLOWED TO BUILD TWO IMPORTED COAL-BASED PLANTS

The Express Tribune, December 17th, 2016.

KARACHI: The government has allowed Hub Power Company (Hubco) to press ahead with its original plan of setting up two power plants of 660-megawatt each (total 1,320 megawatts) on imported coal.

“The Private Power and Infrastructure Board has now called a meeting to discuss the extension in financial close and the signing of Implementation Agreement for 2x660MW imported coal-based power plants at Hub (Balochistan),” Shamsul Islam, Hubco Secretary, said in a notification to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Friday.

A high official of the company told The Express Tribune that Hubco was expected to arrange financing for the new power project by June 2017.

Total cost of the project is estimated at \$1.8 billion, according to an earlier communiqué. He said one of the power plants would start commercial production by December 2018 while the second plant would come online by August 2019.

Hubco’s share price rose 4.03% in a bull run on the PSX on Friday. It gained Rs4.75 and closed at Rs122.63 with volume of 2.7 million shares.

In October, the government had placed restrictions, allowing the company to set up only one plant. The move came in the wake of government’s policy to not approve more power plants based on imported coal after October 14, 2016.

However, companies that had met financial close before that date and/or were part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects were exempted from the restriction.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1265720/power-production-hubco-allowed-build-two-imported-coal-based-plants/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 5 TH TO DECEMBER 11TH 2016

NO RESPITE FROM ALLERGIES AS DRY SPELL CONTINUES

Dawn, December 5th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: While the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has predicted no rains in the city for another week or two, health experts believe that the increasing complaints of allergy cannot decrease unless a wet spell.

The citizens have been advised to take precautionary measures to avoid chances of allergy and in case of a complaint immediately consult a doctor.

Moreover, patients should wear masks to avoid the transfer of virus to others.

An allergy is a condition caused by hypersensitivity of the immune system to something in the environment that usually causes little or no problem for most of the people.

Hay fever, food allergies, atopic dermatitis (dryness of skin), allergic asthma and anaphylaxis (severe form of allergy) are common among many citizens.

Dr Waseem Khawaja, the media coordinator for the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims), told Dawn that the number of patients visiting the emergency department of the hospital had increased from 250 to 400 per day.

“Similarly, the number of allergy patients at the outpatient departments has gone up by 10pc. Those who come with severe complications of allergy are nebulised and provided with medications,” he said.

People should take precautionary measures to avoid an allergy and in case of a complaint they should ensure that the disease does not spread to others. Patients should also take steam, drink green tea and increase their protein intakes,” he said.

Citizens should also avoid dust because it also becomes a reason for an allergy.

He said when an allergy is not treated, complications may occur. These include swelling of the nasal passages. People should get proper treatment and medicine for an allergy, he added.

Associate ENT surgeon at the Capital Hospital, Dr Jawwad Ahmed, said the dry weather promoted allergies because pollen and dust got stuck in the air and can only settle down with the rainwater.

“Currently, there is a low humidity so the citizens are being affected with respiratory tract infections (RTIs). Moreover, when one member of a family is affected with the RTI, the bacteria spread in the air and affect other members too,” he said.

“In case of flu, the patient should contact the doctor and use prescribed medicines regularly. They should not go for a walk in the evening and try to spend more time at home,” he said.

If it is not going to rain soon, anti-allergy drugs will also become short in the market, he said.

An official of the National Institute of Health (NIH) said from time to time the NIH issued advisories to inform the citizens about allergies.

“In simple words, whenever the immune system of the human body becomes weak it increases sensitivity of the body and different things present in the atmosphere and food start creating problems for the body. The reaction shown by the body, because of those elements, is called an allergy,” he said.

“Those with the problem of pollen allergy should avoid going to gardens and forests and stop jogging at tracks in green areas. They should also not keep flowers and trees in houses,” he said.

