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NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 23RD TO JANUARY 30TH 2017

SEPA SEALS SEVEN FACTORIES FOR VIOLATING ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

Dawn, January 25th, 2017

Gohar Ali Khan

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) closed down seven factories in Hyderabad Site on Tuesday due to their serious violation of the Sindh Environmental Protection Act, 2014 and Sindh Environmental Quality Standard (SEQS).

“We have sent several notices to seven industrial units of Hyderabad Site for three years, but they failed to comply with the Sepa 2014, SEQS, rules and regulations. The factory owners also failed to give undertaking and did not appear in personal hearings before the Sepa DG,” Hyderabad Sepa regional head Muneer Ahmed Abbasi told Dawn.

He said the seven units were continuously engaged in violation of Sepa 2014 and other rules.

“We took action against them by issuing an environmental protection order (EPO) in order to close down operation of these units,” he said.

He stated that the EPO was issued for closure of 15 units the Site area, but the Sepa team successfully closed down seven units and another eight would be shut on Wednesday. He said Sepa stopped crackdown because of some issues during night hours in the industrial zone.

Mr Abbasi with his team took action with the help of the district police and administration on the special directives of Sepa director general Naeem Ahmed Mughal.

He said the factories were discharging untreated waste water into Phulelli canal and this water was taking a heavy toll on around two million people who drank canal water, used it for other domestic purposes and irrigated agricultural land.

PROTEST: Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industry president Mohammad Akram Ansari and other office-bearers have expressed grave concern over closure of seven industrial units in Hyderabad Site area by Sepa.

They said several workers would be rendered unemployed if those units were shut down, according to a press release issued on Tuesday.

They demanded of the Sindh chief minister and Sepa head to help stop crackdown against factories.

They also demanded that the Site authorities must be directed to ensure proper infrastructure, sewerage system and sanitation in Hyderabad Site. They pleaded for organising awareness programmes so that all factory owners could know about the Sindh environmental Protection Act 2014 and environmental pollution could be controlled in a peaceful way.

The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) conducted public hearing on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of a new cement plant being built by Power Cement Limited (PCL), said a press release on Tuesday.

The hearing, held at a local hotel, was attended by stakeholders including academia, non-governmental organisations, representatives of various departments and local residents of the project site.

Senior environmentalist Dr G.R. Keerio said during the question and answer session that implementation of health, safety and environment management system was very important. Most of the industries ignored the importance of health and safety aspects which resulted in occupational issues, he said.

Dr Salman Shah, a professor in the Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, said that PCL might collaborate with the university's department of chemical engineering to undertake research and development project which might benefit the cement industry in the long run.

Representatives of locals of the area pointed out that employment should be provided to locals instead of hiring people from other areas.

Former secretary of environment Shamsul Haq Memon said that the PCL must undertake extensive tree plantation in the area in collaboration with Sindh forest department because biodiversity was under serious stress in the project area. He also stressed the need for a hospital in the area.

PCL CEO Kashif Habib promised to follow the recommendation of the EIA and the stakeholders.

Sepa director (technical) Waqar Hussain Phulpoto, who chaired the hearing, said that the agency would not leave any stone unturned in protecting environment and natural resources of Sindh. The department had taken serious actions against violators of the Sindh Environmental Protection Act, 2014, he said.

Earlier, Saquib Ejaz Hussain, representative of EMC Pakistan Private Ltd, which conducted the EIA study, said that PCL intended to expand its cement production capacity from 3,000 total ton production (tpd) to 10,700 tons per day and therefore planned to construct 7,700 tpd capacity integrated cement plant at Power Cement Complex on the Superhighway.

The project site is situated adjacent to the proposed Karachi-Hyderabad Motorway M9 route at a distance of 80km from Karachi.

He said the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was the major reason for increased local demand of cement. The demand would rise in future, he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1310521>

POLLUTED ENVIRONMENT

Dawn, January 26th, 2017

FOR the state, safeguarding the environment is quite obviously low on its list of priorities. However, at times, either due to the hue and cry raised by citizens, or the efforts of conscientious public

servants, major environmental hazards are highlighted, after which the state scrambles to formulate a response to the problem.

Two issues currently under the spotlight in Sindh are pollution of the province's water resources and degradation of the environment by certain industries. As reported in Wednesday's paper, a judicial commission in Sindh formed by the Supreme Court in response to an individual's petition has ordered the relevant government departments to submit a report on the discharge of effluent by industries. According to another report, seven factories in Hyderabad's SITE area were sealed after the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency noted that the concerns were flouting environmental protection laws.

These actions are welcome and it is hoped that state organs tasked with monitoring environmental standards remain alert. The fact is that Sindh — as well as other parts of Pakistan — suffers from high levels of pollution. For example, a recent conference held at Karachi University was told that 40pc of the Sindh capital's population was exposed to "highly polluted air", while 65pc of its citizens lived in areas with "elevated levels of noise pollution".

Moreover, the judicial commission, currently touring Sindh, was earlier told that the metropolis received 200 million gallons of unfiltered water daily. Matters in other parts of the province are no better; while surveying the situation in Sukkur, the commission was told that only three of 29 water treatment plants in the upper Sindh city were functional. This degraded state of the environment has both short- and long-term effects on people's health and quality of life. It would not be enough for the state to just point out how much pollution exists; the next step should be to implement policies to bring down the level of pollution.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1310703/polluted-environment>

‘HUMAN PRESSURES, LOW RAINFALL THREATEN THAR WILDLIFE’

Dawn, January 26th, 2017

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: Rare species of birds have almost disappeared while many other species of fauna and flora are on the verge of extinction in Tharparkar on account of increased human pressures and reduced rainfall.

These points were highlighted on Wednesday during a seminar held at the International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS) of Karachi University (KU).

Titled ‘Protection of wildlife in Thar’, the programme provided the audience, largely comprising university students, valuable insight into the rich biodiversity of the region.

The best part of the event, however, was a documentary titled Nagarparkar; the Endangered Wilderness credited to the Sindh wildlife department.

Though a bit dated as it didn't include the developments which had occurred in the region over the past few years, the documentary educated the audience on Thar's rich heritage of flora and fauna and the many factors threatening their existence.

These factors included illegal hunting, poaching, habitat fragmentation, range-land degradation, burgeoning human population, overgrazing and over-harvesting, cutting of trees and smuggling of valuable flora. All of these factors had brought many wildlife species of both flora and fauna to the brink of extinction.

The signs of the damaged ecosystem, the film showed, were visible all over Nagarparkar, part of the Rann of Kutch wildlife sanctuary that also includes Mithi and Diplo towns of Tharparkar.

The region, brought to life by unpredictable rains, had been proved by studies to be one of the most fertile areas in the country boasting of rare herbs and shrubs.

The number of migratory birds that once visited the region in large numbers has also come down, mainly on account of rampant illegal hunting.

The film featured images of the saras crane, a species that used to breed in Nagarparkar. The beautiful birds were forced to leave when one of the birds in a flock was shot down in 1996.

The same treatment was meted out to the blue bulls that crossed into Pakistan and were greeted with bullets.

A few species thrived in the region and prominent among them were the blue peafowl and vultures. But the population of animals like the blue bull, wild ass, hyenas, gazelle and the many reptiles like the Indian cobra, cobra, vipers as well as lizards had seriously declined.

The film concluded with the message that the wildlife — which had lost their feeding and breeding grounds in Pakistan — could once again visit this country if wildlife conservation measures were taken. Replying to questions, Sindh wildlife conservator Saeed Baloch spoke of challenges the department faced, including lack of infrastructure and opportunities for capacity building.

He, however, defended the department's decision of granting approval to mining activities in the wildlife sanctuary, arguing that a similar decision was taken when a gas pipeline was to be built in the Khirthar National Park years ago.

"Development activities can take place if they are not affecting the core area," he said while acknowledging that 'certain species' were under threat in Thar.

The government, he said, had declared Bharo Jo Tar, an area located some 20km from Mithi, as a wildlife sanctuary mainly to protect the chinkara population, grown from a few pairs to 300 in a decade.

Replying to a question about large areas being used as hunting grounds in Khairpur, he said: "I really don't know which areas you are talking about unless you specify. The department does issue permits for hunting and has introduced game farms."

Deputy conservator of wildlife, Hyderabad, Ghulam Sarwar Jamali briefed the audience about his service in Khirthar National Park where ibex population, he pointed out, had reached 18,000 to 19,000 while the number of urial stood between 10,000 and 12,000.

Earlier, ICCBS Director Prof Iqbal Choudhry talked about the importance of wildlife in the ecosystem.

District officer of Thar Ashfaq Ali Memon and former wildlife official Lajpat Sharma also spoke.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1310735/human-pressures-low-rainfall-threaten-thar-wildlife>

REPORTS SOUGHT FROM MUNICIPAL BODIES ON WASTE DISPOSAL

Dawn, January 26th, 2017

KARACHI: The judicial commission inquiring into the state's failure to provide safe drinking water and sanitation facilities to citizens on Wednesday directed the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) and district municipal corporations to submit their respective reports on the disposal of solid waste in the metropolis.

Headed by Justice Mohammad Iqbal Kalhoro, the commission also issued notices to the local government secretary and municipal commissioners of Karachi Central, West, Korangi, and Malir to submit their reports on Jan 26.

Managing Director of the SSWMB Dr A.D. Sanjani informed the commission that the board was tasked with handling the solid waste of only two districts — East and South. However, he said, the DMCs were responsible for collection of waste in the remaining districts.

Metropolitan Commissioner Badar Jamil Mandhro requested the court to grant him time for filing a comprehensive report with regard to maintenance of drains falling within the domain of the KMC.

Meanwhile, additional chief executive officer of the Karachi Cantonment Board filed a statement, submitting that the cantonment board did not approve any building plan for construction of high-rise or multistorey buildings unless the developer/builder submits a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the KWSB to ensure provision of potable water and proper handling of solid and liquid waste.

He said that the practice was going on since long and informed the commission that he would submit the copies of those NOCs issued by the KWSB.

The KWSB managing director, however, contradicted his statement, saying no such procedure was being adopted by the cantonment boards.

The representatives from Clifton, Faisal, Malir, Korangi Creek, Manora boards and DHA requested the court for time to submit their respective reports.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1310733/reports-sought-from-municipal-bodies-on-waste-disposal>

MAJOR PROTEST HELD IN THAR AGAINST CONSTRUCTION OF CONTROVERSIAL RESERVOIR

Dawn, January 27th, 2017

MITHI: Several hundred people from various parts of Tharparkar region gathered at Islamkot town and staged a demonstration on Thursday for five hours to register their protest against construction of what they called 'the deadly dam' at the village of Gorano.

The demo was held on the call of the All-Parties Alliance to urge Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company and Sindh government to change the site of the water reservoir being built at the Gorano area.

Arbab Latifullah, a leader of the Arbab group, addressing the large number of charged people noted that if the site of the water reservoir being built on 1,500 acres of land was not changed, it would cause unprecedented devastation in the area.

He maintained that fears of the protesters were based on some reports and studies, which said that level of the total dissolved solids (TDS) of this underground water would be around 5,000 ppm (parts per million), much higher than the WHO standard that sets the maximum contaminant level for TDS at 1,000 ppm.

He said the TDS was directly related to the purity of water and quality of water purification systems, and was used to determine safety of water for consumption by humans, animals or for farming.

He noted that the continuous protests by the local people and their 'historic demonstration' were ample proofs of the anger, indignation and fears of Tharis. He made it clear that Tharis, who were otherwise peaceful, would go to any extreme to save their ancestral abodes from devastation.

Warning the mining firm to immediately stop the construction work, he lambasted PPP leaders for not standing with the protesters at this critical juncture.

He claimed the Arbabs of Thar had always served people with dedication.

Advocate Wasand Thari, central general secretary of the Awami Tehreek, in his speech lashed out at the mining firm and the Sindh government for their alleged stubborn and callous attitude towards the local people. He warned them to 'mend' their ways.

"Tharis are neither against the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) nor against the development of their region, but we will never allow the company to spread destruction," he added.

Subhan Samejo of the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) observed that it was a great injustice with Tharis that they were being forcibly displaced from their centuries-old homes without proper compensation.

He demanded of the firm to halt the ongoing construction work on the site.

Advocate Shah Nawaz Hingorjo of the Qaumi Awami Tehreek said the dam would never be allowed to be built. He observed that water from coal mines should be diverted to some other feasible locations as no Thari would allow the company to destroy their lands, historical sites, villages, grazing lands, graveyards etc.

Faqir Irshad Kumbhar of the Sindh National Front said the dam would only cause devastation. "In the reservoir area, there are many species listed under the IUCN Red List of 2010. Any effort to damage those species will be a violation of many international biodiversity laws," he added.

Mr Kumbhar alleged that the firm officials were trying to lure the ‘gullible’ people, but were not ready to debate with the activists from Thar and other parts of the country. “They are trying to buy or bully us,” he claimed.

Dileep Doshi Meghwar of the Thar Sujag Sath came down hard on the mining company for its ‘anti-Thar’ projects. He said water reservoirs of such nature would only cause ‘unprecedented devastation’ in the vast fertile area of Thar.

The participants vowed to continue their peaceful protest unless their demands are met.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1310899/major-protest-held-in-thar-against-construction-of-controversial-reservoir>

LG SECRETARY TOLD TO SUBMIT SINDH’S GARBAGE DISPOSAL PLAN BY JAN 30
The Express Tribune, January 27th, 2017.

Justice Muhammad Iqbal Kalhoru of the Sindh High Court, who is heading the commission established in compliance with the Supreme Court’s order to probe allegations regarding non-provision of clean drinking water and deteriorating sanitation in Sindh, sought the plan by January 30.

At the outset of Thursday’s proceedings, the LG secretary filed a statement along with documents regarding extension/improvement of the urban drainage scheme in Jacobabad and regarding overstaffing and appointment of white collar sanitary workers in compliance with the court’s earlier orders.

To the commission’s query regarding disposal of solid waste, the secretary informed that a Chinese company had been awarded the contract to lift and dispose of solid waste from two districts of Karachi.

The solid waste management department’s managing-director said that 12,000 tons of garbage is produced in Karachi alone, while the relevant departments have the capacity of lifting only 9,000 tons of garbage.

The LG secretary said once the Chinese firm starts lifting the garbage the decision on expanding such service to other districts will be taken in the light of its performance.

Justice Kalhoru asked the secretary to file a detailed report, providing a solution to the problem of lifting solid waste across the province, including Karachi.

He sought time to file a report after consulting with his seniors to devise an immediate working plan to get rid of the solid waste. He was asked to file the plan by end of this month.

Manora Cantonment Board’s (MCB) chief executive officer, Syeda Imammah Ali, filed a statement declaring that the cantonment board obtains water from an outside source through a contractor. The board is also meeting its potable water requirement through a filtration plant established by it, she added.

Regarding the sewerage system, the officer said there were neither high-rise buildings nor industries in the area, therefore no industrial waste was being generated. She also made a statement before the commission that the population of the MCB is less than 50,000 and said half of its sewerage is being recycled and used for several purposes such as gardening.

Ali informed the commission that the remaining half of the sewerage is going directly into the sea but the board is planning to establish a treatment plant to treat the waste before dumping it.

The officer said drinking water was being supplied to the residents after processing it through the filtration plant. However, she admitted that water was not chlorinated at the facility.

The representatives of the Karachi, Clifton, Korangi and Faisal cantonment boards also filed their statements regarding the procedures being adopted by them before approving a plan for multi-storey and high-rise buildings in their territories to ensure availability of potable water and working drainage system. The commission took their statements on record.

The representatives said the cantonment boards approve the building plans only after the requisite no-objection certificates (NOCs) are issued by the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB). They also produced copies of such NOCs.

A representative for the Defence Housing Authority also filed a statement regarding the cantonment boards' procedures for issuing building plans for high-rise and multi-storey buildings. The office-bearer said that none of the waterfront high-rise buildings have been occupied so far. He assured that the same will not be allowed unless community, municipal or utility services are installed there.

Meanwhile, some residents of Mehmoodabad, who filed applications to become interveners in the proceedings, said the KWSB authorities had accused them of having illegally encroached upon the land belonging to the treatment plant. They claimed they had been leased the subject land. The commission will hear their applications today.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1308002/lg-secretary-told-submit-sindhs-garbage-disposal-plan-jan-30/>

HOUBARA BUSTARD HUNTING PERMITS IN SINDH ISSUED BY FEDERAL GOVT, SAYS KHUHRO

Dawn, January 28th, 2017

KARACHI: The Sindh government has not issued any special permits to hunt the rare migratory bird species houbara bustard in the province during the current hunting season, said Parliamentary Affairs Minister Nisar Khuhro on Friday.

He was responding to the legislators' queries during the Question Hour in the Sindh Assembly that pertained to the wildlife department in the absence of Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, who holds the portfolio. Though Mr Shah did arrive later, he still did not respond and Mr Khuhro continued.

Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) legislator Nadeem Rizvi questioned the number of permits issued by the Sindh government to Arab princes from the Gulf states to hunt the internationally protected houbara bustard. The minister said that the Sindh wildlife department has not issued any permit to any Arab prince or anyone else to hunt the houbara bustard. He said that houbara bustard

hunting permits to the Gulf sheikhs were issued by the federal government and that the Sindh government had nothing to do with the issuance of the permits.

To another of his questions about the decreasing number of migratory birds coming to Pakistan owing to ruthless hunting, the minister said that he did not know about it. He said that the number of birds migrating to the country during winters every year depended on the weather conditions in Central Asia where, if the winters were harsh, more birds would migrate and if temperatures were moderate lesser birds would migrate. According to him, the lesser number of birds coming to the country did not depend on hunting.

MQM legislator Naheed Begum inquired about the smuggling of birds being foiled and smugglers being caught. The minister said that 56 falcons had been confiscated at Karachi airport in 2012, over 450 turtles were caught in 2014 in the city, and over 700 turtles were caught from Defence Housing Authority in 2016 while nine smugglers were also caught.

Responding to a question by Pakistan Peoples Party legislator Bahadur Dahri regarding the 56 falcons confiscated and if any wildlife traffickers had been caught and punished, the minister said that catching and protecting the falcons was important and that he did not have any information regarding the smugglers/punishment, but he would get the information and inform the assembly soon.

Nusrat Sahar Abbasi of Pakistan Muslim League-Functional questioned the efforts made to protect hyenas, how many hyenas were surviving and if a licence or permit was required to hunt them. The minister said that the number of surviving hyenas in the province was around 200 and that these were not protected under the law and, like snakes, no permit/licence was required to hunt/kill these animals.

Responding to a question by MQM legislator Kamran Akhtar regarding laying of a 'white-oil' pipeline through Khirthar National Park, the minister said that under an agreement the Sindh Wildlife Department (SWD) received Rs20 million and Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) received Rs10m for allowing Pakistan Arab Refinery Company (Parco) to lay down the oil pipeline between Port Qasim and Mehmoodkot, which passed through the national park. He said that various development works including construction of ponds, checking of dams, waterholes, tube wells, animal enclosures, etc were constructed and four vehicles — two double-cabin and two single-cabin pickups — were purchased to strengthen vigilance and patrolling in the national park for the protection of wildlife and preventing poaching.