The NIH conducted a survey from 1983 to 1993 and found almost 15pc of the population of the city suffering from allergies.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300498/no-respite-from-allergies-as-dry-spell-continues>

US, CHINA, EU, OTHERS FAIL TO REACH DEAL ON ‘ENVIRONMENTAL GOODS’

Dawn, December 5th, 2016

Geneva: Forty-six countries including the US, China and European Union nations failed on Sunday to agree on a list of “environmental goods” like solar-powered air conditioners or LED light bulbs that could be targeted for lower tariffs.

The two-day meeting at World Trade Organisation involved a bid to agree on reducing tariffs on over 200 environment-friendly goods worth around \$1 trillion in trade annually, part of a process that EU trade commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom called important “to show that trade and the environment can go hand in hand.”

She and several other officials said China’s presentation of a late list of goods to include threw a monkey wrench into the weekend negotiations. The talks amounted to just a step in a broader process on the Environmental Goods Agreement that was already facing uncertainty about how the administration of US president-elect Donald Trump will approach it.

“In the last seconds, China proposed a list that was not studied enough,” Turkish Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekci said on Sunday. “Many countries, they have concerns about the list.” Zeybekci cited other concerns about sustainable-development lumber between Canada and New Zealand on one side and Japan and Taiwan on another.

The United States and the European Union, who chaired the talks, said in a joint statement that envoys would return home to consider the next steps, but did not provide any timetable.

“We tried really hard,” Malmstrom told reporters, adding that all negotiators were leaving “with clear determination to do this deal ... This is important for the environment, for the climate, for our moral obligation to show that trade can deliver after the Paris and Marrakech agreements” to help fight global warming.

One senior negotiator said the last-ditch Chinese effort, which affected priority items for many other nations, came even as China has been trying to position itself as a leader on environmental issues. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details of the talks, said China’s new list which was lopsided in favour of its own priorities came in at 11am on Sunday when others had already agreed upon many other points.

“All delegations had some of their red lines moved in or moved out in a way that it was impossible to deal with in a couple of hours,” Malmstrom said, referring to China’s proposal.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300563>

MINING FIRM COMES OUT WITH ‘FACTS’ TO END PROTESTS AGAINST THAR RESERVOIR
Dawn, December 5th, 2016

Hanif Samoon

MITHI: Amid growing unrest in Tharparkar over the execution of a plan to convert a huge piece of land in Islamkot to a disposal site for saline mine water, the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company has again urged certain stakeholders and the media not to be carried away by the propaganda against the “scheme beneficial not only to Tharis but the entire province, as well as the country”.

While a large number of activists belonging to various social organisations and political parties/groups including the Sindh National Front (SNF) took out a rally and held a sit-in at Kashmir Chowk here on Sunday as part of the ongoing campaign against the mine water reservoir, representatives of the company told the media that facts about the scheme were being distorted by vested interests and the issue was also being blown out of proportion by a section of the media.

Irshad Kumbhar, Peerano Chandio, Imran Dars and others who led the rally and sit-in told the participants that they would not allow the mining company and provincial government to convert around 2,700 acres of land of Gorano village, situated near Islamkot town, to a disposal site for “hazardous” effluents to be taken out from mines.

They said that the people of Thar had strong reservations over the execution of the plan being opposed by the people of Thar in general and the around 15,000 residents of a dozen villages, believed to be directly affected, in particular.

They severely criticised the provincial government and Pakistan Peoples Party lawmakers from the area for allowing the mining company to use the same lands for the reservoir. “If the reservoir is laid at this site, the hazardous water to be disposed of into it will cause widespread devastation in more than 75 per cent of the Thar region,” they claimed, and urged the company and provincial government to hold sessions with representatives of the vulnerable population and experts of the relevant field to assess the possible impact. They said they strongly believed that the scheme would badly affect the ecology of the whole region.

In Chhachhro taluka, a similar protest was held outside the local press club.

Participants in the demonstration, organised by the Thar Sujag Saath and attended by activists of various social organisations, criticised the company for not paying heed to the local population's repeated call to shift the site of the reservoir from Gorano village.

Mumtaz Ali Rahimoon, Ramesh Tara, Goutam Rathi, Ali Nawaz Bajeer and others, speaking to the protesters, said that Tharis were being forced to agree on the proposed site. Expressing solidarity with the vulnerable population, they vowed to support them till the company and provincial government were made to shift the site to any alternative place proposed by representatives of the local people.

They urged the lawmakers from Thar to come to the rescue of their voters over the issue. Meanwhile, groups of people belonging to the vulnerable villages continued their protest for 45th consecutive day at a camp set up outside the Islamkot press club.

Speaking to the media, their leaders Advocate Leela Ram, Dost Ali Hajam and others told newsmen on Sunday that they had already rejected all arguments by the company and provincial government in favour of the site selected for the reservoir.

They said that thousands of people would have to leave their villages and ancestral lands to escape the adverse effects of the toxic chemicals and gases on public health, animals and the fertile lands close to the 2,700-acre reservoir.

They explained that they were not at all opposed the Thar coal project but had reservations only over the site of the reservoir for hazardous mine effluents. Rejecting the company claim, supported by the provincial government, that none of the alternative sites proposed by representatives of Gorani village residents was suitable for the reservoir, they said that the authorities concerned and the company should at least keep in mind the commitments they had made with the local people before starting the work on the reservoir.

A team of executives representing the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company appeared before media personnel in Mithi on Sunday to urge them not to blow the issue out of proportion as was reflected in the coverage of protests against the reservoir in the print and electronic media over the past few weeks.

Mohsin Babar, Haris Siddiqui and others said that it was absolutely wrong that the reservoir would be spread over an area of 2,700 acres. "In fact, the covered area of the reservoir will be just 15 acres," they said, adding that around 35 cusses of saline water drawn out from mines would be syphoned daily into the reservoir.

Secondly, they said, the mine water would not be toxic or hazardous. Its evaporation would not adversely affect a single human being or animal. "Contrary to the apprehensions being expressed by the villagers that it would turn their lands barren, the water will be very much useful for irrigation purposes," they claimed.

Regarding the alternative sites proposed for the reservoir, the executives said that they appeared to be parts of an extensive Ramsar site where digging, construction or any other such activity was prohibited under the relevant conventions.

They urged local media personnel to verify facts before reporting the issue. "You must keep in mind that the Thar coal project is going to be an important part of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor," they said.

Although the opposition to the site was unjustifiable, the company was ready to hold negotiations with the protesting villagers and address their genuine grievances, said Mr Babar, who introduced himself as the spokesman for the company.

in reply to a question, he said some anti-Thar elements were out to sabotage the coal project but the company and provincial government were fully aware of their designs. Acceding to a genuine demand made by the people of certain areas, three big reverse osmosis (RO) plants were being installed to provide drinking water to them, he said.

Expressing their confidence that the protesting villagers would be able to realise facts to stop resisting the reservoir scheme, the executives said their company was planning holding of workshops in different parts of Thar to sensitise them about the mega project and its merits.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300481/mining-firm-comes-out-with-facts-to-end-protests-against-thar-reservoir>

SUBCOMMITTEE FINALISES PROHIBITION OF SMOKING BILL

Dawn, December 7th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Subcommittee on National Health Services has finalised The Prohibition of Smoking and Protection of Non-Smokers Health (Amendment) Bill 2016 though most of the recommendations in the bill have been omitted.

The committee chairman, Nauman Wazir, who belongs to the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, said the decision was taken in the interests of the people.

Head of The Network for Consumer Protection Nadeem Iqbal, who assisted in the drafting of the bill, said the committee report has only taken the tobacco industry's point of view and that all the exercise was a waste of money from the exchequer.