Responding to a question by MQM legislator Mehfoozyar Khan and PTI member Khurram Sherzaman regarding weekly bird bazaars at Liaquatabad, Saddar and other places and if these were legal, the minister said that the SWD has issued only 46 dealer licences to animal/bird sellers. He said that raids were conducted routinely to check illegal wildlife/bird sellers.

Responding to a question by Sumeta Syed regarding bears, the minister said that grizzly and brown bears were not found in Sindh. He said that black bears were mostly found above the altitude of 8,000 feet from sea level — in Kashmir and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa — and brown bears were found above 8,000 feet and up to 16,000 feet from sea level, in Kashmir, KP and Gilgit-Baltistan.

MQM legislators Qamar Rizvi, Dewan Chawla, Hargundas Ahuja and Waqar Shah; PML-F legislator Rafique Bhanbhan; Seema Zia of PTI; and others also participated in the Question Hour.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1311138>

WORLD BODIES URGED TO LOOK INTO WOES OF THARI PEOPLE

Dawn, January 28th, 2017

Hanif Samoon

MITHI: Sindh Taraqqi-pasand Party (STP) chairman Dr Qadir Magsi has appealed to local and international human rights bodies to raise their voice against the building of a massive mine effluent reservoir in Tharparkar which, he said, was bound to cause widespread destruction in the desert region and force thousands of people to leave their ancestral abodes and farmlands to escape serious public health issues and starvation.

He also urged the authorities concerned to review their decision of building the reservoir — projected to be spread over an area of around 1,500 acres — covering Gorano and about a dozen other villages of Tharparkar as a temporary disposal site for water and other effluent to be extracted from coal mines in the district.

The STP chief made the appeal at two press conferences held at the Islamkot Press Club and Malhi House in Mithi and a public meeting organised by his party in Chelhar town during his visit to the district on Friday.

Dr Magsi also observed that the Pakistan Peoples Party, during its almost decade-long rule over the province, had failed even to ensure provision of basic amenities to the people of Thar where, he observed, several hundred children, mostly newborns, have died over the last year due to malnutrition and a lack of essential health facilities at hospitals and rural health centres.

Accusing PPP lawmakers and other leaders of being involved in ‘massive corruption’ and ultimately having ruined the entire province, he observed that while poor Tharis were continuing to lose their children and facing starvation, the provincial government was still busy plundering the kitty.

He said the PPP government had miserably failed to mitigate the sufferings of Tharis, who had already been facing chronic drought for decades.

He expressed his party’s full support to a group of residents of Gorano and other villages sitting in the hunger strikers’ camp outside the Islamkot Press Club, and said the government and Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company could not be allowed to cause ‘massive devastation’ in Thar by building the reservoir at its projected site.

“There is no harm in shifting the site to a place away from population,” he said citing various proposals put forward by residents of the vulnerable villages.

PPP leaders must feel the pinch of conscience over the unabated deaths of Thari children and much-feared displacement of thousands of Tharis in the name of development, he said.

“The Sindh government is directly responsible for the children’s deaths,” he said, and urged the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other such international forums to send their teams to the region to ascertain the causes behind these deaths.

Dr Magsi also warned that the government would be equally responsible for the looming reservoir-related disaster in the region.

He noted that the Rann minor was the only irrigation channel meant for the district but no water had been released into it for many years.

“It’s height of injustice,” he said, and reminded Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah of the promise he had made to the people of Thar that he would ensure release of water into the channel till its tail-end area.

The STP chief criticised PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari for having done nothing for the people of Sindh while he held the office of the head of state, and said that now he was seeking their support in the next general elections.

“All feudal lords have ganged up with Mr Zardari,” he observed, but added that a huge vacuum still existed for sincere and committed people to fill.

Dr Magsi flayed the elements which were out to create doubts and confusion over the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The project, he said, would bring prosperity in the whole region.

He demanded shelving of ‘anti-people’ projects like Zulfikarabad and urged the federal government to strike down all mega projects which were bound to cause devastation in Sindh.

“Sindh is rich in natural resources with huge deposits of coal, granite, salt and minerals lying under its soil, yet its people are dying of hunger and throwing themselves into wells due to abject poverty,” he said.

Shahnawaz Siyal, Shankar Baghi Chhangani, Ghansham Malhi and other STP leaders accompanied Dr Magsi in his visit to Tharparkar.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1311135/world-bodies-urged-to-look-into-woes-of-thari-people>

INDUSTRIALISTS REACT TO SEPA ACTION IN HYDERABAD

Dawn January 29th, 2017

HYDERABAD: Reacting strongly over the closure of 15 factories by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) in Hyderabad a couple of days ago, leaders of local business and trade organisations on Saturday urged the higher authorities to save them from ‘unfair, unaffordable and unjustifiable burden’ and also save a large number of industrial workers from losing their jobs.

Speaking at a news conference in the local press club, Hyderabad SITE Association of Trade and Industry leaders Mazharul Haq and Salahuddin Qureshi, Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry leader Ziauddin, Hyderabad Chamber of Small Trade and Industry leader Nadeem Siddiqui

and other industrialists condemned Sepa for sealing 15 factories without waiting for the deadline given to them to comply with its earlier order.

They observed that the environment protection law under which action was being taken against industries was introduced only a couple of years back but they were being forced to strictly observe all its provisions, including establishment of a treatment plan, which was not possible.

“Meeting Sepa requirements needs ample time, which is not given, and a huge amount of money which is beyond the affordability of every industrialist,” they argued.

They said that around 200 industrial units of Hyderabad were told to have their own effluent treatment plant but action was started in the last week of January.

Secondly, they said, every recipient of the Sepa letter was not under obligation to have such a plant because every industry did not generate environmentally dangerous effluent.

In fact, it was for the Sindh government to establish a plant to treat effluent disposed of by factories in Hyderabad SITE like the one it had installed in the Kotri SITE, which was yet to start functioning, they said.

The industrialists also took exception to the attitude of Sepa and police officials who sealed the 15 factories, saying that the action was taken “as if we are some terrorist organisations”.

The authorities concerned must keep in mind that such an ‘unfair’ action would render thousands of workers jobless as had already happened in the case of the 15 factories, they said. The leaders of trade and industrial organisations said they were doing their best to fulfil the Sepa requirements in line with the relevant act but they should be allowed reasonable time while the government must address the issue of the huge amount of money involved.

In reply to a question, they said that hardly 30 out of the total 200 industrial units in Hyderabad were found having failed to observe Sepa standards and they, too, were striving hard to do that within their resources. “It’s impossible for a small factory to have treatment plant, which is very costly,” they said.

They suggested setting up of a committee comprising Hyderabad commissioner and mayor, SITE managing director, technical experts and other such people to take decisions on the implementation of environmental laws, rules and regulations, besides ensuring that Sepa did not go beyond its limit and injustice was not done to any industrialist.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1311291/industrialists-react-to-sepa-action-in-hyderabad>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 16TH TO JANUARY 22 ND 2017
CHASHMA BARRAGE MUSSELS RESEARCHER FINDS HEAVY METALS TOXICITY
Business Recorder, 18 January, 2017

LAHORE: In an alarming but significant groundbreaking environment research, Punjab University PhD scholar Muhammad Sohail working under the supervision of Dean Faculty of Life Sciences Prof

Dr Muhammad Naeem Khan has found that freshwater mussels (*Anodonta anatina*) being sensitive to aquatic environmental contamination are excellent indicators of ecosystem health and stability.

According to the spokes person of the PU freshwater mussels, close relatives of pearls producing oyster mollusks are immobile and imbedded in the river streambed and filter water to obtain oxygen and food; therefore, they are sensitive to industrial, agricultural and other anthropogenic contaminations polluting even River Indus.

The researcher has found bio-accumulation of Lead, Copper and Chromium heavy metals in the gills, mantle and foot of freshwater mussels collected from River Indus and Chashma Barrage bed. Punjab University Advanced Studies & Research Board (ASRB) in its first meeting presided over by Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Zaffar Mueen Nasir approved the award of PhD degree to Muhammad Sohail on the basis of excellent foreign PhD evaluation reports received from the leading European fisheries experts in the University of South Bohemia, Czech Republic and NAIK Research Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Hungary, who endorsed the research findings as significant and recommended the award of PhD degree.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/01/18/8-page/840560-news.html>

CITY RESIDENTS PLAGUED BY HIGH LEVELS OF AIR, NOISE POLLUTION
CHASHMA
Dawn, January 19th, 2017

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: At least 40pc of the city's population is exposed to highly polluted air while 65pc residents live in areas with elevated levels of noise pollution, pointed out a researcher while sharing findings of his study at an international conference which opened at the Karachi University (KU) on Wednesday.

Titled 'Urban ecology and frontiers of sustainable development', the five-day conference has been organised by the Society for Urban Ecology (SURE), South Asia chapter and KU's Department of Geography.

Giving a presentation on a study based on the assessment of human exposure to traffic-borne problems in Karachi, Dr Salman Zubair, assistant professor at KU's geography department, explained that air pollution, an inherent by-product of the combustion process from vehicular traffic, was a serious threat to human health and had been accountable for 4pc deaths and 0.6pc burden of diseases across the globe.

"Our study showed that all traffic-generated problems are strongly associated with areas having high road density. The area intensely affected due to air pollution is just 5pc of the total area of Karachi. But, since the area is the city's central part, it has high road and population density," he said, while mentioning names of towns with high level of air pollution.

Polluted air had more serious health impact than noise pollution since hazardous particles remained suspended in the air for a long time, he added.

In another presentation on a study that has explored changes in land use along the west bank of Malir River covering a period from 2005 to 2013, Dr Anila Kausar said the results of the study suggested that there was a dire need to improve water availability and related infrastructure in the area.

“Poor standards of literacy, lack of governance and investment also adversely affect development of agriculture in this region,” she said.

Other subjects covered in the technical sessions included urban environment and stress, ecological city and urban sustainable development; a case study of Karachi, urban development in the eastern Hindu Kush, assessment of change in slum areas and its ecological impact on Karachi, and urban ecosystem services assessment in Romania.

Earlier, Prof Salman Qureshi from Humboldt University, Berlin, in his keynote speech spoke about urban ecology in detail and said that megacities of South Asia needed urban planning since living conditions in these areas were not good. Fifty-two per cent area of Mumbai consisted of slums.

Prof Cristian Ioja from the University of Bucharest, Romania, Prof Jamil Kazmi and KU Vice Chancellor Prof Mohammad Qaiser also spoke in the inaugural session.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1309266/city-residents-plagued-by-high-levels-of-air-noise-pollution>

HAZARDOUS WASTE IS DISPOSED OF INTO PHULELLI CANAL, JUDICIAL COMMISSION TOLD

Dawn, January 20th, 2017

HYDERABAD: The judicial commission formed by the Supreme Court has said that it will not like to get confused in statistics and jugglery of words but intends to hold accountability of and fix responsibility on those who are responsible for wastage of public money in water and sewerage projects.

The one-man commission comprising Justice Mohammad Iqbal Kalhoro of the Sindh High Court has been assigned the task of inspecting civic conditions, including sanitation and cleanliness, water supply and drainage installations and also check the quality of potable water being supplied to consumers in different parts of Sindh. The SC formed the commission while hearing a petition filed by Advocate Shahab Usto drawing the apex court’s attention to the crumbling civic infrastructure and poor quality of water being supplied to people in the province.

Justice Kalhoro arrived in Hyderabad on Thursday and visited various water supply and sewerage installations besides meeting senior officials concerned. He expressed his displeasure over officials making confusing statements regarding certain projects and facilities.

“Where has the [public] money gone? I am least bothered what PC-I and PC-II are all about and just want to know who is responsible if government agencies are not working and if the Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa) is not performing,” he remarked while interacting with officials. He made it clear that he would not just record statements and submit them to the apex court but “will even hold the entire government of Sindh responsible if you [officers] keep confusing the commission with statistics of this or that project.”

Rejecting several arguments and excuses by the officials, Justice Kalhoro said: “If Wasa is overstaffed, who is responsible for that; and who was supervising it? Our children have to live in these cities. It is not A against B-type proceedings. Unless officers are held accountable or responsibility is fixed, the situation won’t improve.”

A large number of officials of irrigation department, Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) and Wasa, as well as the commissioner, deputy commissioner and municipal commissioner of Hyderabad were present in the court-IV where the judicial commission held its proceedings.

Advocate Usto informed the commission that water treatment plants in Hyderabad were not working while entire municipal and domestic waste was released into the Phulelli canal [a freshwater body] of the Kotri barrage. Hospital waste dumped along with municipal waste also goes into the canal, according to him.

Commissioner Qazi Shahid Pervez in his detailed statement admitted that untreated wastewater was released into the canal. He said that against the city’s requirement of 120mgd (million gallons per day) 60mgd of filtered water was provided by Wasa, 30mgd was received from the new filter plant and 10mgd from the old plant.

“Wasa doesn’t have funds to maintain its system,” he said, adding that government institutions, departments and the Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (Hesco) owed millions of rupees in dues payable to Wasa.

He informed the commission that he had forwarded two PCs-II (project cost) to seek Rs40 million each for feasibility study of water supply and drainage sectors to the provincial government.

Justice Kalhoro asked the chief secretary’s focal person, who was present in court, to tell the commissioner about status of the PCs by Friday (today).

Sepa Director General Naeem Mughal stated that drinking water supplied by Wasa did not meet the WHO and National Environmental Quality standards. He said that some industrial units were closed down for not having their own treatment plants.

Justice Kalhoro asked the acting director general of the Hyderabad Development Authority to immediately provide funds for starting chlorination of water at Wasa’s facilities where settled or raw water was supplied from.

He asked the Hyderabad commissioner to ensure that private hospitals followed the hospital waste disposal law and take action against those found breaching it.

The commission also ordered closure of the old slaughterhouse existing on the right bank of Phulelli canal and asked the district administration not to allow any slaughterhouse to be built on the banks of any irrigation canal. It sought a report about Cattle Colony, where a modern slaughterhouse was lying non-functional.

Later, Justice Kalhoro set out to visit Wasa’s filtration plants, Darya Khan sewage disposal station and other such facilities as well as Phulelli canal along with the relevant officials.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1309562>

SOUTH PUNJAB FOREST COMPANY: FIRM KEEN ON DEVELOPMENT OF COMMERCIAL FORESTRY

The Express Tribune, January 20th, 2017.

Imran Rana

FAISALABAD: South Punjab Forest Company (SPFC) will play an instrumental role in the overall development of commercial forestry on modern scientific lines and purely on marketable basis.

This was disclosed by SPFC Chief Executive Officer Tahir Rasheed while addressing a function at the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI).

He said that at least 50 public sector companies are working in Punjab including newly created SPFC. Another two forest companies have also been proposed for central and north Punjab, which would work for the development of commercial forestry to support wood, sports goods and furniture industries on a sustained basis, said Rasheed.

Underlining the benefits of commercial forestry, he said that it will play a major role in controlling environmental pollution in addition to reorganising wood industry and saving foreign exchange.

“SPFC is engaged in the preparation of feasibilities of different business plans,” said Rasheed, expressing hope that the work will be completed within the next three weeks. This will pave the way for transparent leasing of land initially for 15 years, which will be extendable for another 15 years on the same terms, he added.

He said that in America the private sector has developed forests on 870 million hectares of land with an investment of \$480 billion. Out of it, \$20 billion has been invested by different institutions due to the profitability of this sector.

Talking about the plans of SPFC, Rasheed said that after the completion of TORs, lease agreements will be inked in the month of May. He further said that a period of 7 to 8 months will be given for land levelling and provision of water.

“Currently three different business plans are under consideration. These will be on sharing basis, lease basis and a mixed blend of these two types. Investors will be allowed to cultivate 11 different species of trees, however no invasive varieties will be allowed for the purpose of cultivation.”

The SPFC CEO clarified that this allocated land will not be allowed to be used for any other purpose including agriculture; however the lessee could grow bamboo on it.

Responding to a question, he said that a proposal is under consideration to give extra incentives to the investors who have business plans to grow, sell or export Moringa. This plant has unique medicinal value as its leaves, roots and fruits, all are used in the preparation of high value medicines.

He said that canal water will be supplied where it will be possible, however in other case the lessee will have to make its own arrangements for the irrigation of forests.

Also speaking on the occasion, FCCI President Muhammad Saeed Sheikh highlighted the importance of commercial forestry for wood, furniture and sports goods industries and said that SPFC will play a major role in providing raw material to these vital segments of national economy.

He said that the government should offer maximum facilities to investors as government will get additional benefits in the form of positive impact on environment.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1301197/south-punjab-forest-company-firm-keen-development-commercial-forestry/>

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARD: JUDICIAL COMMISSION INSPECTS TOXIC WATER DISPOSAL IN KOTRI

The Express Tribune, January 21st, 2017.

Hyderabad: Like other canals springing from the Kotri Barrage, the canal which supplies water to Karachi from the Indus River continues to be polluted by toxic industrial, municipal and hospital waste water. The contamination occurs mainly in Kotri taluka of Jamshoro district where a combined effluent treatment plant for SITE's industries, treatment plants for municipal waste and hospital waste remain either dysfunctional or non-existent.

On Friday the Supreme Court's (SC) judicial commission on water and sanitation inspected the treatment plant and sites from where poisonous liquids are being released into the KB Feeder Canal. The visit laid bare the inferior toxicity treatment system being practised at the plant, built at a cost of over Rs1 billion on a order given by the Sindh High Court (SHC) in 2010.

It is the same canal which will supply water for the Rs51 billion K-IV project, which was inaugurated in August, 2016, and aims to supply 260 million gallons of water to Karachi per day.

The Justice Muhammad Iqbal Kalhoro, who heads the commission, to the plant's private operators elicited vague answers. "You are misleading the commission. Be honest," said Hyderabad commissioner Qazi Shahid Pervez to Syed Faisal, a chemical analyst at the plant, when his replies about sudden stoppage of waste water's discharge in the canal from the plant failed to convince the officials. The move was considered to be an act of hiding the scale of pollution.

Water expert Dr Ahsan Siddiqui, whom the SHC has given responsibility of monitoring the water quality of Manchar and Keenjhar lakes daily, pointed out that the plant is devoid of a water testing laboratory. The operator reluctantly admitted that the private operator's lab was located in Karachi.

"The quality check of treated water being released into the canal has to be carried out after every four to five hours," said Sindh Environment and Protection Agency (SEPA) director-general Naeem Ahmed Mughal.

Dr Siddiqui also explained that the plant is failing to carry out chemical oxidation and biological oxidation demand processes, which are quintessential for toxicity treatment. "They are throwing poisonous water into the canal which has become a health and environmental hazard for the people of Jamshoro, Thatta and Karachi as well as Keenjhar Lake."

Mughal said the agency has checked noncompliance of the standards. Pervez and Jamshoro deputy commissioner Munawar Ali Mahesar also informed the commission of having repeatedly told the private operator to address the problem but to no avail.