The bill was tabled by PML-Q Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed and called for a ban on tobacco advertisement. It said tobacco retailers should not be allowed to advertise tobacco products inside shops so that younger people are not tempted by them.

The bill suggested that tobacco companies should not be allowed to sponsor events such as health camps, plantation campaigns and sports events as part of their corporate social responsibility and that such companies should not have the right to contact consumers.

According to the subcommittee's meeting minutes, available with Dawn, members said prohibition of tobacco advertisements was already defined and a further ban on interior display will deprive retailers of dealing in tobacco products and of their right to conduct legitimate business.

It was discussed that the display of tobacco products in shops does not always mean advertisement and that it may also hamper consumer right of choice if tobacco is not displayed.

The bill has also allowed tobacco companies to continue with their corporate social responsibility events.

Talking to Dawn, Mr Iqbal said the committee did not consider the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control of the World Health Organisation, which puts a stop to these activities.

"The committee has wasted tax payer's money with this faulty exercise," he said.

However, Senator Wazir said that engaging in corporate social responsibility activities was a requirement of the Security and Exchange Commission of Pakistan.

"Tobacco companies are distributing solar systems in the rural areas, among other things, and should not be banned from doing so," he said.

He said that vendors will not be allowed to advertise tobacco products outside their shops but can advertise within. Tobacco companies cannot contact consumers for the promotion of their products but can contact them for surveys.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300961/subcommittee-finalises-prohibition-of-smoking-bill>

PQA URGED TO MAKE COAL PROJECTS ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY

Dawn December 7th, 2016

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: Raising their concerns yet again over the two multi-billion coal projects planned in the Port Qasim area, industrialists at a meeting held on Tuesday called upon the Port Qasim Authority (PQA) to thoroughly revisit both projects and make them environment-friendly.

Traders represented by the Bin Qasim Association of Trade and Industry (BQATI) also submitted a set of recommendations to the authority in this regard.

The meeting was called by the PQA in an effort to address traders' concerns over the proposed coal conveying system and the development of two coal handling facilities.

According to sources, the BQATI representatives were of the opinion that their investment running in billions in the Port Qasim area faced grave threat from the coal project given the fact that environmental safeguards were almost non-existent in the country and government regulatory bodies were weak.

Investors, they said, never knew that one day the PQA would change its master plan and set up large-scale coal handling facilities in the Port Qasim area. Master plans, they argued, could be changed for national interests. But there should be a mechanism to ensure that public interests were protected, they added.

Being unconvinced with the briefings on the projects given by consultants at the meeting, they insisted that the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) reports (of the projects) contained 'false information and had missed out on important details'.

The data on air and wind in these reports was also challenged and it was pointed out that the EIA report on berth three and berth four (coal handling facilities) had completely ignored the risk of suspended particulate matter, a potential threat emerging from coal handling facilities. Since the suspended particulate matter was acidic in nature, it could cause erosion at industrial units, it was said.

The PQA, sources said, showed willingness towards the call for removing gaps in the EIA reports.

The recommendations submitted by BQATI on the coal terminals stated that transportation of coal through PQA channel, its transfer from mother ship to small vessels and to the coal yard and further to the railway network should be fully covered.

"The Sahiwal Power Company and the Huaneng Fuyun Port and Shipping (Pvt), the project developers, should be asked to provide adequate infrastructure facilities including water sprinkling system, firefighting arrangements and wind shields at the project sites.

"All mitigation measures recommended in the EIA reports should be complied with and project proponents shall ensure all trains before leaving the storage yard are sprinkled and covered with tarpaulin or any other effective measure shall be adopted to avoid coal dust and spillage during transportation.

"Any damage caused to the industrial units/assets at the coal handling facilities shall be fully compensated by Sahiwal Power Company and Huaneng Fuyun Port and Shipping (Pvt)," the document submitted to the PQA states.