Advocate Amjad Sehto showed the judge the electricity bill of the plant for December, 2016, which was only Rs32,000. "This makes it evident that they are not actually running the plant."

The commission also visited the point from where a tuberculosis centre's and municipal waste is being discharged into the canal. The Kotri taluka's 2.7 MGD water filtration plant also appeared dysfunctional as the municipal official admitted their failure and capacity to maintain the plant. The official agreed to a suggestion that the public health engineering department, which built the facility and handed it over to the municipality, should be given the responsibility of maintaining it.

The commission ordered Liaquat University's hospitals in Hyderabad and Jamshoro to adopt hospital waste management standards recommended by SEPA and to complete the process for constructing incinerators. During a hearing at the SHC's circuit bench in Hyderabad, the commission received complaints of rampant garbage dumping and burning in the populated areas.

The commissioner also informed the judge that Qasimabad Municipal Committee (QMC) was overstaffed with around 300 unnecessary clerical and supervisory staff. It was also disclosed that 18 Muslims are appointed among 209 sanitary workers but they perform duties of computer operator and drivers. Local government minister Jam Khan Shoro, whose younger brother Kashif Shoro is chairperson of the QMC, was blamed for such appointments.

"This is a criminal drain of financial resources," said Pervez, who fired hundreds of contractual staff of Hyderabad Development Authority in June.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1302041/environmental-hazard-judicial-commission-inspects-toxic-water-disposal-kotri/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 9TH TO JANUARY 15TH 2017

SAUDI GOVERNOR IN CHAGAI FOR HUNTING

Dawn, January 10th, 2017

Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: The Governor of Tabuk region of Saudi Arabia, Prince Fahd bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, arrived in Dalbandin, the headquarters of Chagai district, in his special plane on Monday for hunting the houbara bustard.

Saudi Ambassador Abdullah Marzouk Al Zahrani, Balochistan Chief Minister's Adviser on Forests and Wildlife Obaidullah Babit, Adviser on Excise and Taxation Amanullah Notezai, Adviser on Industries Muhammad Khan Lehri, Home Secretary Dr Akbar Harifal and Chagai Deputy Commissioner Shahik Baloch received him at the airport.

Later, the governor of Tabuk left for the area allotted to him for hunting along with his staff and other officials. Heavy contingents of the Frontier Corps, police and Levies were deployed to guard the camp

of the Saudi royal dignitary and no one was allowed to move towards the area allotted to him for hunting.

His personal staff and security personnel had arrived in Quetta on Sunday and later left for the area selected for him in Chagai district.

Chagai, Washuk, Kharan and other areas of the Rakhshani valley in south and west Balochistan are famous for the presence of the houbara bustard, including local and Siberian birds of the species.

According to sources, the governor, during his stay in the area, will also visit development schemes launched with Saudi funds.

Mr Babit told reporters in Dalbandin that he had received the visiting Saudi prince on behalf of Chief Minister Nawab Sanaullah Zehri.

He said he had requested the Saudi ambassador to launch development projects in the area. The ambassador said the Balochistan government should officially write to his embassy in this regard. "I will write a letter to the Saudi ambassador from my ministry and request him to launch more development schemes in Dalbandin," the adviser said.

The foreign affairs ministry has granted licences to several Arab dignitaries, including members of the royal families of the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, for hunting the houbara bustard in various areas of Balochistan and Punjab.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1307534/saudi-governor-in-chagai-for-hunting>

THARI VILLAGERS CONTINUE PROTEST AGAINST CONTROVERSIAL DAM

Dawn, January 12th, 2017

MITHI: A large number of villagers from Gorano resumed their protest on Wednesday for the 83rd day outside the Islamkot press club against the construction of a controversial water reservoir in their area.

Talking to local reporters, advocate Leela Ram and other leaders of the protesters deplored that the construction of the dam on 1,500 acres of land would cause widespread devastation in more than 12 villages.

They said the coal mining company concerned would dump water from the mines there, which, they said, would damage their villages, fields and pastures. They vowed to continue their protest, along with their women and children, unless the site of the dam was changed.

Meanwhile, Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company chief executive officer (CEO) Shamsuddin Ahmed Shaikh, addressing a press conference at Green Park of Block-2 of Thar coalfield, claimed that the coal reserves of Thar would be a 'game-changer' in the country by generating much-needed electricity by the end of 2018. He made it clear that the site of the Gorano dam would never be changed since, according to him, there was no alternative site for its construction. Mr Shaikh claimed the water reservoir would not affect even a single resident of the region.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1307864>

ALL SEPA LABS, MONITORING STATIONS DYSFUNCTIONAL IN KARACHI

Dawn, January 13th, 2017

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: All laboratories and environmental monitoring stations of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) in the city have been inoperative for at least four years “owing to financial constraints”, it emerged during a visit of a judicial commission on Thursday.

The commission led by Justice Mohammad Iqbal Kalhor also visited various spots in Qayyumbad, Korangi and Phase VII of the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) and was briefed on how untreated domestic and industrial effluent made its way into the sea.

No waste was currently being treated at any of the government facilities as they had been closed for want of rehabilitation, KWSB officials told the commission accompanied by Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), KWSB and Sepa officials, members of civil society organisations, experts on water system and water quality, the petitioner as well as journalists.

The commission has recently been tasked by the Supreme Court to hold an inquiry into the state’s failure in providing clean drinking water and sanitation facilities in the province.

The commission’s terms of reference include examining the statutory role played by Sepa in the issues mandated to it under the Sindh Environment Protection Act, 2014.

At the Sepa office in Korangi, the commission was surprised to note that the department was seriously handicapped to play its due role as the three laboratories for chemical, microbiological and analytical analysis had been non-functional for years.

“They had been functional till 2012 under a project. With its conclusion, the funding resource was lost and these labs stopped operating,” a Sepa official told the commission, adding that the department had no finances to run its monitoring/ research facilities.

The environmental monitoring unit installed on the top floor of the Sepa building and a mobile monitoring station for testing air quality were also lying abandoned. The equipment was found in a good condition and it appeared that it had not been used much.

The staff revealed to journalists on condition of anonymity that the third environmental monitoring station set up at the office of the deputy commissioner of district central in North Nazimabad was also in a state of disuse.

They also said that the department not only faced a staff shortage and posts were lying vacant, it also lacked scientists of relevant fields to head those laboratories. The department had no funds to get repaired the five vehicles used for field visits.

All those monitoring/ research facilities were funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency, they added.

The director general of Sepa was not in the office to respond to the commission's queries as he was reportedly on a visit to Hyderabad whereas the staff had no satisfactory reply when queried over a nearby partially opened drain bringing toxic waste from the Korangi Industrial Area, which the commission had inspected before visiting the Sepa office.

Earlier, the commission inspected the Manzoor Colony and Gizri drains bringing waste to the Korangi Creek through the Malir River. The latter carried untreated sewage mainly from the DHA.

It also noted the spots where land reclamation was being done by the DHA in the Malir River, destruction of mangroves and the highly polluted environmental conditions.

Justice Kalhoro expressed annoyance when KMC official Nauman Arshad had no answer when asked about any reliable estimates on the untreated waste coming through those drains and the Malir River daily.

He held the district municipal corporations responsible for not collecting solid waste at source, which made their way into drains and choked them.

When asked whether Sepa ever carried out a study since its operation on the impact of untreated waste on ecology, Sepa official Waqar Hussain Phulpoto replied in the negative and blamed it on a shortage of funds.

An official of the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources collected samples from all the inspected places.

Meanwhile, Justice Kalhoro issued notices to the deputy inspector general of police, deputy commissioner of district west and the SSP concerned to take measures for safety of the Manghopir filter plant, under threat by increasing encroachments, illegal excavation and sand-lifting activities.

Apropos a recently published report on the judicial commission's visit to the KWSB installations, the utility stated: "The water supplied to the city is properly chlorinated as per standard and there is no negligence.

"Though there is a shortage of filtration, it's wrong to say that water is not chlorinated. The areas which fail to receive required chlorine in water are compensated through sodium hydrochloride," says a press release.

"Chlorine is injected as per required standard, which is 1.2ppm up to the tail-end areas. The chief chemist regularly collects samples from various parts of the city and tests chlorine level."

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1308090/all-sepa-labs-monitoring-stations-dysfunctional-in-karachi>

VILLAGERS HOLD MARCH AGAINST CONTROVERSIAL RESERVOIR

Dawn, January 13th, 2017

MITHI: A large number of people held a march from Gorano village to Islamkot in Tharparkar district on Thursday in protest against continued construction activity for the laying of a controversial mine effluent reservoir within their area.

Pleading that the reservoir, projected to be spread over hundreds of acres of Gorano and about a dozen other villages, was bound to devastate them by destroying the region's ecology and badly affecting human and animal population, the villagers have been protesting against the project for almost three months.

However, the provincial government and the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company are not ready to consider their request to look for some barren site away from human and animal population.

The villagers are not convinced by the company's assertion that storing the mine effluent in the reservoir in transition before its final disposal would not affect the region's lands or population. The government, however, urges them to agree on sacrificing a little for 'massive development' aimed at prosperity of Thar, chronically hit by drought for decades.

Disappointed over being ignored by the company and government for several weeks, the protesters on Thursday started a march from Gorano village to Islamkot, some 30 kilometres away. They held a demonstration outside the local press club and vowed to continue their protest until the reservoir site was shifted.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1308076/villagers-hold-march-against-controversial-reservoir>

FIVE TEXTILE UNITS CLOSED FOR VIOLATING ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

Dawn, January 13th, 2017

HYDERABAD: Officials of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) on Thursday got five textile units in the Nooriabad industrial area shut for violation of environmental laws.

The units that have been closed are M/S Al-Rahim, Marhaba, Stallion, Ahmed and Popular Fabrics textile mills.

Sindh Sepa DG Naeem Mughal confirmed the action and said they had been repeatedly warned, but their managements did not comply with the directives issued by Sepa from time to time. He said they earned money, but were not ready to install wastewater treatment plant.

A Sepa press release issued on Thursday said that a team took action under provisions of environmental law and issued an environmental protection order (EPO) against those units. The action was taken for prevention and control of environmental pollution emanating from these industrial units. The pollution was causing adverse impacts on human health, animals and vegetation and these units were operating in non-compliance of environmental laws/rules and regulations.

Sepa said the industrial units were found violating Sindh Environmental Protection Act, 2014.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1308081/five-textile-units-closed-for-violating-environmental-laws>

SEPA TOLD TO SURVEY FACTORIES DUMPING WASTE INTO SEA

The Express Tribune, January 13th, 2017.

Naeem Sahoutara

KARACHI: The Sindh Environment Protection Agency (Sepa) was ordered on Thursday to survey all factories producing hazardous waste and dumping it into the sea without treatment.

The survey report is due within four days, said the judicial commission set up to probe the allegations that the Sindh government has failed to provide clean drinking water and proper sanitation.

Justice Muhammad Iqbal Kalhor of the Sindh High Court, who is heading the commission established in compliance of the Supreme Court orders, issued these directives after Sepa director Waqar Hussain admitted that the agency had not conducted any survey to identify the industrial units falling within any of its three categories.

He explained that the industries falling in the A category produce severe hazardous or poisonous effluents, therefore, it is mandatory for them to install waste-water-treatment plants. Those in the B category also produce hazardous and poisonous effluent but it is relatively lesser in volume than those in the A category, he added.

The C category comprises mainly dry units, which either do not produce any hazardous effluent or produce then within permissible standards. However, no survey has been conducted to identify such units, he admitted.

Meanwhile, North Karachi Industrial Area Association's secretary-general Mirza Muhammad Hussain told the commission that 2,200 industrial units of varying categories are operating in the North Karachi Industrial Area. The garbage was being removed by ZM Corporations under a contract, he said.

He admitted, however, that industrial effluent and waste was being discharged in the Lyari River through the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) pipelines network 'without any treatment.' A treatment plant was installed in Gabol Town more than 20 years ago but it was not functional, he said.

For his part, FB Area Industrial Area Association's chief executive officer Rehan Zeeshan said 300 industrial units were installed in his area. The garbage was being removed through a contractor but there was no plant to treat industrial waste, he said, adding that most units were not producing any hazardous and toxic effluents.

The secretaries-general of the two industrial areas' association said they were ready to cooperate with Sepa for the survey and identify which categories the industrial units fell under.

The commission also issued show-cause notices to the presidents of the Landhi and Korangi industrial areas associations to explain why they had failed to appear in court despite being served notices. They were directed to appear on Friday (today) before the commission with their explanations.

Earlier, Justice Kalhoro visited the water reservoirs in Manghopir and took note of excessive excavation of sand and gravel by private contractors and its impact on the environment as well as the reservoir.

The commission issued notices to the West Range DIG, district West's deputy commissioner and West SSP to appear with their reports today.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1292996/murky-manufacturing-sepa-told-survey-factories-dumping-waste-sea/>

COURT SEEKS STATISTICS ON FELLED TREES

Dawn, January 14th, 2017

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court on Friday sought a report from the Parks and Horticulture Authority showing statistics of trees felled in the provincial metropolis in the wake of different mega projects, including Orange Line Metro Train, Gulberg signal-free corridor and widening of Canal Road.

PTI leader Andleeb Abbas filed a petition questioning extensive cutting down of the trees and the government failure to implement environment policy regarding forestation.

Advocate Sheraz Zaka argued the Punjab government had given an undertaking before the Supreme Court that 10 trees would be planted against each felled tree. He alleged the government did not fulfill its undertaking. He said the fundamental rights of citizens were at stake and Lahore city was becoming one of the most polluted cities in the world due to the rampant deforestation.

The lawyer pointed out that the provincial government in 2015 issued environmental policy that envisaged plantation of trees but neither the policy nor undertaking before the apex court was materialised.

Justice Ayesha A. Malik directed the PHA director general to submit a detailed reply on the matter by the last week of February.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1308347>

'MARINE POLLUTION COSTING PAKISTAN BILLIONS OF RUPEES'

Dawn January 14th, 2017

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: Utter neglect towards marine pollution costs Pakistan billions of rupees every year that includes the huge expenditures the country incurs on account of vessel repair and maintenance, as constant flow of untreated toxic effluent towards the sea has doubled (metal) corrosion rate.

This was stated by Director General of Ports and Shipping Asad Rafi Chandna while talking to journalists on Friday at Jetty No18 of West Wharf, Karachi Port Trust (KPT), where a judicial commission had arrived to observe the level of marine pollution at the harbour.

The commission, led by Justice Mohammad Iqbal Kalhoro, has recently been tasked by the Supreme Court to submit a report on environmental degradation and failure of the state in providing clean drinking water and sanitation facilities in the province.

“Some 25 years ago, these waters were blue where one could see dolphins. Today, marine life is extinct because the harbour has become one hundred per cent polluted,” Mr Chandna said while referring to a study according to which around four million gallons of municipal and industrial waste was discharged into the sea daily.

According to him, the Pakistan Navy alone incurs a loss of Rs1bn annually on vessel repair and maintenance as (metal) corrosion rate owing to toxic effluent in the seawater has doubled.

He regretted the fact that all the three government waste treatment plants were lying closed while the cost of Greater Karachi Sewage Treatment Project, better known as S-III, pending since 2007, had increased from Rs8 billion to Rs39bn due to delay in its completion.

“There is neither an effective regulatory mechanism to force industries to treat their waste at source, nor surveillance of increasing marine pollution. If the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board lacks sufficient funds to build a treatment plant, the children of this city and multinational companies can do that,” he remarked, describing the neglect as criminal.

Saeed Baloch of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, accompanying the commission, spoke about the misery of local residents who suffered not only loss of livelihood, but also health problems caused by marine pollution.

The commission, assisted by water quality experts, boarded a KPT vessel to see the extent of pollution at the breakwater but had to abandon the trip in the middle due to low visibility caused by rain.

Samples from the site were collected by a Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) official who would submit its report to the commission.

Earlier in the day, representatives of Korangi and Landhi associations of trade and industry Nehal Akhtar and Ather Ali Khan appeared before the commission. None of them could refer to any data when asked about details on industrial units with treatment plants.

Justice Kalhoro rejected the explanations given over the performance of Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) by its director general as he failed to bring any record to prove departmental efficiency.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1308295>

SINDH GOVT TO LAUNCH HYGIENE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
Dawn, January 15th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The Sindh government will launch a project with the World Bank's assistance to increase the dietary diversity and improve hygiene practices in the province.

The bank will take up the Sindh government's project named Sindh Multi-Sectoral Action for Nutrition (MSAN) in March to approve \$21 million financing for the project

The project will lead to behavioural change to achieve open defecation-free villages and introduce production of nutrition food through homestead gardening practices and increasing household knowledge of food and nutrition.

The sanitation component will be implemented in 13 districts while the agriculture for nutrition component will be implemented in 20 union councils of four districts that will overlap with the sanitation component's districts including Dadu, Jacobabad, Kashmore, Larkana, Kambar-Shah-dadkot, Tharparkar, Badin, Sanghar, Tando Mohammad Khan, Umerkot, Shikarpur and Sajawal.

The agriculture for nutrition components will be implemented in Jacobabad, Tharparkar, Sanghar and Umerkot.

The Sindh government is one of the first provincial governments of the country to allocate and release financial resources for nutrition-related purposes. To complement action for nutrition support, the provincial government has developed a Priority Action Framework for Nutrition programme to reduce stunting from 48 per cent in 2016 to 30 per cent in 2021.

It has allocated Rs1 billion in the current fiscal year and committed to add the same amount in later years for the project.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1308501/sindh-govt-to-launch-hygiene-improvement-project>

CM CLAIMS 'RELATIVE' BETTERMENT IN CITY DRAINAGE SYSTEM

Dawn, January 15th, 2017

KARACHI: Speaking about the plight of the city in event of continuous downpour, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Saturday said if the draining capability of the city system was not satisfactory yet "comparatively it is better because the cleaning of drains and removal of encroachment has helped a great deal".

Speaking to reporters during his five-hour visit of various parts of the city to witness the after-effects of rains, he said he had visited Pichard Nullah near the airport and Gujjar Nala which were flowing smoothly.

He said it was a gigantic task to remove encroachment from Gujjar Nala and the local government minister had done a good job for which he must be appreciated. He said he was in touch with the mayor of Karachi.

"He is in streets and I am also visiting the city to review disposal of rainwater accumulated on the roads and neighbourhoods," he said.

He said the mayor had enough powers to serve the people of Karachi. "It is quite surprising that he is being asked about his powers all the time. The provincial assembly has given him powers; he should serve the people and he is doing his best.

“I am supporting him and invited him today to join me in the trip but he was busy working elsewhere,” he said.

The chief minister said there were traffic issues because streets were being reconstructed. “Instead of appreciating the work certain quarters are criticising the government for carrying out development in the city. This shows they are not opposing us but actually the people of Karachi and people should know them and their intentions.”

Earlier, the chief minister visited parts of the city to inspect proper drainage of rainwater. The areas he visited included Sharee Faisal, Nipa, Liaquatabad, North Nazimabad, Nazimabad, Golimar, Shershah, Lyari, etc.

In Lyari, he visited the General Hospital and inquired after the health of patients. He asked them about the quality of services being provided to them in the hospital. He directed the medical superintendent to provide best health facilities and ensure that every doctor and paramedic was on duty.

CM Shah visited the reverse osmosis plant of Lyari and checked quality of water.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1308425/cm-claims-relative-betterment-in-city-drainage-system>

LOW WATER LEVELS: RIVERINE LIFE COMES UNDER THREAT

The Express Tribune, January 15th, 2017.

SUKKUR: The riverine life of River Indus has been threatened by the alarming decrease in the water level.

The water was released into the downstream due to the annual closure of the Sukkur Barrage and its seven off taking canals and thus the riverine life including fish and turtles have become vulnerable. However, ample water has been left in the left bank of the Indus river, which populated by a large number of blind Indus dolphins.

Every year, water supply to seven off-taking canals of Sukkur Barrage remains closed for 15 days for annual repair and maintenance. All the gates of Sukkur Barrage are raised in first week of January to allow water flow in the downstream. Besides the oiling and greasing of the gates, flooring and filter blocks of the barrage and canals are examined thoroughly and repaired, if needed.

However, people living near the barrage start fishing in the shallow water in an attempt to make money.

A visit to the Sukkur Barrage and its off taking canals revealed a large number of people fishing in different canals using fishing nets. As a result, many turtles were also caught in the fishing nets, which were later released by the people.

According to the fishermen, the big fish swim in the deep water while the small fish are found near the embankment and are caught easily.

At Sukkur bypass, a large number of people including children were seen chasing turtles, which had come out of the shallow water in search of food.

Besides, others were seen fishing using small fishnets. However, they said that these fish are too small to be sold in the market so they are using them for personal consumption.

Upon contact, Sukkur wildlife department deputy conservator Taj Mohammad Shaikh said, “Our teams are closely watching the river and all the canals to make sure that people don’t harm the turtles or the rare blind dolphins”.

There is ample water in the left bank of the river for the dolphins, he said, adding that the turtles are found across the river. Due to low water level in the right bank canals, the turtles come out in search of food and then go back, he explained.

On Friday, a dolphin was spotted in the Rohri canal, which is situated in the left pocket of Sukkur Barrage, he said.

A team of wildlife department tried to rescue it but failed as the water level in the canal is quite high. “We avoid chasing the mammal constantly because it becomes afraid and suffers a heart attack,” he claimed. The team will again go to rescue the dolphin today (Sunday).

He also appealed to the people to take care of the wildlife. Once the Sukkur Barrage is opened, the situation will return to normal, he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1295122/low-water-levels-riverine-life-comes-threat/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 2ND TO JANUARY 8TH 2017
DAM PROJECT TO CAUSE WIDESPREAD DEVASTATION, SAY EXPERTS
Dawn, January 2nd, 2017

MITHI: After visiting the site of the Gorano water reservoir project on Sunday, environmentalists, rights activists and members of civil society expressed serious concerns and apprehensions over its construction.

Addressing a press conference at the Islamkot press club, Jami Chandio, Noor Bajeeer, Partab Shivani, Ali Akbar Rahimoon and others deplored that if the site of the pond proposed to be built on 1,500 acres of land was not changed, it would cause unprecedented devastation in the area.

They maintained that the protesting villagers’ fears were based on reports and studies which said that the total dissolved solids (TDS) level of underground water in the area would be around 5,000 parts per million (ppm), much higher than the WHO standard that set the maximum contaminant level for TDS at 1,000 ppm.

“The TDS is directly related to the purity of water and quality of water purification systems, and it is used to determine how safe water is for consumption by humans and animals or for farming,” they added.

They also rejected the claims of Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company officials that not a single villager would be affected by the water of the coal mines from block-2 of Thar coal area, which would be dumped into the pond at the proposed site.

They feared that fertile area would turn into salt mines and all the wells providing drinking water to thousands of inhabitants and their livestock in over 12 villages would turn brackish and ultimately people would be forced to migrate.

They said that in the reservoir area, there were many species of biodiversity which were listed under the IUCN Red List of 2010. Any effort to damage those species would be a violation of many international biodiversity laws.

“The dam is not the issue of only those protesting Tharis, but of the whole Sindh and Pakistan,” they said and made it clear that they were not against the development of Thar and the region through of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The activists also visited the hunger strikers’ camp and assured the protesting villagers of their full moral support against the hazardous water reservoir.

Meanwhile, villagers, including women and children, resumed their protest for the 74th day outside the Islamkot press club.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1305841/dam-project-to-cause-widespread-devastation-say-experts>

CUTTING OF FORESTS DEVASTATED ENVIRONMENT: KHATTAK

Dawn January 3rd, 2017

PESHAWAR/BATTAGRAM: Chief Minister Pervez Khattak has said that ruthless cutting of forests has devastated natural environment and caused floods.

He said that provincial government devised a comprehensive system for restoration of natural environment as it believed in practical steps, according to a statement.

He was addressing as chief guest the inaugural ceremony of sanitation campaign in Peshawar on Monday. The campaign titled Goloona Peshawar (Flowers Peshawar) will continue for 10 days. During the campaign, efforts will be made to clean the roads and streets of the city.

The drive is a joint venture of several organisations and institutions including Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar, University of Peshawar, Al-Khidmat Foundation, Peshawar Development Authority and four towns of the provincial metropolis.

The chief minister said that there were 135 gardeners for 13 gardens in Peshawar when PTI formed government in the province. He said that the gardeners had never bothered to plant a single sapling owing to absence of check and balance system.

Mr Khattak said that the present government inherited a deteriorated system but it was determined to reform it. He said that government took concrete steps to bring a real change. He said that 80 per cent residents of Peshawar were consuming polluted water that was a major cause of diseases.

The chief minister that provincial government allotted funds for provision of clean drinking water to people improve public health and reduce burden of patients on hospitals. He said that 30 per cent

funds were diverted to local government and local bodies were made responsible for keeping the environment clean.

Mr Khattak asked people to keep an eye on the performance of their elected representatives. He said that government ended political interference in education, health and police departments.

The chief minister said that services of WSSP would be extended to six more districts of the province. He said that Rapid Bus Transport project would be initiated in Peshawar to provide better transportation services to people. He said that bus stand would be shifted out of the city.

In Battagram, a weeklong cleanliness drive was launched on Monday to keep public places clean.

The drive was launched by district administration at Battagram Bazaar. MPA Nawabzada Wali Mohammad Khan, Deputy Commissioner Sardar Asad Haroon, tehsil nazim Niaz Mohammad Khan, representatives of traders and volunteers of Zalmey Battagram and Pakistan Red Crescent Society were present on the occasion.

The deputy commissioner said that aim of the drive was to enhance civic sense among the citizens. He called upon peoples to cooperate with the municipal administration to make the drive a success.

He said that during the campaign, choked drains, streets and bazaars would be cleaned.

Speaking on the occasion, tehsil nazim Niaz Mohammad Khan said that they were planning to set up slaughter house and selected places for dumping garbage.

However, residents of the district that a weeklong drive would not bring any change. "The government needs to make it a regular activity," they added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1306114/cutting-of-forests-devastated-environment-khattak>

SANITATION WORKERS NOT TO COLLECT GARBAGE TODAY

Dawn, January 3rd, 2017

KARACHI: Workers of the civic agencies have announced that they would not collect garbage from the city on Tuesday (today) in protest against the government's plan to hand over solid waste collection to a Chinese company.

Speaking at a press conference at the Karachi Press Club on Monday, the local government anti-privatisation committee leaders — Zulfiqar Shah, Kaneez Fatima and others — said that garbage collection was the function of the civic agencies and they would not allow the government to hand this function over to a private company.

They said the government was giving a large amount to the Chinese company for garbage collection while the civic agency workers have offered to do the job at half the cost, yet their offer was not being accepted. They said that the people will also have to pay more as the Chinese company would sell its plastic bags in which the garbage would be collected.

They said that currently around 10,000 workers were doing the job of cleaning and sweeping and over 7,000 of these were over 50 years of age, having over 25 years of service, and if the government did not take back its plan to privatise garbage collection, then all of the workers would resign and the government would not have the resources to clear their dues.

They said that as a first step the workers would not collect garbage on Tuesday and if the government did not accept their demand, they would develop a strategy against the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board that was handing over garbage collection to the Chinese company.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1306047/sanitation-workers-not-to-collect-garbage-today>

QATAR'S ROYAL FAMILY IN CHOLISTAN TO HUNT MIGRATORY BIRDS

Dawn January 4th, 2017

LAHORE: Members of Qatar's royal family arrived in the Cholistan desert in Bahawalnagar district on Monday to camp and hunt migratory birds.

Qatar's former deputy prime minister Muhammad bin Khalifa Al Thani was among the royal guests. Their flight had to be diverted from Bahawalpur to Multan because of foggy conditions so they had to travel to Bahawalnagar by road, security sources said.

Prince Hamad Bin Jassim, one of the royal family members, had accompanied the royal family when they landed in Lahore in the first week of December. The prime minister's family had hosted a luncheon for them at their Jati Umra residence in Raiwind. However, an official said, the prince had left Pakistan a few days ago.

Prince Jassim had made headlines over a month ago when the Sharifs presented a letter from him regarding the ownership of their London property raised in the Panamagate case in the Supreme Court.

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chairman Imran Khan had termed the letter "fake" and demanded the PM's disqualification.

Prince Jassim, Qatar's former prime minister, and Saifur Rehman of Ehtesab Bureau-fame are among the owners of REDCO International. The former premier has shown willingness to appear before the court or a commission to be cross-examined if the letter needed to be verified. His name, too, had appeared in the Panama Papers.

A new bench of the Supreme Court is scheduled to resume hearing of the Panamagate case on Wednesday (today).

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1306349>

FIRST BATCH OF MACHINES TO LIFT GARBAGE FROM KARACHI ARRIVES FROM CHINA

Dawn, January 7th, 2017

Hasan Mansoor

KARACHI: The first batch of machines imported from China to lift garbage in Karachi's district South has arrived at the Karachi port and the second shipment is expected to arrive next week, officials in the Sindh government told Dawn on Friday.

Jam Khan Shoro, Sindh minister for local government, said the first batch included 200 tricycle refuse vehicles, 1,300 handcarts, 5,000 dustbins of 240-litre capacity, several 280-litre steel dustbins, 3,200 dustbins of 260-litre capacity, showers to clean trees, mechanical sweepers and street-washing vehicles.

Officials at the CM House said that Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah had directed Mr Shoro to get the machinery cleared at the earliest so that the garbage-lifting scheme could be launched without delay.

"The chief minister wants to launch the project before the [end] of this month," an official in the Sindh government said. Mr Shoro said the second shipment of machines will arrive on Jan 10 and will include loaders and other heavy equipment.

The Chinese company, Changyi Kangjie Sanitation Engineering Company Limited, had won the Rs2bn annual contract to process waste in the city. The District South Municipal Corporation, with a majority of elected representatives from the Pakistan Peoples Party, was the first of Karachi's six urban municipalities that agreed to the scheme and passed a resolution in this regard, a mandatory prerequisite for the plan.

DMC East, with a majority of representatives from the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, followed suit and joined the project planned by the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board. "The equipment for DMC East will arrive soon," Mr Shoro said.

The remaining four DMCs will be included in the scheme after they complete the prerequisites.

Officials explained that Karachi South produced the highest volume of waste — 1,300 tonnes a day — among the six districts of Karachi followed by Karachi East which produced around 1,000 tonnes of garbage a day.

The government would pay the Chinese firm Rs2bn each year, which, the officials claimed, was the least costly option by international standards. After the Chinese firm begins its operations, the city's sanitation workers will be placed at the disposal of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board.

Officials said the Chinese firm would lift garbage from in front of houses, compress and shift it to designated garbage transfer stations in respective districts.

The company is in consultation with the government to transfer the garbage to a landfill site where it would establish a power plant to produce energy from the city's garbage.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1306849>

HOUBARA HUNTING: PERMITS ISSUED TO SEVEN DUBAI DIGNITARIES
Dawn, January 8th, 2017

KARACHI: The federal government has issued at least seven special permits to the ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum and other members of the royal family and the ruling elite to hunt the internationally protected bird houbara bustard during the 2016-17 hunting season, it is learnt reliably.

According to sources, the permit holders include Dubai's deputy ruler, crown prince, deputy chief of police, a high-ranking military official, members of the royal family, government officials and a businessman. They have been allocated hunting areas in three provinces — Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab.

Resident of colder Central Asian regions, the houbara bustard avoiding the harsher weather conditions at home migrates southwards to spend its winters in relatively warm environment in the arid regions of Pakistan every year.

The sources said that Pakistan was a signatory to different international conventions on conservation of nature, which prohibit hunting of protected species. Besides, local wildlife protection laws also ban hunting of the houbara bustard and Pakistanis are not allowed to hunt this bird. But the government issues special permits to dignitaries from Arabian Gulf states to hunt the houbara bustard.

The permits signed by the foreign ministry's deputy chief of protocol Naeem Iqbal Cheema have been sent to the permit holders through the embassy of their country in Islamabad. Mr Cheema has also sent copies of the permits to the wildlife conservator in the climate change ministry, to be forwarded to officials concerned, including chief secretaries, chiefs of Rangers and Frontier Constabulary etc, in the three provinces to facilitate the hunting.

Mr Cheema's letter to the Islamabad-based diplomatic mission of the United Arab Emirates says: "The government of Pakistan has conveyed its recommendations to the authorities in the provinces concerned for allocation of following areas to the dignitaries of Dubai for hunting of houbara bustard for the season 2016 –17."

According to the sources, the names of the permit holders and the areas allocated to them are: the UAE Vice President and ruler of the Emirate of Dubai has been allocated Muzaffargarh district in Punjab, Khuzdar, Lasbela and Nokundi in Balochistan's Chagai district.

The code of conduct sent with the permits to the hunters informs them that they have been allowed to hunt 100 houbara bustards within 10 days during the hunting season that began on Nov 1 last year and will end on January 31.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1307127/houbara-hunting-permits-issued-to-seven-dubai-dignitaries>

HUNTING STIRS PROTEST IN CHAGAI; HIGHWAY BLOCKED

Dawn, January 8th, 2017

QUETTA: Vehicular traffic remained briefly suspended between the border town of Taftan and Quetta on Saturday as workers and supporters of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) blocked the National Highway near Chagai to protest against the hunting of houbara bustard by Arab dignitaries in the area.

The protesters, led by PPP leader Mir Arif Jan Mohammad Hasni, blocked the highway linking Pakistan with Iran by erecting barricades and putting up huge boulders on the road.

Traffic remained suspended for around two hours and a large numbers of vehicles, including passenger buses and trucks carrying import and export goods were stranded, causing trouble to the travellers in the chilly weather that has gripped the area for the last 48 hours.

Addressing the protesters, Mr Hasni and other PPP leaders said the government issued permits to the Arab dignitaries for hunting the rare migratory bird just to serve their interests.

During the hunting, they said, vehicles of the dignitaries and their staff crushed standing crops, causing irreparable damage.

They demanded cancellation of hunting permits issued to the Arabs and warned that PPP workers would otherwise lodge a protest and block the highway for an indefinite period.

Security forces were present to avoid any untoward incident. However, no such incident took place.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1307124/hunting-stirs-protest-in-chagai-highway-blocked>

GARBAGE COLLECTION IN KARACHI REEKS OF DIRTY POLITICS

The Express Tribune, January 8th, 2017.

Oonib Azam

KARACHI: Garbage collection in Karachi reeks of dirty politics as the Chinese contractors hired to carry out the process are still awaiting approvals from the district municipal corporations (DMCs).

The Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP)-led Sindh government decided to outsource garbage collection in the city to a Chinese company, Changyi Kangjie Sanitation Engineering Company, soon after the formation of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB).

The contract for garbage collection has already been awarded for districts East and South but it has yet to be made public. An official claimed that the government has agreed to pay Rs2 billion every year for garbage collection of two districts and this decision has not sat well with the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). According to MQM's Khawaja Izharul Haq, who is the opposition leader in the Sindh Assembly, a local company could have carried out the garbage collection in less than half the money being offered to the Chinese company.

Since MQM holds a majority in three of Karachi's six districts – East, Central and Korangi – their opposition can delay the garbage collection process. The private contractor needs the approval of the DMCs' councils as per the law, explained SSWMB managing director Dr AD Sajnani.

Despite the unanimous opposition to the outsourcing of garbage collection, the MQM lacks its usual uniformity when it comes to this issue. The party has majority in districts East, Korangi and Central but only District East has given consent to the Chinese company and the garbage collection is scheduled to kick off from February whereas District Central vowed to oppose the move.

The DMC Central chairperson, MQM's Rehan Hashmi, told The Express Tribune that they will resist the Chinese company's operations in his district. "Only if half of the amount that is being given to the Chinese company is transferred to the DMC, we will uplift [garbage] in the entire district," said Hashmi, adding that there has been a lack of transparency in awarding contract to the Chinese company by the Sindh government. "We are doing whatever we can to lift the garbage in our district," he pointed out.

Meanwhile, the chairperson of DMC East, MQM's Moeed Anwar, said garbage collection has been outsourced in all countries in the world. "We may not be able to collect garbage in our districts with the existing system," he said. If the Chinese company does not do a good job, they can be sent back, he added.

DMC Korangi has yet to make a decision but they are inclined to follow the same path as District Central. "We will see how they operate in other districts and then come to a decision," said DMC Korangi chairperson Nayyar Raza, also of the MQM. His district has yet to receive the SSWMB letter requesting for the council's approval for garbage collection.

As for mayor Wasim Akhtar, he is very much on board with the decision to outsource garbage collection to a Chinese company. Each district is free to make its decision and the performance of the SSWMB in districts South and East will tell if other districts should allow the Chinese company to operate or not, he said, adding that the districts have nothing to do with the party or its policies.

In principle, all powers should lie with the city mayor, said MQM spokesperson Aminul Haque, adding that the same job can be done by the DMCs on their own at half the cost. As for DMC East's approval, he said the decision was made in haste.

The waste management board is, therefore, kicking off the garbage collection from only districts South and East for now. "We cannot go in any district against their will," said Dr Sajnani, hoping that pressure from the people will make other councils give their approvals.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1287634/outsourcing-ordeals-garbage-collection-karachi-reeks-dirty-politics/>

February 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 20TH TO FEBRUARY 26TH 2017 **FORMATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COUNCIL DEMANDED**

Dawn, February 21st, 2017

KARACHI: While criticising the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) for serving shut-down notices upon industries, the leaders of seven industrial estates have urged Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah to immediately set up the Sindh Environmental Protection Council.

In a recent meeting industry leaders had warned that if shut-down notices issued to industrial units of seven industrial estates by Sepa were not withdrawn, it would 'cause chaos and render millions of workers jobless'.