It also requests the PQA to ensure 24-hour air quality monitoring at specific locations and that the project proponents shall engage independent monitoring consultants to ensure monitoring of the project's compliance with the environmental management plan and to document the monthly status of the project progress.

“Coal shall be stored in such a way that a coal heap shall be not be higher than five metres and the distance between two heaps at ground level should be five to 10 metres to ensure access in case of a fire mishap.

“Sufficient water storage facilities shall be developed. Water sprinkling shall be carried out at each and every stage of handling to avoid generation of coal dust and other dust within the premises.”

The proposals include suggestion for a committee comprising the authority officials, the BQATI representatives and environmentalist who would review the monthly progress of coal handling facilities throughout the construction and operational phase.

The PQA and BQATI agreed to hold another meeting to find out a way forward.

It was the second meeting held by the PQA on the coal projects pending Sindh Environmental Protection Agency approval. The PQA, the sources said, was facing pressure from the federal government to ensure coal supplies to the Sahiwal-based power project by June next year.

Both the projects, the sources said, drew criticism at their respective hearings when their EIA reports were shared with stakeholders; the conveying system’s EIA report was rejected by Sepa while the other EIA report is pending approval.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300909/pqa-urged-to-make-coal-projects-environment-friendly>

HOW TOXIC WATER DESTROYED PAKISTAN’S LARGEST LAKE

The Express Tribune, 7 December 2016.

Manchar Lake: For generations the Mohanna tribe have lived, loved, worked, and played on Manchar Lake; their floating settlement serving their needs from birth to death.

But an unrelenting flow of toxic wastewater is pouring into the lake — a byproduct of industrialisation and aggressive agricultural practices upstream — and has slowly rendered it inhospitable, poisoning the water and almost everything in it.

For fishermen such as Mohammed Yusuf, life on the lake is becoming intolerable. “When we were young, our lives were very good. Every kind of fish was available. Our earnings were good,” he told AFP.

“When my father would go fishing he would bring back over a hundred kilos of fish. Now the situation has changed. The fish is extinct because of the bad water,” he added.

The wooden, flat-bottomed barge he lives in with his mother, wife, and their nine children, has ornate carvings but it has seen better days.

Now Yusuf barely catches enough fish to feed his family, let alone be able to save the money he needs to maintain his boat.

He estimates they have just five years before it is beyond repair, fearing he will soon have to leave the place where he was born.

And yet their whole life is packed into this floating home: Clothes and linen are stacked in the stern, kitchenware and food under the prow. Cooking is done down in the hold, on a little earthen hearth fed by the stems of aquatic plants.

“If it is hot we sleep on the roof, in the winter we sleep inside the boat on the floor,” said Yusuf.

Two cradles swing as the breeze softens the heat: the larger for his child born on board some 40 days ago, the smaller one for the Koran, a dignified place for the Holy Book to avoid desecration.

Neighbouring boathouses are anchored a few dozen metres away. Children wade or swim in the shallows while adults navigate the water in narrow wooden canoes, which they skillfully push with a pole.

“We have been living this way for generations,” explained the fisherman.

The size of Manchar Lake, one of the largest fresh water reserves in Pakistan, varies depending on rainfall. It can measure more than 250 square kilometres (100 square miles) after the annual monsoon.

In the 1970s a series of drains and canals were built to carry sewage to the lake from several major cities in Sindh province, as well as industrial wastewater, and overflow from rice paddies full of pesticides and fertilisers.

The system, known as the Right Bank Outfall Drain (RBOD), also dumps into the lake vast quantities of brackish water drained from the right bank of the Indus to make the surrounding land arable.

Meanwhile, mountain torrents supplying fresh water have declined. So too has the flow of the Indus itself into the lake, due to the building of dams and greater irrigation, explains Mustafa Mirani of the Pakistani Fishermen Forum, which campaigns for the protection and conservation of the lake.

As far back as the 1990s, assessments found the land and the water was being destroyed by a toxic mix of saline, chemicals and sewage, explains the activist, who grew up on the lake.