They urged the chief minister that first legal requirements under the Environment Protection Act of 2014 should be met, wherein an Environmental Protection Council has to be set up. The council will have representatives from industry and the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

They claimed it was the responsibility of the Environmental Protection Council to frame standards for the protection of environment, but Sepa has framed its own standards and started issuing notices to the industry of the city.

It was noted by the leaders that industrial waste needs treatment before it was thrown into the sea, but for the last 20 years the relevant civic bodies have failed to install treatment plants in any of the seven industrial areas of Karachi.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1315991>

COAL: THAR'S VERY OWN BLACK GOLD

The Express Tribune, February 22, 2017

Salman Siddiqui

KARACHI: People in Thar are literally sitting on billions worth of coal deposits, but their surroundings are a stark reminder to the kind of progress Pakistan has made – rich in resources and potential, but poor in development and infrastructure.

Despite the coal reserves, Thar continues to be among the most poverty-ridden areas in the province – not that the benchmark is really high in Sindh.

Now, after a long and overdue wait, a public-private partnership model promises to change the reality.

Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC), in partnership with the provincial government, has already kicked-off operations to extract Thar coal and the company's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Shamsuddin Ahmed Shaikh, says electricity production from the first of four units will commence by the end of 2018. The 1,320-megawatt Thar coal-based power plants, comprising four units of 330MW each, are being completed at a cost of \$2.1 billion.

“We are running ahead of the given schedule; though the commercial operation date (COD) of two power plants is June 2019, we expect electricity production from the first unit to begin by the end of next year,” said Shaikh.

Shaikh said energy production from the first unit in December 2018 would, however, depend on coal availability from the Thar field.

“Coalmining in the Thar field block-II is being carried out round the clock and we expect to see the completion of mining work before deadline as well,” he added.

All these projects are being executed under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) programme. SECMC is working in collaboration with the Sindh government and is the main sponsor of the project.

But despite the progress, some believe that the people of Thar may not get the benefit they deserve.

Shaikh, however, said it is crucial to carry out the project to achieve social uplift in the area.

“Thar people are the real owners of Thar coal ... but they are still living in the 18th century. A social uplift programme is in progress, which is part and parcel of the coal extraction project. This would bring them to the 21st century,” Shaikh said in an interview with The Express Tribune.

“SECMC and Engro Powergen Thar have initially allocated significant amount of funds for the programme,” he said.

Shaikh urged upon other companies involved in the coal extraction and/or utilisation projects to do the same. “The projects would become meaningless if they do not bring a positive change in the lives of the locals,” he said.

The government of Sindh should also spend the royalty from the projects on locals, he said.

Thar contains the world’s seventh largest coal reserves at an estimated 175 billion tons, more than the combined oil reserves in fuel-rich Saudi Arabia and Iran, and 68-times higher than Pakistan’s total gas reserves, Shaikh said.

The joint venture has formed Thar Foundation to run the uplift programme. It would construct a 100-bed hospital, schools, mosque, a temple, market place, community centre, bus stand, Otaq {a public gathering/sitting room) and a milk collection centre.

He said the joint venture has employed approximately 2,000 people with majority jobs going to the locals.

“We {companies} are giving and would continue placing orders for construction materials and hire their services to make them successful entrepreneurs,” he said.

The Thar Foundation has selected 25 engineering students from Tharparkar District. They would be given further education and training at Mehran University of Engineering and Technology and Institute of Business Administration for the next two years. Later, they would be hired by SECMC, he said.

Thar population was estimated at 2.265 million in 2015. At present, Thar is known as a food insecure district, as hundreds of children die due to malnutrition and inadequate medical facilities.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1334767/coal-thars-black-gold/>

CHINESE FIRM COLLECTING GARBAGE 8.5 TIMES MORE COSTLY FOR SINDH GOVT
Oonib Azam

The Express Tribune, February 25, 2017

KARACHI: The collection of garbage in District South by a Chinese firm is going to be 8.5 times more costly for the Sindh government as compared to what it the District Municipal Corporation (DMC) South was paying for the service.

Local Government Minister Jam Khan Shoro has announced that the Sindh government will pay \$26 per tonne to Changyi Kangjie Sanitation Engineering Company to lift garbage in the district. Earlier, according to DMC South Municipal Commissioner Muhammad Afaaq, they were spending Rs320 per tonne for garbage collection.

Once the Chinese company takes over, garbage collection will be transferred to the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) from DMC South. DMC South is the first municipality in the city to have signed an agreement for the purpose. According to DMC South Chairman Malik Fayyaz, a council resolution was needed to sign such an agreement, which was passed after a briefing from the SSWMB on how they will operate in their district through the Chinese company.

According to Fayyaz, District South generates 1,300 tonnes of garbage per day. If the Sindh government starts paying \$26 (approximately Rs2,700) per tonne to the Chinese company for lifting garbage, it will cost them Rs3.52 million per day, Rs106 million per month and Rs1.2 billion yearly.

SSWMB Managing Director Dr AD Sajnani told The Express Tribune that District South has roughly 0.2 million tonnes of garbage in the pile-up, which is also present inside the nullahs and in several other big grounds, which will take three to four months for the Chinese company to clean. If this is taken into account, the Sindh government will have to pay Rs535 million to the Chinese firm just to clean the pile-up.

Urban Resource Centre's Zahid Farooqi commented that due to corruption and mismanagement, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) and the DMCs are not able to lift garbage. The landfill sites, he pointed out, are in far-flung areas, due which it is very difficult to transfer all the garbage of the city there in a day. According to him, this is why garbage has been accumulating.

He was of the view that whatever amount the Sindh government is ready to pay to the Chinese firm, if only a portion of it would have been given to DMCs, the city would have been cleaned more economically.

The Chinese firm will only be supervising or monitoring the cleaning process while the labour will be Pakistani, he said.

On the other hand, Shehri – Citizens for a Better Environment's Amber Alibhai said that as long as the city gets cleaned, it doesn't matter who is doing that. She asked if the DMCs had been sleeping for the last many years. She was of the view that, because of the DMCs' shoddy performance, garbage is 'till our knees' in the city. She added that the 'monopolist behaviour' of the KMC would end with the involvement of the Chinese firm. "It's not the amount of money; it is the end result that matters," she said. "Let the market forces decide."

Despite its opposition to the outsourcing of garbage collection, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) lacks its usual uniformity when it comes to this issue. The party enjoys a majority in East, Korangi, West and Central districts but only District East has given consent for the Chinese

company's involvement. Garbage collection is scheduled to kick off in District South next week. Meanwhile, Central and Korangi districts have vowed to oppose the move.

DMC Central Chairman Rehan Hashmi had told The Express Tribune that they will resist the Chinese company's operations in his district. "Only if half the amount that is being given to the Chinese company is transferred to the DMC, we will uplift [garbage collection] in the entire district," said Hashmi.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1338123/chinese-firm-collecting-garbage-8-5-times-costly-sindh-govt/>

US CITIZEN HUNTS KASHMIR MARKHOR IN CHITRAL

Dawn, 26 February 2017

CHITRAL: An American citizen hunted a Kashmir markhor in Toshi game reserve here the other day.

An official of wildlife department told Dawn that the markhor was 10 years old whose horn measured 42 inches.

He said that the members of the local conservancy committee helped the US man hunt down the markhor. He said the American took two days for spotting and choosing the animal as there were a number of trophy-sized markhors in the game reserve.

The US citizen had purchased the hunting permit from the wildlife department at 98,000 US dollars. Every year two hunting permits of Kashmir markhor are auctioned for different game sanctuaries in Chitral. The official said that out of the permit fee, 80 per cent went to the local community which was utilised on their collective welfare.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1317081>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 13TH TO FEBRUARY 19TH 2017

NO POLITICS OVER THAR COAL PROJECT: QAIM

Dawn 15 February 2017

MIRPURKHAS: Former Sindh chief minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah has said that politics should not be played over the Thar coal project because the future of Pakistan depends on it.

Speaking to the media at the residence of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) MPA Mir Haji Hayat Talpur in Digri town on Tuesday, he said PPP had put in great efforts in getting the Thar coal project materialised and executed in the best interest of the country and nation.

"It's going to be completed next year and will provide livelihood to thousands of Sindhi people, besides contributing to efforts towards overcoming the energy crisis in the country," he said. In reply to a question, Mr Shah said the role of the media was very important in ensuring the census process transparent.

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=15_02_2017_119_005

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 6TH TO FEBRUARY 12TH 2017

NINE SEIZED TURTLES, 40 HATCHLINGS RELEASED

Dawn 8 February 2017

KARACHI: Nine freshwater turtles confiscated a day earlier along with 40 hatchlings of green sea turtles from shops at Karachi's Burnes Road were released into the Haleji Lake in Thatta district on Tuesday, wildlife department officials stated.

The turtles were being illegally sold at the shops. They were identified as nine Indian flapshell turtles (*Lissemys punctata*), a freshwater species listed as Least Concern in the Red Data List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and 40 green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) classified as endangered.

All species of turtles are protected under the Sindh Turtles and Tortoises Protection, Conservation and Compensation Rules.

‘It was a routine raid. Two men have been arrested and would be fined under the law,’ said Azeem Ahmed Kachelo, the inspector heading the raiding team of the wildlife department, adding that the department had received complaints about the sale of turtles.

The Indian flapshell turtles, he said, had been released into the Haleji Lake, Thatta, whereas green turtles would be released at Sandspit beach in Karachi on Wednesday (today). Sindh wildlife conservator Saeed Akhtar Baloch said: ‘The seizure is part of efforts to check the growing illegal trade of wildlife in the province.

The department has so far broken two networks of traffickers involved in the trade of freshwater turtles and has rescued hundreds of turtles last year.

Meanwhile, the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan has appreciated efforts of the wildlife department and underlined the need for strengthening anti-poaching operations and creating public awareness in collaboration with relevant stakeholders so the community could play an active role in the fight against the illicit trade.

‘The wildlife crime industry is also demand-driven. Hence, bringing change in public behaviour through persuasion is critical.

‘Illegal wildlife trade is growing at an alarming rate at pet shops as well as through the social media, which needs to be strictly monitored,’ said Rab Nawaz, senior director programmes at the WWF-P.

Poaching, catching, trapping, netting of turtles and tortoises and using them as whole parts, products or derivatives for any purpose is prohibited under the turtles and tortoises law as well as the Sindh Protection Ordinance, 1972. The rules also ban transportation, petting, caging and export of turtles and tortoise.

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=08_02_2017_118_004

SEPA ORDERS CLOSURE OF MAJOR PRIVATE HOSPITAL

Dawn, February 10th, 2017

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) on Thursday issued a notice to a major private hospital asking its management to shut down its operation within 30 days for not observing the Hospital Waste Management Rules, 2014.

The notice was issued to the Wali Bhai Rajputana Hospital whose management has been told not to entertain new cases and ensure completing the current cycle of admission cases within the next 30 days.

Sepa Director General Naeem Ahmed Mughal along with his team visited the hospital to inspect arrangements for disposal of hospital waste. He said the action against the health facility was taken under Section 21(2)(A) of the Sindh Environmental Protection Act, 2014 after it was established that the hospital management had continuously been violating the waste management rules.

Speaking to Dawn, the DG said that several notices had been issued to the hospital management over the last one year advising it to come up with a waste management plan and a waste-water treatment system in line with the law, which it failed to do. He said the hospital's waste was burnt in a cemented pit within its backyard which was a serious violation of the relevant rules.

The Sepa DG said that unhygienic conditions prevailed in all wards and toilets of the hospital and a foul smell filled it when the Sepa team visited the health facility for an inspection. Dumping of hazardous waste in the open and smoke billowing from the pit kept the environment polluted, he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1313824/sepa-orders-closure-of-major-private-hospital>

GREEN PAKISTAN PROGRAMME LAUNCHED

Business Recorder, 10 February 2017

LAHORE: The federal governments' initiative to improve the forest cover of Pakistan through Green Pakistan Programme was formally launched on February 09, 2017, all across the country.

The Punjab Forest Department also launched the programme by planting 100,000 saplings over an area of 138 acres across 19 districts of the province. A ceremony was held at Karol Forest, Lahore, which was attended by Minister Mian Yawar Zaman, Secretary Capt. (R) Jahanzeb Khan, Additional Secretary, Forestry, Wildlife & Fisheries Department, Government of the Punjab Shahid Rashid Awan and CEO, South Punjab Forest Company(SPFC).

For Green Pakistan Programme, the federal government is bearing 50 percent cost of the project, whereas each province will contribute 50 per cent as a matching grant. Through the programme, 100 million trees will be planted across the country. The programme aims to plant indigenous tree species to conserve and promote the local flora of Punjab. The species to be planted in different ecological areas include Chir, Kail, Deodar, Fit, Partal, Spruce, Phulai, Kiker, Rubinia, Kahu, Jand, Ber, Fig, Akhrot, Toot, Neem, Frash and other species etc.

According to Mian Yawar Zaman, Minister, Forestry, Wildlife & Fisheries Department, Government of the Punjab, 'Through Green Pakistan Programme in Punjab, Rs1,285 million have been allocated, through which almost 5.5 million trees will be planted on 10,000 acres of forest land, across 13

districts in five years. Furthermore, the department will provide 22.15 million trees to the people on comparatively lower prices, which will be easily available at 244 sale points.

The initiative by Mian Shahbaz Sharif, Chief Minister Punjab, to introduce the Kissan Package, through which farmers will be facilitated in planting trees, will also contribute to the cause. The government will provide 70 per cent funds, whereas the remaining 30 per cent will be provided by farmers.'

According to Tahir Rasheed, CEO, SPFC, 'Green Pakistan Programme will be a successful initiative, as it will help to improve the forest cover of Pakistan, leading to the conservation of wildlife. Most importantly, it will help to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change in Pakistan, as the country is highly vulnerable to the phenomenon.'

South Punjab Forest Company (SPFC) and World Wide Fund for Nature – Pakistan (WWF-Pakistan) also collaborated for the event. WWF-Pakistan also helped to engage the students from Government College University (GCU), who participated by planting trees at the event. At Karol Forest, 7000 trees were planted on 10 acres of land and hoped that the initiative will eventually increase the proportion of forests in Pakistan.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/02/10/13-page/848448-news.html>

FOR WILD HOUBARAS, FRIENDS FLYING IN FROM ABU DHABI

The Express Tribune, February 10th, 2017.

LAHORE: To boost the dwindling population of wild houbara bustard in Pakistan, more than 1,000 birds bred in captivity in Abu Dhabi, UAE will be released soon in the country. The 1,050 bustards to be released are from the Pakistan-resident species bloodline and will be donated by the International Fund for Houbara Conservation.

The houbara bustard migrates from the Central Asia to Pakistan every year in the winters and returns to its breeding grounds after the wintering season. Despite a ban on its hunting, the government issues between 25 and 35 special hunting permits annually to wealthy Arab dignitaries, who like to hunt the bird both as a sport and because its meat is considered an aphrodisiac.

A statement issued on Thursday by the Houbara Foundation International Pakistan said the latest move would add to several previous bird releases in previous years. The most recent release of 600 birds and 200 birds took place in Pakistan in March 2015 and February 2016, respectively.

Since the bustards are originally from Pakistan's resident houbara population, the organisation hopes most of them will settle easily for breeding.

All local cooperation is being provided by the Houbara Foundation and Punjab Wildlife Department for receiving the birds and for their scientific release. CITES export and import permits along with necessary the no-objection certificates are being exchanged between the two establishments in Abu Dhabi and Pakistan.

"Having been under highly specialised care, the birds being brought to Pakistan have been well-prepared to manage themselves in the wild. All the birds have been individually tagged with

identification rings while selected birds are also tagged with satellite transmitters for scientists to carry out monitoring of the birds after release and record their movements, habitat preferences and the ability to breed,” the statement read.

It added that after their release, data will be generated bi-weekly in order to detect movements, habitat preferences and breeding behaviours. The birds’ locations will be communicated to the Houbara Foundation for field validation and further investigations.

The statement said the breeding programme in Abu Dhabi had bred over 206,000 houbara bustards, of which around 137,831 birds have been released into the wild. The International Fund for Houbara Conservation is now producing over 50,000 houbara every year.

According to its website, the Abu Dhabi-based International Fund’s research centres are involved with the preservation of all houbara populations ranging from Mongolia to Morocco, encompassing North African, Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries.

Established in 1995, the Houbara Foundation International Pakistan works in collaboration with reputed conservation organisations and law-enforcement authorities to curb the trend of hunting, illegal trapping and loss of habitat that all contribute to the decline in wild houbara populations in the country.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1321975/born-wild-wild-houbaras-friends-flying-abu-dhabi/>

NO PERMIT: SINDH STOPS QATARIS FROM HUNTING TILOOR

The Express Tribune, February 11th, 2017.

Z Ali / Rana Tanveer

Lahore / Hyderabad: The Qatari royals currently visiting Tharparkar district of Sindh for falconry have been denied permission to hunt Houbara bustard, a migratory bird also known as tiloor.

Shaikh Fahad Abdul Rahman al Thani reportedly arrived in Tharparkar on Feb 5. He had plans to stay in the district till Feb 28, according to a letter of the Foreign Office which was addressed to Sindh’s director general protocol and Rangers director general.

“The guests were not officially allowed to hunt. The Foreign Office had only requested for security during their visit,” District Wildlife Officer Ashfaque Memon told The Express Tribune over the phone.

According to him, wild animals are protected in Tharparkar. “The local people have great affection for these animals. They don’t like anyone killing them,” he said.

Another wildlife official said the royals pitched five to seven tents in Jat Tarai village in Diplo on Feb 5. He said 15 to 20 people were accompanying the Qatari guests, who had arrived in over half a dozen vehicles.

“They spent the whole day and night in the camps. We saw they had seven to eight falcons,” the official claimed. The wildlife official claimed that al Thani did not provide any permit. “We told them

that if you want to stay here from Feb 5 to Feb 28 you may stay. But we will not allow you to hunt,” Memon said.

The game warden, Tilook Chand Valassi, said the Qatari royals did not even submit an application to the wildlife department for assistance. However, he confirmed the provincial government did forward the Foreign Office’s letter to the wildlife department.

“It is requested to make necessary arrangements for provision of strict security [Rangers’ security] to the dignitary, as requested by the Consulate General of Qatar, Karachi,” read the letter written by the foreign ministry’s deputy chief of protocol.

The letter neither made any mention of the Tharparkar sojourn of the Qatari guests nor did it carry any request for assistance from the Wildlife Department. The warden said that during the stay of the Qatari royals the Rangers provided security to them.

Separately, Lahore High Court Chief Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah on Friday directed the Punjab Wildlife Department and the federal government to explain with records what criteria had been invoked for removing tiloor from the list of protected animals.

The CJ asked the Punjab government whether the hunting of the migratory bird had contributed to the economic development of Bhakkar and Jhang – where hunting takes place.

Appearing before the court, Advocate Sheraz Zaka referred to a recently published book – Confessions of an Economic Hit Man – which explained how developed countries and multinational corporations plundered the resources of developing countries.

He said corporations and rich people obtain licences to explore oil and gas as well as hunting permits while giving undertaking to the governments that economic development would take place in areas where licences for exploration of resources or permits for hunting are granted.