It was then proposed to re-route the RBOD to empty into the Arabian Sea further south. But the plan has been suspended for years due to lack of funds, and dirty water continues to flow into the lake untreated and unabated.

The water is no longer drinkable. The pollution has killed off flora and fauna and it has become impossible to grow vegetables in the toxic silt.

Migrating birds, which once came in their thousands to rest among the reeds on the lake, are now rarely seen.

Fish stock has also plummeted. In the 1970s, more than 15,000 tons were netted each year compared with 2,000-3,800 tons in recent years, according to the Sindh Fisheries Department. The number of the Mohanna tribe living around the lake has halved in the last 25 years, according to Mirani.

“When I was growing I saw some 400 boats and that many families on them. All of them, eating, sleeping, marrying, all would take place on the boats,” he recalled.

“Now, because of poverty, they can’t mend or repair their boats. So gradually all these boats are vanishing.” There are now just four dozen floating homes left on the lake. But life on the shore is tough too. Their rudimentary villages are made from mud and have little sanitation.

Saindad, a toothless sexagenarian, who now lives on the shore in a shabby reed cabin has had no source of income since his last boat sank.

“We don’t have water or any filtration facility. And no-one cares about us. We are so poor we don’t even have cooking utensils or other essential things,” he said.

His sons left to look for work in neighbouring cities. Some of the lake’s inhabitants have taken to fishing the seas near Karachi or neighbouring Balochistan.

The Pakistani Supreme Court took up the issue in 2010, but has failed to force government action. “This lake is gifted from God,” sighs Mirani, “but all its beauty has been ruined.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1254775/toxic-water-destroyed-pakistans-largest-lake/>

WILL KP ALLOW A QATARI PRINCE TO HUNT HOUBARA BUSTARD?

KARACHI: The federal government will be in for a bit of embarrassment when the Qatari royals go to hunt the houbara bustard in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) as hunting the internationally protected bird in the province is not allowed, it was learnt here on Saturday.

According to sources, the federal foreign ministry has issued a special hunting permit to a member of the Qatari royal family, Sheikh Abdullah bin Ali Al-Thani, to hunt the migratory bird in Dera Ismail Khan district of KP during the hunting season 2016-2017.

The federal government has permitted the Qatari sheikh to hunt 100 houbara bustards in 10 days during the season which started on Nov 1 and would conclude on Jan 31, 2017.

KP's wildlife chief conservator, Mubarak Shah, told Dawn that since the houbara bustard was a protected bird in KP nobody — local or foreign — could hunt it. He did not comment any further except asking Dawn to contact MPA Ishtiaq Urmar, an advisor to CM Pervaiz Khattak for Environment, Forests and Wildlife, for details.

This reporter tried to contact the MPA for a comment but he was unavailable. His secretary said he was unwell and had been hospitalised.

When asked to comment on whether the Qatari prince would be able to hunt the endangered bird, Mr Shah said that it was a sensitive topic and he would need permission from high-ups before responding. He said he would call back but didn't.

Sources said that while the other three provinces — Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan — allowed Arabs with permits to hunt the houbara bustards, KP did not. They added that a while ago, a Qatari who had been hunting in the province had been caught and fined.

A few days back, another Qatari royal, Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah Al-Thani, faced some resistance in hunting in the Hoshab and Balakatar areas of Kech district in Balochistan so he immediately called the prime minister on phone and things were sorted out.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1301780>

TALE OF TWO CITIES: WHY IS GARBAGE A PROBLEM

Dawn, December 11th, 2016

Saad Sayeed

ISLAMABAD: A walk in Islamabad amongst the Margalla Hills and city's plentiful picturesque neighbourhoods should be a pleasurable experience but there are alleys and dead ends throughout the city strewn with garbage.

On some nights, the smell of burning waste permeates the air and thick smoke engulfs entire locales. This in a city with a much smaller population than the country's other major urban centres.

In Karachi, the garbage issue is nearing an environmental catastrophe. And even in smaller tourist destinations such as Murree, garbage can be seen everywhere — almost as if it has become part of the environment.

A friend and fellow journalist recently went on a rant about garbage in Murree, fearing that it was an irreversible problem. When asked about why he thought this, he replied "there is garbage dumped everywhere" and required enormous effort and resources to have it cleaned.

Far from a problem faced by specific neighbourhoods and urban centres, the issue of garbage disposal and collection has become a national problem. The state infrastructure for waste management has not developed enough to handle the amount of garbage produced while little emphasis is placed on education for the general public.

The result can be seen on street corners, ravines, public parks, nalas, empty fields, and so on. The state infrastructure currently only deals with approximately 50 per cent of generated waste, which is far lower than the minimum standard of 75pc to ensure an acceptable level of urban cleanliness.

Nargis Latif, CEO of an environmental NGO, Gul Bahao, said in Karachi “garbage is gold.” Her organisation turns plastic waste from factories into houses and furniture, and has been pioneering effective forms of waste management focused on recycling and composting.

And yet, the city continues to dispose of waste inefficiently or not at all. In most low-income areas of Karachi, valuable garbage that is recyclable or reusable is collected by the local communities and sold off — leaving only compostable and packaging materials on the street. Low-income neighbourhoods are therefore the most active in garbage collection and its effective disposal.

Ms Latif argues that a lot of Karachi’s garbage-related woes are connected to a “garbage mafia” that exercises control over waste management. In a city of 26 million people where thousands of tonnes of garbage is produced daily, waste is a billion-rupee business.

“The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation for example pays people to pick up garbage,” said Zahid Farooq, a joint director at the Urban Resource Centre. “But there is another person who gives money for the garbage in the dumpster to be left there.”

He said this person had a team of scavengers who sift through garbage and take anything of value. “Only after this has taken place can the garbage be moved to landfill site,” he added.

That too is another problem according to Mr Farooq: “In Karachi there are two landfill sites... It is not practical for a garbage truck to travel 60 kilometres to dump at a landfill site.”

Similar issues exist in Islamabad where the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has failed to establish a permanent landfill site resulting in garbage being dumped in ravines and open sewers throughout the city.

“In the absence of landfill sites, where will people throw their garbage?” asked Mr Farooq.

The issue of waste management is bigger than simply making garbage disappear from sight. It involves the overall handling of garbage, including campaigns to reduce the actual production of garbage.

Mr Farooq pointed out the “role of the community” in this process was very important. This involves the collection and management of garbage from the household till the moment it is removed from the locality.

An emphasis here is placed on a collective responsibility for waste where it is handled properly and also used efficiently in recycling, composting, and energy production.

Walking around in the country’s major cities there appears to be little care taken in maintaining shared public space. People throw wrappers out their car windows, litter as they walk down the street, garbage pickers dump waste on street corners and burning garbage leaves patches of ash everywhere.

Other than the odd sign providing perfunctory acknowledgment of the issue, little action is taken by the local governments. Yet climate change and environmental issues have been identified as perhaps the greatest threat facing Pakistan and current development projects are only exacerbating the issue.

Recently, garbage collection in Karachi's South and East districts was handed over to Wuzung, a Chinese company. The government identified this as a way of dealing with the growing waste management issue in the city and resultant environmental complications.

However, the move raises questions about why a foreign firm would be charged with municipal affairs when there are major unemployment issues in the country and such a move would do nothing to develop local infrastructure and awareness.

Years ago, a close friend narrated a story about how he came to stop throwing garbage on the street. One summer, his cousins from America were visiting and after getting food from McDonalds and eating in the car, they threw the contents out the window on the street. My friend found this disconcerting and asked if they would do this in the US. "No, but this is Pakistan," his cousin replied.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1301779>