“However, it is unfortunate that no economic development is taking place in Bhakkar and Jhang, despite the fact that the Supreme Court has already issued directions that hunting permits be given only if it contributes to the economic development of those areas.”

In another petition, Advocate Kalim Ilyas said all across the world tiloor is a protected animal and it should not be excluded from the list of protected species. The CJ adjourned the hearing till March 3.

Tiloor is a rare species of migratory birds, which come from Central Asia in the winter to the arid plains of Pakistan. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has placed the bird on its ‘red list’ of threatened species. Its hunting is banned in Pakistan but the country issues special hunting permits to the dignitaries from the Middle East.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1323170/no-permit-sindh-stops-qataris-hunting-tiloor/>

Dawn, January 31st, 2017

Zahiruddin

CHITRAL: The extended heavy snowfall in the high altitudes of Chitral during last three weeks has forced the Kashmir markhor in Chitral's Gol National Park to descend on areas forming the buffer zone of the park.

The villagers of the Mughlandeh, Goldur, Balach, Singur, Shali, Awirait and Shoghor said that they had seen markhors and other species of wildlife inhabiting the national park near their villages during the last two weeks.

One Ali Madad of Shoghor said that he saw a bevy of markhors just a few hundred yards away from his snowbound village which was a unique experience for him as the wild animals lived only in the high altitude areas.

He said that they had been hearing the howling of wolves throughout the nights for the past two weeks which flocked to the human settlements in search of food when the highlands were covered with snow.

In Goldur, the village bordering the core zone of the national park, the members of conservation committee were vigilant to the situation and herded the markhors back into the park which had entered the upper part of the village in the night.

When contacted, sub-divisional forest officer of Gol Wildlife Division, Irshad Ahmed, confirmed that markhors from the core zone of the park thronged the buffer zone when the park, located at high altitude, was packed with snow.

He said that the markhor population in the core zone of the park had exceeded 2,000 and in the peripheries bordering the buffer zones their strength could be over 400.

Mr Ahmed said that the markhor with 11 years of age was treated as ageing one whose body growth stopped. He said that the number of such animals had been estimated at 100 in the park.

He said that markhor was at the verge of extinction in Chitral in early 1980s at the time of establishment of the national park, but due to better conservation strategy based on community support the population had increased significantly.

He said that the 12 villages around the national park had organised village conservation committees (VCCs).

Former chairman of Park Management Association Hussain Ahmed said that trophy hunting permits should be auctioned to control the markhor population in the park.

He said that this would also provide revenue to VCCs. He said that the markhor of 7-10 years of age was fit for trophy hunting and due to no increase in the hunting permits a number of markhors were wasted in the natural process.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1311759>

GREENER PUNJAB: 350,000 SAPLINGS TO BE PLANTED IN FAISALABAD

The Express Tribune, January 31st, 2017.

FAISALABAD: At least 350,000 saplings will be planted in schools and other educational institutions across the district during the tree plantation campaign.

A spokesperson of district education authority and review committee said on Monday that a comprehensive strategy had been chalked out to achieve the tree plantation target in educational institutions of Faisalabad.

He said that green teams were being constituted at school level which would be responsible for achieving the target. The school heads have also been directed to make arrangements for achieving the tree plantation target as early as possible, he added.

In a bid to mitigate the impact of climate change and global warming, the government is planning to plant millions of saplings as part of an upcoming national tree plantation drive scheduled to commence early next month. The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council had approved funding for the project.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1311878/greener-punjab-350000-saplings-planted-faisalabad/>

WHAT TRUMP CAN AND CAN'T DO TO DISMANTLE OBAMA'S CLIMATE RULES

Coral Davenport

International New York Times, 3 February 2017

WASHINGTON — President Trump campaigned on sweeping promises to eliminate former President Barack Obama's major environmental regulations and "get rid of" the Environmental Protection Agency. On Tuesday, Mr. Trump offered a down payment on those promises, with memorandums clearing the path to construction of the Keystone XL and Dakota Access oil pipelines. He is expected to roll back a few more rules, including some on coal production, in the next few weeks.

Although dismantling Mr. Obama's most far-reaching climate regulations can be done, it will take legal acumen and a lot of time – perhaps longer than a single presidential term. Here's a look at what Mr. Trump can and can't do, and how quickly, to roll back environmental regulations.

A year ago, Mr. Obama incited the coal industry's rage with a stroke-of-the-pen executive action banning new leasing of coal mines on public lands. Mr. Trump has the same authority to undo the ban.

"That was Obama hitting the pause button, and Trump can unpause it," said Richard J. Lazarus, a professor of environmental law at Harvard University. "Anything that was done without a lot of process up front can be undone without much process."

However, it's not clear how much impact this move would have on jobs or the environment. It affects only mines in Wyoming and Montana, where coal companies had for years shed jobs because of increased automation and declining coal demand.

"This one is low-hanging fruit," said Mr. Lazarus of a new coal mining regulation. On Jan. 19, the day before Mr. Trump took office, the Obama administration completed a rule to reduce mountaintop-removal coal mining, which uses explosives to blast off the tops of coal-seamed mountains. Coal companies oppose the rule, which prohibits them from using the technique near streams that could be polluted by the resulting rubble.

The rule will probably be undone quickly. Under the 1996 Congressional Review Act, Congress can scrap new regulations within 60 legislative days of being completed, by a simple 51-vote majority in the Senate. While the law has been used successfully only once in its 20-year history, it is expected to enjoy a newfound prominence soon. The Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell of coal-rich Kentucky, has already vowed to use the act to undo what he calls "this regulatory assault on coal country." With the support of all 52 Republicans and probably Senator Joe Manchin III, a West Virginia Democrat, as well, the rollback of this rule is expected to be on Mr. Trump's desk within weeks.

In November, the Interior Department completed a rule reining in the venting of methane, a potent planet-warming greenhouse gas, from oil and gas drilling facilities. Oil and gas companies called the rule expensive and burdensome. Like the mountaintop-mining rule, this one falls into the 60-day window allowing Congress to quickly overturn it with a 51-vote majority. It is expected that the fossil fuel industry's allies in the Senate will quickly push to do so.

While it can't be done quickly, there is a clear legal path for the Trump administration to undo one of the hallmarks of Mr. Obama's climate change policies: a 2011 regulation requiring automakers to build fleets of cars by 2025 that achieve an average fuel economy of 54.5 miles per gallon. The rule, jointly issued by the E.P.A. and the Transportation Department, would force manufacturers to build next-generation electric cars. It could reduce carbon emissions by about six billion tons, equivalent to removing a little more than the United States' emissions of carbon pollution for an entire year.

But the rule came with a loophole: a provision inserted by automakers to revisit it in 2017 if they found it too onerous. Just before Mr. Obama left office, the E.P.A. released a finding that the rule was not too costly for automakers to meet. But it did not do so jointly with the Transportation Department, leaving a legal avenue for the Trump administration to loosen the standards through that agency.

The chief executives of the biggest auto companies have already asked Mr. Trump to do just that, in a meeting with him this week. While Mr. Trump did not offer specifics, he did tell the automakers that he plans to ease their regulatory burden.

"It's not something that can be done with the stroke of a pen," said Jeffrey Holmstead, a former senior E.P.A. official in President George W. Bush's administration who has been mentioned as a possible deputy E.P.A. administrator in Mr. Trump's presidency. "It would likely take a year or 18 months. But it's not a heavy lift, from a legal perspective."

The centerpiece of Mr. Obama's climate change policy is a 2015 E.P.A. rule curbing greenhouse gas emissions from electric utilities. It could shutter and replace hundreds of coal plants with wind and

solar plants. Mr. Trump has vowed to eliminate the rule, but doing so could require years of court battles. He would also be required by law to come up with an alternate regulation.

Mr. Obama's climate rule has already been challenged in a federal court, where it is awaiting a verdict. It is expected to be appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Trump administration could refuse to defend the Obama rule in court, but environmental groups could continue to argue in its favor. Meanwhile, the Trump E.P.A. would have to create its own presumably more industry-friendly regulation, which could take about 18 months. But that rule would then assuredly be subject to a federal lawsuit, which itself would probably be appealed to the Supreme Court. In one possible but bizarre outcome, both the Obama climate rule and the Trump climate rule could spend years wending their way through the same courts.

"There are a number of ways this could play out as it goes through the courts, and it could take at least four to five years," said Richard Revesz, a professor of environmental law at New York University and director of the American Law Institute. "Ultimately, what happens to it will likely be determined by the results of the 2020 presidential election."

This obscure but powerful metric was created by Mr. Obama's economists to put a measurable price, \$36 per ton, on damage inflicted by carbon pollution. Mr. Obama's E.P.A. plugged the social cost of carbon into formulas to create an economic justification for regulations that impose a measurable cost on polluters. By reducing or eliminating this metric, Mr. Trump's regulators could create an economic rationale to undo those rules and replace them with relaxed, industry-friendly ones.

One of Mr. Obama's orders gave the federal government broad authority to limit pollution in major water bodies, like the Mississippi. Credit William Widmer for The New York Times

Mr. Obama received angry resistance from rural America over his controversial "Waters of the United States" regulation. It was released in 2015 under the authority of the 1972 Clean Water Act, which gave the federal government broad latitude to limit pollution in major water bodies, like the Chesapeake Bay, the Mississippi River and Puget Sound, as well as small streams and wetlands that drain into those larger waters. But groups like the American Farm Bureau Federation called the rule a land grab, and Mr. Trump has vowed to get rid of it.

Mr. Trump's E.P.A. could revoke the rule. But it would be required to create a new one, venturing into complex legal territory as it tries to redefine the terms of federal waterways and wetlands. "That's not going to be easy," Mr. Holmstead said. "I believe they can do it, but it's likely to take several years."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/26/us/politics/donald-trump-climate-epa.html>

March 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 27TH TO APRIL 2 ND 2017

NO POLLUTION SURVEY IN RAWALPINDI FOR TWO YEARS

Dawn, March 27th, 2017

Aamir Yasin

RAWALPINDI: For the last over two years, the Punjab Environment Protection Agency (EPA) did not carry out a survey of the Rawalpindi city and cantonment areas for air, water and noise pollution as it remained busy in running the anti-dengue campaigns.

EPA officials here linked the survey with the establishment of the environmental analytical laboratory in the district.

Without any survey, the environment watchdog will not be able to suggest measures for checking the noise and air pollution. The last survey of noise and air pollution in the city was conducted in 2014 when an environment impact assessment report was being prepared for the metro bus project.

Work on the environmental analytical laboratory started in 2010 but it is yet to be completed. Under the law, EPA has to collect water samples from different sources to check its pollution level.

In the 2014 survey, the noise and air pollution was checked at Raja Bazaar, Committee Chowk (Murree Road) and Pirwadhai. The noise and air pollution level was found to be above the national standard.

At Raja Bazaar, the noise level was 75 decibel (db), Committee Chowk (Murree Road) 85 db and Pirwadhai 90 db. The national standard for the noise level is 45-55 db for residential areas, 55-65 db for commercial areas and 65-75 db for industrial areas.

After conducting the survey, EPA recommended to the provincial government to establish greenbelts and plant trees in these areas as soon as possible.

In its report, the department had said the residents of the areas were in danger of facing hypertension, mood swings and other ailments. "The local administration had been directed to establish parks, plant trees and establish greenbelts," the report said.

The movement of heavy vehicles is very high at Pirwadhai area but the Parks and Horticulture Authority and the forest department never took any initiative to plant trees in these areas.

A senior official of the environment department told Dawn that the government was yet to increase the staff of the department in Rawalpindi which was not more than 10 officials. Even these officials are kept busy in the dengue surveillance campaigns.

"We spared the months of January and February during which we had to compile reports on the assignments given to us by the Lahore office," he said.

When contacted, EPA Rawalpindi deputy director Shahid Hasan said the survey for the noise, air and water pollution would be carried out in the city areas soon after the completion of the environmental analytical laboratory.

He said the provincial government had started work on the establishment of the laboratories in major cities and the recruitment of staff was also underway.

He said after the establishment of the laboratories in different cities, EPA would monitor the pollution level in air, surface water and ground water and carry out studies of critical environmental concerns and then take measures for their rectification.

He expressed the hope that by the next month the recruitment of staff would be completed after which the laboratory would become functional.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1323086>

WASTEWATER'S RECYCLING TO EASE GLOBAL WATER SHORTAGES: UN Business Recorder, 27 March 2017

Paris: Recycling the world's wastewater, almost all of which goes untreated, would ease global water shortages while protecting the environment, the United Nations said in a major report on Wednesday.

"Neglecting the opportunities arising from improved wastewater management is nothing less than unthinkable," said Irina Bokova, director-general of UNESCO, one of several UN bodies behind the report issued on World Water Day.

For decades, people have been using fresh water faster than Nature can replace it, contributing in some regions to hunger, disease, conflict and migration.

Two-thirds of humanity currently live in zones that experience water scarcity at least one month a year. Half of those people are in China and India.

Last year, the World Economic Forum's annual survey of opinion leaders identified water crises as the top global risk over the next decade. On current trends, the UN Environment Programme forecasts that water demand — for industry, energy and an extra billion people — will increase 50 percent by 2030.

Global warming has already deepened droughts in many areas, and the planet will continue to heat up over the course of the century, even under optimistic scenarios. "There is an absolute necessity to increase water security in order to overcome the challenges brought on by climate change and human influence," said Benedito Braga, head of the World Water Council, an umbrella grouping of governments, associations and research bodies.

Wastewater — runoff from agriculture, industry and expanding cities, especially in developing nations — is a major part of the problem.

That is especially true in poor countries where very little, if any, wastewater is treated or recycled.

High-income nations treat about 70 percent of the wastewater they generate, a figure that drops to 38 percent for upper middle-income countries. In low-income nations, only eight percent of industrial and municipal wastewater undergoes treatment of any kind.

More than 800,000 people die every year because of contaminated drinking water, and not being able to properly wash their hands.

Water-related diseases claim nearly 3.5 million lives annually in Africa, Asia and Latin America — more than the global death toll from AIDS and car crashes combined.

Chemicals and nutrients from factories and farms create deadzones in rivers, lakes and coastal waters, and seep into aquifers. The 200-page World Water Development Report details a four-pronged strategy for transforming wastewater from a problem to a solution, said lead author Richard Connor of UNESCO's World Water Assessment Programme.

Besides reducing pollution at the source, policy initiatives must shift focus to removing contaminants from wastewater flows, reusing water, and recovering useful by-products, the report concludes.

“Up to now, decision makers have mainly focused on supplying clean water rather than managing it after it has been used,” Connor told journalists.

“The two aspects are inextricably linked.”

Water can be used over and over, he added, pointing to the fact that water from several major rivers in the United States is recycled up to 20 times before reaching the ocean.

The potential for reusing liquid waste is perhaps best illustrated by astronauts on the International Space Station who drink recycled urine and use it to wash up.

On a larger scale, there are many nations where necessity has spawned innovative technologies.

In Singapore and the southern California coastal city of San Diego, residents already drink recycled water.

In Jordan and Israel, 90 percent and 50 percent of agricultural water, respectively, has been recovered for reuse, according to the report.

Besides being recycled, wastewater “can also be a rich source of nutrients, minerals and energy — all of which can be cost-effectively extracted,” said Guy Ryder, chair of UN-Water, and head of the International Labour Organization. These are the same elements, he added, that cause terrible damage when untreated wastewater is released into the environment.

Harvesting phosphorus, for example, from urine — supplied by urine-diverting toilets — reduces wastewater's nutrient load. Already in use in Australia, China and Japan, these systems can be easily scaled up.

More than a fifth of global phosphorus demand worldwide could be met by recycled human urine and feces, according to a recent study.

Waste can also be converted into fuel. A 2015 law in Japan requires sewage operators to use biosolids as a carbon-neutral form of energy.

The city of Osaka produces 6,500 tonnes of fuel per year from 43,000 tonnes of wet sewage sludge for electricity generation.—AFP

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/03/27/16-page/860911-news.html>

THAR COAL: CENTRE WANTS CUT IN EXPENSIVE TARIFF, SINDH OPPOSES

Dawn, March 29th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The federal and Sindh governments seemed working on contradictory policy directions on electricity tariffs for future power projects based on Thar coal.

This became public when the Sindh government on Tuesday demanded continuation of existing expensive tariff for Thar coal-based power projects and the federal government demanded 15-20 per cent cut in existing rates that were offered to 'early bird' investors to open up Thar coal deposit.

At a public hearing presided over by National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) Chairman Tariq Sadozai, independent experts on the other hand suggested that future rates for Thar coal-based power plants should be in line with competitive market rates for other sources and the practice of preferential treatment to any specific fuel should be brought to an end for a fair market environment.

The hearing was attended by an unusually large number of participants as the regulator sought views for international competitive based tariff for Thar coal investments instead of old incentivised cost plus tariff structure that expired a few months ago. The Nepra panel also comprised all the four provincial members.

Former member Planning Commission Syed Akhtar Ali said the 20pc return on investments for early investors was too high and ended up somewhere around 30pc when calculated also for tax exemptions and sovereign guarantees for debt arrangement. His argument was that other fuels on average were given 15pc internal rate of return and 1pc incentive should have been enough for Thar coal-based plants.

He said it was also misstatement that Thar coal was an unknown territory because plants were already operating across the border on the same structure. Also advised that interest rate of Kibor plus 3pc was very high which should be allowed on the basis of some professional study to have a long-term view.

A representative of the Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB) told the hearing that the highly incentivised tariff for Thar power plants had already expired that offered guaranteed return on equity which should now be rationalised. He said it was a misdemeanour that investment would move out if return on equity was replaced with competitive bidding based tariff.

A note sent by the Ministry of Water and Power was read out at the hearing which advocated reducing levelised tariff for Thar coal-based power plants by up to 20pc. Nepra, noted with concern that the ministry had not deputed a representative to the hearing to take note of what was happening in the market and comments coming from all sides even though the ministry was one of the most important stakeholders.

The regulator has started suo motu proceedings for the development of new tariff for Thar coal-based power projects through reverse competitive bidding (lowest tariff) as the previous tariff expired on Jan 19, 2017 after completing its two year-term. The old upfront tariff ranged between 8.5 cents to 9.5 cents per unit for various capacities and funding sources.

The power ministry said the highly incentivised tariff for Thar coal-based plants was offered, and notified on Jan 20, 2015, due to lack of investor interest in the power sector at that time due to security reasons, uncertainties over infrastructure connectivity with Thar coal and expensive interest rates.

The situation has changed now, the ministry claimed, saying the policy objective has been achieved through higher investor interest in Thar particularly triggered also by CPEC investment. It said three Thar blocks of coal were now on the CPEC having a total capacity of up to 9,000 megawatts while the previous rate was applicable to 3,600MW of plants in different stages of implementation.

The ministry said the construction and engineering cost had dropped by 10-15pc over the past couple of years while interest rate had come down from 9.5pc to 5.75pc and the project completion time could be secured in 30-36 months against 48 months. It argued that investment now should be attracted in super-critical technology.

Shamsuddin Shaikh, the chief executive officer of Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company that is currently in the process of coal mining and setting up of power plant said the previous tariff was applicable to a total of 10 power plants currently in different stages of implementation and demanded that the same tariff should be allowed for another four plants for the coal mine expansion.

He said even if the tariff was changed its notification should not be delayed beyond June 2017. He argued that the benefit of lower tariff should be weighed against non-expansion of coal mines and opined that even if the tariff appeared on the higher side its overall benefits would be greater.

A representative of Oracle Power working on another block of Thar coal said it would be unfair to offer 20pc internal rate of return for block-2 of Sindh Engro Coal and reduce it for others.

Representatives of the Sindh Investment Board argued that energy shortage is an extraordinary situation requiring extraordinary steps to encourage fresh investments in Thar to bridge this gap. The crux of the argument was ‘don’t disturb the existing arrangements until power production starts from Thar’.

The Sindh government also sought extension in previous tariff for a few months because investors were upbeat in setting up of power plants.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1323426/thar-coal-centre-wants-cut-in-expensive-tariff-sindh-opposes>

MINISTER FACES CRIMINAL CHARGES FOR HUNTING MARKHOR

Dawn, March 30th, 2017

Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: Levies Force officials say they have filed a case against Balochistan Home Minister Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti for allegedly hunting a markhor, an endangered wild goat species, while the minister claims no knowledge of a case registered against him.

Sources said that the case had been filed with the Takatu Levies Station in Quetta.

A few weeks ago, a picture of Mr Bugti holding his gun and sitting next to a markhor hunted in the Takatu range of Quetta, made the rounds on social media.

The Balochistan High Court took notice of the picture and directed the wildlife department to either fine Mr Bugti or lodge a case against him under the law.

Markhor is a protected species under the law and the wildlife department collects between \$80,000 and \$100,000 for every markhor killed.

Mr Bugti denied breaking any law in this regard and said that he had not received a notice so far. “I have not [been] served a notice for hunting the markhor,” he said. “I would respond to all queries in a court of law, if served with a notice.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1323698>

CHINESE FIRM ASKED NOT TO SET UP COAL-FIRED POWER PLANT

Dawn, March 31st, 2017

Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: Former speaker of the Balochistan Assembly Mohammad Aslam Bhootani, in response to a statement of Chairman of the China Power International Company Wang Binghua about plans to set up a coal-based power plant at Gadani, has urged the company to instead set up wind-and-solar-based power plants in Gadani in view of environmental hazards.

The plant was being established in collaboration with Hubco for development and not for profit, he said. China’s role in the development of Pakistan through sustainable projects and the inflow of resources and investment through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was an undeniable fact, he added.

The former speaker said that every business’s objective was to gain profit, and if for charity then there were numerous means other than installation of an environmentally-hazardous coal power plant.

On Mr Wang’s claim that the plant would benefit four million families, he asked the Chinese official to apprise as to what would be the mortality ratio in Gadani, Hub and neighbouring Karachi city on account of dangerous gases the plant would emit.

Mr Bhootani said: “It is a tragedy with less developed countries around the world that multinational companies bring in environmentally unsustainable projects for monetary gains and exploit people in the name of development”.

He appealed to sober elements of civil society to raise their voice against exploitation from the hazards of ill-conceived projects.

He further advised Mr Wang to honour the friendship by reversing the project to wind or solar energy.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1323901>

COAL ADDICTION SPREADS AS CHINESE WORKERS DIG IN THAR

Dawn, April 2nd, 2017

Faseeh Mangi

In the dusty scrub of the Thar desert, Pakistan has begun to dig up one of the world's largest deposits of low-grade, brown, dirty coal to fuel new power stations that could revolutionise the country's economy.

The project is one of the most expensive among an array of ambitious energy developments that China is helping the country to build as part of a \$55 billion economic partnership. A \$3.5bn joint venture between the neighbours will extract coal to generate 1.3 gigawatts of electricity that will be sent across the country on a new \$3bn transmission network.

"When I came it was a mess. There was nothing here," said Dileep Kumar, one of the first mining engineers at lead contractor Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company, standing atop the mile-wide hole in the earth, busy with yellow trucks and diggers on the floor below. "Now look at it. This wasn't possible without the Chinese."

The country has natural gas reserves, four nuclear-power stations and the world's largest dam. Some 700 kilometres north of the Thar mine, another Chinese company is helping build a solar farm eight times the size of New York's Central Park. Yet power outages remain a way of life with blackouts of 12 hours or more even in Karachi and Islamabad. By one estimate, the shortage of electricity is wiping two percentage points off economic growth every year.

Thirst for energy is taking Pakistan in the opposite direction of western countries that are trying to reduce coal power, or use cleaner-burning fuel and technologies. Germany, which still relies on coal-fired stations for two-fifths of its electricity, has promised to switch half of them off by 2030.

Pakistan by contrast relies on coal for just 0.1 per cent of its power, according to the Pakistan Business Council. The Thar projects and others could see that jump to 24pc by 2020, according to Tahir Abbas, analyst at Karachi-based brokerage Arif Habib Ltd.

Pakistan's coal reserves would give the nation a cheap domestic alternative to expensive oil and gas imports. The nation spends about \$8bn a year on imported petroleum and is one of the region's biggest buyers of liquefied natural gas.

In an effort to curb the import bill and meet demand for power, Pakistan plans to dig up some of the world's biggest known deposits of lignite, a lower-grade brown coal. But first, it must clear 160 meters of sand to get to the coal.

On a flat, arid plain, separated from a hot cerulean sky by a thin line of spindly scrub, yellow-edged containers sit neatly around paved quadrangles. In the centre of each, a lumpy circle of green turf, irrigated by a hosepipe, provides some respite from the dust and heat.

The Spartan accommodation houses about 350 Chinese workers on six-month stints, working 6am to 6pm with a three-hour break during the hottest part of the day, when summer temperatures can reach 42 degrees Celsius.

Nearby, similar compounds house the Pakistani engineers and workers, mostly from Karachi. The two groups keep separate schedules and take separate meals, with the cook turning meat into biryani and curries for one side and dumplings for the other.

A kilometre from the living compounds, a massive square terraced hole is being carved out of the dust. Yellow Chinese dump trucks made by Shaanxi Tonly Heavy Industries Company line up at the bottom to be filled with dirt by hydraulic excavators.

Many of the drivers of the fleet of 125 trucks are locals, Hindus and Muslims. In every cab and cabin are bottles of Nestle mineral water, a precious resource. For everything else – washing of ore, damping of coal dust, bathing – the company extracts groundwater.

Engro will reach the coal by the end of 2018, six months earlier than scheduled, CEO Shamsuddin Ahmad Shaikh said in an interview. After decades of delays, the injection of Chinese capital and resources has made investors and companies believe the project will finally happen.

“All the big industrial groups in Pakistan have already asked us to give them coal” for future power plants, said Mr Shaikh.

And this is only the start. Engro has already begun digging a second pit and another Chinese joint venture, Sino-Sindh Resource, and Shanghai Electric Group Company plan to start on a similar coal power project nearby in June. Oracle Coalfields plans coal production and electricity at another block by 2019.

In all, the Thar region could produce enough coal to generate 15 gigawatts within 10 years, the Ministry of Water and Power secretary said in a phone interview. That’s the equivalent of all the domestic and industrial solar power installed throughout the United States last year.

“Coal is about economies of scale,” the secretary said, who estimates the cost will fall until coal is Pakistan’s cheapest option in the energy chain.

For the Chinese, the projects in Thar have the potential for healthy profits and contracts for its companies and workers at a time when China itself is trying to reduce dependence on coal. It also bolsters China’s partnership with a country that offers a strategic trade link to the Arabian Sea and the Middle East, bypassing India.

Return on equity at the Engro mine is around 30pc, Mr Abbas said. “That is very lucrative.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1324254>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 20TH TO MARCH 26TH 2017

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Dawn, Economic & Business, March 20th, 2017

Murtaza Talpur

One of the major causes of poverty in the country is environmental degradation. It reduces natural resources such as air, water, and soil; destroys ecosystems and habitat; leads to deforestation and wildlife extinction and increases pollution.

The livelihood of many poor people is associated with ecosystems. If it continues to deplete where then will those people go?

The depleting of natural resources has no doubt resulted in unprecedented rains, cyclones, flooding, earthquakes, drought and other such climatic

changes that hamper the country's economic progress. This pattern has been observed since the last two to three decades.

Extreme weather conditions such as floods and heavy rains were witnessed in 1992, 2003, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2015. Besides the 1999 cyclone, the 2005 earthquake, and an ongoing drought-like situation in Thar has not only significantly affected socio-economic conditions but also damaged infrastructure at a large scale.

The effect of environmental degradation on the economy is assuming critical proportions while the government's response does not measure up to the enormous challenge.

Hence our farm economy is encountering huge losses.

Forested areas are declining, wetlands are being polluted due to waste water disposal, grasslands and pastures are reducing and agricultural lands are decaying due to increased water-logging; while birds and plants face extinction. The fish stock in the wetlands is also depleting while communities that used to depend on fishing are migrating to semi-urban settlements.

Land degradation, erosion and super-flooding mostly hurt the poor and marginalised communities.

According to the joint findings of the World Bank's 2015 study, in collaboration with a local authority, there has been a 3-4pc loss on the federal budget due to floods and heavy rains.

The annual economic impact of flooding is estimated between \$1.2bn and \$1.8bn— between 0.5pc and 0.8pc of national GDP.

According to the Global Climate Risk Index (2017) by German Watch, Pakistan is at number 7 on the global climate risk list. Risks globally have been analysed between 1996 and 2015. Furthermore, the report says that Pakistan has faced 133 natural disasters, with 0.647pc loss in GDP — a total loss of \$3,823.17m.

Awareness at the grassroots level needs to be provided to help people understand the importance of environmental degradation while being simultaneously empowered to tackle the problem.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1321629/environmental-degradation>

BALUCHISTAN GEARS UP FOR 1,320MW COAL-FIRED PLANT

The Express Tribune, March 21st, 2017.

Mohammad Zafar

Quetta: Senior officials from the government, along with Chinese officials, will perform the ground-breaking ceremony of 1,320MW coal-fired power plant, in Hub town of Lasbela district, Baluchistan, on Tuesday.

The project, which was set up by Hub Power Company (HUBCO) and China Power International Holding Ltd (CPIH), is being constructed by China Power Hub Generation Company (CPHGC).

One of the largest coal-based power projects being constructed under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, it will be built at an estimated cost of \$2 billion. The project is expected to contribute 9 billion kWh of electricity annually to the national grid supporting about 4 million Pakistani household in yearly power consumption.

Expensive power generation is one of the biggest issues facing Pakistan's power sector, however, cheap electricity production through coal will help reduce the power sector deficit and ultimately bring down circular debt.

Currently, CPIH has 74% share while, HUBCO has 26% share in CPHGC. The project would consume an estimated 3.8 million tons of coal per annum. A dedicated jetty terminal would also be constructed alongside the power plants to import coal directly to the plant from the sea. China Development Bank (CDB) is leading the bank consortium that is providing funding for this project.

The boiler units being used for this project are state-of-the-art super critical technology-based. This super critical technology is widely used in most of the developing countries to improve the coal efficiency, to lower the cost of fuel and to cut down the emissions.

In addition to that, Electro Static Precipitators (ESPs) are installed to control particulate matter emissions in this project. Low NO_x (Nitrogen Oxides) burners for burning of pulverised coal are specially designed to reduce NO_x (Nitrogen Oxides) emission in comparison with other burners.

CPHGC is employing all these technologies and will spend around 10% of project cost on these pollution control technologies. A detailed Environment and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) has been carried out at site. The site will follow all NEQS (National Environment Quality Standards) and IFC (International Finance Corporation) standards.

CPHGC CEO Zhao Yonggang said that the 1,320 MW coal-fired power project is the largest power project being constructed in Baluchistan province under CPEC and it will bring immense socio-economic benefits for the country, specifically for Baluchistan.

The province will receive a tremendous boost during the construction and the operation period of the project, which will last during the project lifetime. The project construction will provide opportunities through induction of skilled, semi-skilled and un-skilled workforce by Project Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contractors through sub-contractors during the construction period.

In addition, other economic activities around the project site are also likely to witness a major increase.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1360947/balochistan-gears-1320mw-coal-fired-plant/>

KWSB COMES UNDER FIRE OVER HALEJI LAKE PROJECT

Dawn, March 23rd, 2017

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: A Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) project aimed at reducing the city's water shortfall by utilising the 'highly polluted' water of Haleji Lake drew criticism from stakeholders at a public hearing on Wednesday.

The public hearing was held at a hotel to discuss the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report of the Rs6bn project titled 'Additional 65 million gallons a day Water Supply Scheme from Haleji Lake to Pipri, Karachi'.

The project, however, lacks provision for a treatment/filtration system and the strategy to address the challenges posed by seepage from an effluent-carrying channel, the Right Bank Outfall Drain (RBOD), which runs along the highly polluted Haleji Lake, a freshwater body in Thatta district.

The KWSB project, which doesn't have any provision for a system to treat the waste water it will generate, was described as 'half-baked' by an official of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) present at the public hearing.

The EIA report of the KWSB project was prepared by the Environmental Management Consultants (EMC), Pakistan, Private Limited.

While appreciating the fact that the project will enhance the supply to the water-starved city and help rehabilitate the polluted lake, which comes under the jurisdiction of three different departments of the government (KWSB, wildlife, and irrigation departments), stakeholders at the public hearing questioned KWSB's wisdom of not making treatment mechanism part of the Rs6bn project. The three government departments, they said, equally share the blame for the lake's destruction.

Strangely enough, no comprehensive data about the present quality of the Haleji Lake was shared at the programme. The KWSB attracted strong criticism at the hearing often with reference to a recent report of a judicial commission that had highlighted serious gaps in operation of KWSB and Sepa.

Inclusion of a separate treatment system, it was said, was also necessary given the fact that the KWSB presently had no capacity either to properly chlorinate water or treat waste water as was found by the judicial commission.

"Highly contaminated water from the Haleji Lake will pollute supplies coming from other sources," said a participant in the proceedings.

The EMC representatives appeared to have lacked confidence on their water quality data that they had acquired while preparing the EIA report of the Haleji Lake project, as they preferred not to share its details with the audience.

One major concern about the project pertained to seepage from the RBOD that ran in close proximity to the freshwater lake — a Ramsar site that used to be called a birds' paradise — and it was said that the drain posed serious threat to the proposed project.

“Studies have shown that the RBOD and the Left Bank Outfall Drain have played havoc with the province and have turned all its wetlands into wastelands. No environmental impact assessments of these drains have ever been done,” said Saquib Ejaz Hussain, an environmental consultant, while calling for an independent monitoring of the proposed KWSB project.

According to him, the project shouldn't be initiated unless the irrigation department, responsible for releasing water into the Haleji Lake and looking after the RBOD, was taken on board and a solution to the drain seepage was found.

Members of the audience also questioned the need of the project and said that instead of taking up a new project, the KWSB should have spent money to plug water leakage and theft. Responding to the concerns expressed at the hearing, KWSB project director Sikandar Ali Zardari claimed that the project would revive the lake's glory and benefit Karachiites facing water shortage.

“Cleaning of the lake has been initiated and the level of total dissolved solids (TDS) has reduced from 1,800 to 800. The lake is being continuously washed and its water quality will improve,” he said.

The project director added that the existing infrastructure for filtering/treatment would be utilised for the water to be received from Haleji Lake.

The KWSB installations would be upgraded and strengthened to supply clean drinking water to the city, he said in reply to a question.

Syed Nadeem Arif of the EMC said that it was just a pipeline laying project and the EIA report only addressed the issues related to it.

Public hearing is a legal requirement under Sepa regulations.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322197>

CALL FOR END TO DUMPING INDUSTRIAL, DOMESTIC EFFLUENT, SOLID WASTE IN FRESHWATER BODIES

Dawn, March 23rd, 2017

Hyderabad: Speakers at various programmes held to mark the World Water Day in a number of Sindh towns on Wednesday called for an end to unabated practice of dumping industrial and municipal wastewater and solid waste into freshwater bodies.

Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) organised a programme in collaboration with the department of chemical engineering, Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, in Jamshoro where the speakers highlighted the importance of water and emphasised the need for its conservation.

They said that unabated discharge of industrial runoff, municipal wastewater and solid waste, sewage of high-rise buildings and development projects in urban and rural areas into freshwater bodies was contaminating water, which had affected aquatic biodiversity as well as human health.

At a seminar on World Water Day organised by Sindh Agriculture University (SAU), Tandojam, in collaboration with the Research and Development Foundation (RDF), researchers, educationists, agriculturists and growers stressed the need for high-efficiency irrigation system to ensure food security and sustainable agriculture.

They urged the government to avoid discharging industrial, municipal and agricultural waste into canals as it impacted soil and caused diseases among humans as well as livestock in tail-end areas.

Sindh Abadgar Board's (SAB) Dr Zulfiqar Yousfani said that acute shortage of water was to be experienced in April in the province. It would lead to uncertainty in farm sector and create problems for the community in getting drinking water, he said.

He said that all water accords were flawed as they had failed to resolve issues at the provincial and federal levels. For example, he said, the 1991 accord did not mention how groundwater was to be used.

SAB's vice president Mahmood Nawaz Shah said that 90 per cent of the population in rural areas and 44pc of urban population lacked access to safe drinking water. Surface and underground water sources were depleting fast and Pakistan might face more challenges in future, he warned.

SAU Vice Chancellor Prof Mujeebuddin Memon Sehrai urged academia to conduct research and transfer technology, while end users should adopt sustainable agriculture practices and efficient use of water to protect natural resources.

John Ryan, county director of Trocaire, said that his organisation was contributing to efforts to improve livelihoods of rural communities in Sindh with the help of local partner organisations.

MIRPURKHAS: Office-bearers and workers of Al Khidmat Foundation and Arts Council participated in a walk organised to observe the World Water Day.

Dr Khalidur Rehman who led the walk said that hepatitis and liver diseases were on the rise due to lack of clean drinking water as people were compelled to drink highly contaminated water.

He lamented that constant flow of sewage into Jarwari Minor, which was the main source of drinking water for the city, had made it highly contaminated.

He advised people to get drinking water from filtration plants.

Mithi: Speakers at a workshop held by Sukaar Foundation in Leeryar Bheel village to mark the World Water Day urged the government to put in place a mechanism for storing rainwater in the desert region.

They urged the government to focus on a water security plan to overcome water crisis in the rain dependent arid zone.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322188/call-for-end-to-dumping-industrial-domestic-effluent-solid-waste-in-freshwater-bodies>

GRAVES AND GARBAGE AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE

Oonib Azam

KARACHI: To Muhammad Nadeem's surprise, his wife's grave at the Azeempura Graveyard was littered with garbage and polythene bags. "This is nonsense," he yelled at the caretaker of the graveyard, questioning how such a huge heap of garbage could accumulate in the graveyard.

All the garbage of Shah Faisal Town, District Korangi, has been dumped in the Malir River, adjacent to which the Azeempura Graveyard is situated. A part of the boundary wall has collapsed, due to which all the garbage that is dumped inside the river washes up in the graveyard. Once a week, according to one of the caretakers, someone sets the garbage on fire, due to which the graves also get affected.

When The Express Tribune visited the graveyard on Tuesday it reeked of pungent garbage and wisps of smoke were visible near the Malir River. Someone had recently burnt garbage and only the charred remains of scores of graves and the dilapidated boundary wall were visible.

As crows fly low over the heads of visibly irked visitors, Nadeem cleans his wife's grave with his own hands. "I visit the graveyard twice a week," he said, adding that ever since the boundary wall has been collapsed, garbage has started accumulating inside the graveyard. "How could we leave our deceased inside this garbage?" he asked.

Covering her nose with her scarf, Alia recites verses of the Holy Quran at her mother's grave. "It has been three months since my mother's death and now I regret burying her in this graveyard," she said. Several times, Alia herself has given money to the caretakers of the graveyard to clean the graveyard. "The government simply does not pay any heed," she said angrily, adding that the authorities deliberately burn garbage so that fire engulfs the graves as well and they get new spaces for burials.

Citizens who have buried their loved ones in the graveyard are outraged at the situation. PHOTO: ATHAR KHAN/EXPRESS

The small Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) office situated at the entrance of the graveyard was padlocked. A caretaker of the graveyard told The Express Tribune that ever since the KMC banned burial in six graveyards of the city, one of which was the Azeempura graveyard, the office has remained closed.

Deputy Director of KMC's Graveyard Department Sarwar Alam was unaware of the situation. He said they have written to the authorities to take action regarding the collapsed boundary wall and

garbage, but nothing has been done. Alam said they do not have enough funds to deploy security guards at the graveyards.

According to a truck driver who brings garbage to dump in the river, around 12 to 15 trucks from Shah Faisal Town throw garbage in the river every day. "We never throw it inside the graveyard," he clarified, adding that they are unaware of how the garbage accumulates at the graveyard.

Trash talk: SHC seeks details of funds set aside for garbage collection

Chairman of District Municipal Corporation Korangi Nayyar Raza said that the district generates around 1,500 tons of garbage on a daily basis, part of which is dumped near the Malir River from where they have outsourced a contractor who moves that garbage to the landfill site in Jam Chakro. For the garbage inside the graveyard, he said it could be old and assured that he would look into the matter and not let anyone desecrate the graves.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1361907/graves-garbage-far-eye-can-see/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 13TH TO MARCH 19TH 2017
THAR-COAL PROJECTS: NEPRA DECIDES TO RE-DETERMINE TARIFF
Mushtaq Ghumman

ISLAMABAD: National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) has decided to re-determine tariff for upcoming Thar-coal power projects as the duration for upfront tariff has expired.

"Upfront tariff for Thar coal power projects has expired and now Nepra has to decide whether it will continue the upfront tariff or will opt for bidding for new projects. Nepra has convened stakeholders' meeting for a discussion on future strategy on Friday," said one of the stakeholders.

Nepra has fixed March 28, 2017 for public hearing in Islamabad to seek proposals from stakeholders for re-determination of tariff for upcoming Thar coal power projects.

The Authority has initiated suo moto proceedings for the development of new tariff for Thar Coal Based Power Projects on January 13, 2017 by advertisement along with certain issues in leading national newspapers seeking comments of the stakeholders, Interested/ Affected persons and the general public. Individual letters were also sent to all concerned.

There were unconfirmed reports that Nepra is considering reducing Return on Equity (RoE) to 13 per cent for upcoming Thar coal power projects but officials claim that the Authority has not even considered rationalizing RoE.

According to Nepra, keeping in view the comments of stakeholders, it has decided to hold a hearing in the matter. The following issues have been framed for the hearing: (i) Whether the Authority should determine another upfront tariff with revised benchmarks keeping in view the improvements in technology and reduced risks, as the investors have already borne the first movers risks? (ii) Whether the Authority should determine the benchmark tariff of competitive bidding under Competitive Bidding Tariff (Approval Procedure) Regulations, 2014 for new power projects on Thar coal?

(iii) If new tariff is determined under either upfront or competitive regime whether the cost-plus regime option should be available? (iv) Whether only such coal power plants may be allowed which have low cooling water requirement for future power generation at Thar? (v) What shall be the reasonable Internal Rate of Return (IRR) on equity for future Thar coal power projects keeping in view the reduced risks?

(vi) What shall be the appropriate thermal efficiency levels for future Thar coal power projects? (vii) Whether the construction period of 40 months and 48 months for 330MW and 660MW/1099MW projects respectively, is reasonable? and (viii) Whether other operating costs as given in the previous Upfront Thar Tariff should be reduced?

When contacted CEO, Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC), Engro Powergen Ltd (EPL), Engro Powergen Thar Ltd. (EPTL) Shamsuddin Ahmed Shaikh who was in China said that Nepra has fully supported the development of Thar coal. “We will work with Nepra whatever their decision i.e. extension of upfront tariff or bidding,” he added.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/03/14/1-page/857367-news.html>

SC DEFINES MEASURES FOR ALLEVIATING CONTAMINATION OF MANCHAR LAKE Naeem Sahoutara

The Express Tribune March 17, 2017

KARACHI: The Supreme Court (SC) directed on Thursday the provincial authorities to ensure regular monitoring and revival of water filtration plants, disposal of solid waste and efforts to control pollution level in the largest freshwater reservoir of Pakistan – Manchar Lake – to achieve positive results.

At the outset of the hearing, the bench, comprising justices Amir Hani Muslim and Qazi Faiz Isa, directed the provincial chief secretary, Rizwan Memon, to include the irrigation department secretary in the taskforce assigned the mitigation of increasing contamination in Manchar Lake and another committee that has been tasked to revive the non-functional water filtration plants across the province.

The bench directed the irrigation secretary to ensure regular monitoring of the restoration works using modern technology.

Justice Isa directed the authorities to ensure that photographs or videos were made on the spot, reflecting the condition before and after measures were taken. He further ordered that water samples be regularly collected from the lake and get tested by the same laboratory to reach a conclusion about whether or not such efforts were yielding positive results in controlling the level of contamination.

The judges observed that the problem of contamination in the lake will only be resolved when the Right Bank Outfall Drain (RBOD) project will be completed and the contaminated water is disposed of in the sea. However, they said, measures to stop dumping of untreated industrial effluent and sewerage through regular monitoring will help minimise the pollution level.

Justice Hani also directed the chief secretary to include the director-general of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency in the task force. The court ordered that a competent and eligible officer should be appointed on the post.

Justice Isa further said that the same method should be applied in disposal of solid waste, including the hazardous hospital waste, which will ensure proper monitoring of the efforts and achieve positive results.

“We do not want miraculous results but we want to see positive results,” the judge told the authorities, noting that the 70-year-old problem will take time to heal but can be solved through strict monitoring.

The bench further directed the irrigation secretary to submit periodical reports supported by documentary, video and pictorial evidences to the judicial commission and the SC for perusal.

The bench members told the chief and irrigation secretaries to hire any young person, instead of any ‘tired’ secretary, to efficiently perform this task of field monitoring. They added that the person hired should be equipped with requisite facilities.

Meanwhile, Chief Secretary Rizwan Memon informed the bench that the provincial government will pay Rs30 million to the water experts who had assisted the judicial commission in inquiry into non-supply of clean drinking water, worsening sanitation and its impact on the environment.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1357254/sc-defines-measures-alleviating-contamination-manchar-lake/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 6TH TO MARCH 12 TH 2017

SEA POLLUTION ISSUE: SINDH PA SEEKS 50PC COST OF TREATMENT PLANT FROM CENTRE

Business Recorder, 8 March 2017

Anwar Khan

KARACHI: To Avoid Marine Pollution Hazards, Sindh Assembly Unanimously Urged The Federal Government On Tuesday To Bear 50% Of The Total Cost Of The Planned Treatment Plant As Per Its Commitment With The Sindh Government.

The Provincial Legislature Made This Demand In A Resolution, Adopted Unanimously, After Some Amendments To The Original Draft Resolution That Was Tabled By Dr Seema Zia, A Female Member Belonging To The Pakistan Tehreek-E-Insaf (PTI). She Had Sought The Government Action Against Marine Pollution That Poses Serious Threat To Environment, Animals And Human Beings.

She Alerted The Sindh Government Of Growing Marine Pollution. She Said Spill Over Of The Perilous Industrial Waste Poses Threat To The Marine Ecology And Asking The Government To Step Up Its Efforts To Scale Back The Hazards. She Said Untreated Perilous Industrial Waste Is Being Discharged Directly Into The Sea While Sindh Province Lacks A Plant To Process The Domestic Sewerage Fluids.

“It Causes Serious Diseases, Affect Marine Animals And Maritime Installations,” She Said, Adding That Thousands Of Citizens Visit Daily And Especially On Holidays To The Beaches That Are

Polluted With The Hazards. She Further Said That Kids Too Play On Beaches Whereas Beaches Colour Have Turned Dark And Its Polluted Sand Could Cause Diseases Such As Hepatitis, Polio And Food Poison, Etc.

Dr Seema Pointed Out There Was No Facility To Treat The Unwanted Waste Before Its Spilling Over Into The Sea.

She Proposed That A Treatment Plant Was Needed To Cleanse The Hazardous Spillages.

Supporting The Resolution, Sindh Local Government Minister, Jam Khan Shoro Told The House That Some 450 Million Gallons Of Untreated Sewerage Water Is Discharged Into The Sea On A Daily Basis. He Said That The Treatment Plant Project Was Chalked Out In 2007 At The Cost Of Rs7.90 Billion But Could Not Be Completed On Time.

“Now The Cost Of The Uncompleted Project Has Soared To Rs32 Billion,” He Said, Adding That “The Project Has Been Submitted To The ECNEC And Awaits Approval.” He Asked The Federal Government To Approve The Project Immediately. He Said It Was Decided Between The Sindh And Federal Government To Bear 50 Percent Of The Cost Of The Project.

“Establishment Of The Plant Is Now Linked To The 50% Share In Terms Of Financial Assistance By The Federal Government,” He Said, Adding That The Project Cannot Be Completed Without It.

The Amended Resolution Asked The Federal Government To Aid Sindh To Develop The Revised S-III Project On A Priority Basis To Treat The Perilous Waste Before Discharging Into The Sea.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/03/08/8-page/856073-news.html>

SINDH ASSEMBLY PASSES BILL TO ESTABLISH FOOD AUTHORITY

Dawn, March 9th, 2017

Habib Khan Ghori

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly on Wednesday unanimously adopted a government bill to establish a food authority in the province to ensure provision of safe and hygienic food to the people.

The Sindh Food Authority Bill, 2016, which will turn into an act once the Sindh governor gives assent to it, carries prison term and fines for those found involved in making/selling adulterated food or soft drinks.

The Sindh Food Authority, to be headed by the food minister, will comprise 16 members — seven bureaucrats, three provincial lawmakers nominated by the speaker, one representative each of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, food operators, food industry and consumers, a food technologist and any other member/respective commissioner as co-opted by the government. The secretary of the food department would act as convener.

According to the bill, a food safety officer can initiate action against any person who manufactures, stores, sells, distributes, imports or exports any food item which is not of standard or misbranded. The

said person shall be liable to imprisonment for a term up to six months and/or fine, which may extend to Rs1 million, or with both.

The law would also apply to those who manufacture or process or keep any food under unhygienic or unsanitary conditions. Such persons shall also be liable to imprisonment up to six months and fine up to Rs1m or both.

But in case of false warranty, the person shall be liable to six-month imprisonment or fine up to Rs500,000 or both.

In case of injury or death of a consumer due to unsafe food, the court, in addition to any other penalty under this law, shall direct the food operator to pay compensation to the consumer or, as the case may be, the legal heirs of the consumer an amount which is not less than Rs1m in case of complete disability or death; or not exceeding Rs500,000 in case of partial disability or injury.

MPA Dr Mahesh Malani, the chairman of the standing committee on food, presented the report on the law in the assembly and Senior Minister Nisar Khuhro piloted the bill for clause-by-clause consideration.

Syed Sardar Ahmed, the parliamentary party leader of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, suggested a few amendments in certain clauses, which were accommodated accordingly.

The bill was unanimously passed after its third reading.

Later, the assembly was adjourned at 2.30pm to reassemble on Thursday (today).

The house was called to order by Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani at 11am. After the Question Hour, the house adopted four resolutions with consensus on the International Women's Day.

The resolutions — read out by Ghazala Sial of the PPP, Naheed Begum of the MQM, Nusrat Sahar Abbasi of the PML-Functional, Dr Seema Zia of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf and Sorath Thebo of the PML-N — paid rich tributes to the women of Pakistan, particularly Fatima Jinnah, Raana Liaquat Ali Khan, Benazir Bhutto, Nusrat Bhutto, mothers of the slain students of the Army Public School, Peshawar, and all those women who, despite challenges, had contributed bravely to nation-building and community services.

In their brief speeches, the women lawmakers demanded that all political parties give more representation to women, more representation in the government institutions and equal rights. They also resolved to stand against all discrimination towards them and for equal opportunity and social protection.

Earlier, in response to the call-attention notice of PTI's Dr Zia about non-payment of salaries to non-gazetted and gazetted staff, including senior doctors, of the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital, Local Government Minister Jam Khan Shoro said that all regular staff and non-gazetted employees were being paid regularly.

However, he said that he would consult the administration and then submit a reply about specialist trainee doctors who were serving on stipends.

Kamran Akhtar of the MQM raised the issue of 'unjust' police raids and harassment. However, Senior Minister Khuhro said that police and other law-enforcement agencies were discharging their responsibility and they deserved encouragement, not criticism.

In response to the call-attention notice of PPP's Ghazala Sial about posting of only one teacher for 200 students of the Government Primary School Younusabad, Minister Jam Mehtab Dahar said that there were three teachers and two of them had resigned. However, he said he had asked the deputy commissioner concerned to hire two more teachers so that students should not suffer.

In response to the call-attention notice of PTI's Khurram Sherzaman about non-availability of water in Clifton, the LG minister said that only 550 million gallons daily of water was being supplied to Karachi against the demand of 1,100 mgd. This was causing shortage of water for tail-enders, he added.

He said that the government had closed down illegal hydrants and was also taking other measures to improve water supply.

MQM's Heer Soho raised the issue of holding of a jirga of Swand and Sabzoi communities. Senior Minister Khuhro informed the house that 'arbitration', and not a jirga, between the two communities was held in Shikarpur, where clashes were recurring in the two communities over theft of animals for the past several years in which over 104 persons had been killed. He said the arbitration was held to settle their dispute and save precious lives.

He said the concept of out-of-court settlement was not new to the world and such issues were also being resolved through arbitration.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1319287>

TRUCKS LOADED WITH COAL ALLOWED TO LEAVE TORKHAM AFTER PROTEST Dawn, March 10th, 2017

Ibrahim Shinwari

LANDI KOTAL: The authorities at Torkham border permitted over 100 vehicles, loaded with coal imported from Afghanistan, to proceed to their respective destinations after a protest demonstration by the transporters.

Holding black flags and chanting slogans for release of their vehicles, the transporters held a protest demonstration at the National Logistic Cell terminal.

Noor Mohammad, a spokesman for the agitating transporters, said that nearly 170 vehicles loaded with coal imported from Afghanistan were already cleared by Customs but were stranded at the Pakistan side of the border after all crossing points with Afghanistan were closed on February 17.

He said that there was no justification of detaining their vehicles as they had already crossed the border and had also done their clearance from Customs.

“We cannot leave our vehicles at the border unattended nor do we have proper place for stay as all the shops, offices and restaurants are closed owing to closure of border,” said Mr Noor.

He added that most of his co-workers had also exhausted all their money owing to prolonged closure of the border.

Responding quickly to the protest of transporters, the authorities in consultation with security officials granted permission to at least 128 vehicles to leave for their respective destinations in the country.

Officials at the border said that the prolonged stay of the vehicles in the prevailing situation was dangerous and transporters too were faced with numerous problems. They said that permission was granted to the already cleared vehicles.

The political administration and security officials, however, could not agree on allowing the vehicles loaded with Pakistani exports goods and foreign items, imported under Afghan Transit Trade Agreement, to proceed.

Sources said that political administration was willing to allow all the stranded vehicles, numbering about 400, to leave Torkham for their terminals in Peshawar to avoid any untoward incident. They said that security officials were not willing to send the vehicles back as such gesture would convey a negative message.

Meanwhile, senior vice president of Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ziaul Haq Sarhadi also urged the government to open border crossings for all the vehicles loaded with export and ATTA goods.

Welcoming the opening of border for two days for ordinary Afghan and Pakistani nationals stranded on both sides, he said that the same facility should be provided to loaded vehicles stranded on both sides of the border.

Mr Sarhadi said that nearly three weeks closure of the border had inflicted losses to the tune of millions of rupees on both local and Afghan traders. He demanded of both the governments to devise business friendly policies to strengthen trade relations between the two neighbouring countries.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1319592/trucks-loaded-with-coal-allowed-to-leave-torkham-after-protest>

HUTS AT KEENJHAR LAKE BEING GIVEN TO INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE FOR FREE, ADMITS MINISTER

Dawn, March 10th, 2017

KARACHI: The huts of the Sindh culture and tourism department at Keenjhar Lake are being rented out and also given free of charge to acquaintances and guests of ministers, district administration and departmental officials, etc, Sindh Culture Minister Sardar Ali Shah has said.

He said this while responding to questions during the Question Hour that pertained to the culture and tourism department during the Thursday session of the Sindh Assembly.

The culture minister, responding to a question raised by Pakistan Muslim League-Functional legislator Nusrat Abbasi whether the huts were given free of charge to influential people, conceded that the friends and guests of ministers, high officials, district administration, etc, were provided the huts free of charge.

Replying to another question, he said that the huts were available to the general public for Rs 6,000 and Rs 4,200 each for 24 hours and had generated income of over Rs33 million between 2009 and 2013.

A total of 24 huts were available, he added.

Responding to a question asked by Muttahida Qaumi Movement legislator Aisha Khatoon regarding poor condition of the huts, the minister said that they were constructed in the early 1990s and repair works had been initiated; all of these would be ready by June, he added.

Responding to a question raised by MQM legislator Heer Soho regarding developing islands in the lake and if some islands had been occupied, the minister said that a few islands were present in the lake but except one, all other islands became submerged when the water level in the lake rose so these could not be developed.

However, there was one island which always remained above the water level and had potential to be developed into a tourism spot. He said that when he went to the island a few weeks ago he saw a board with the name of a security organisation.

He said he was taking up the matter with the Sindh irrigation department, which controls the lake, and the organisation concerned, to get the island vacated so that it could be developed into a tourist spot.

Answering a question asked by Ms Abbasi, the minister said that a 20-room motel/hotel was being constructed at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh Bhutto in Larkana at an approximate cost of Rs120 million and so far around Rs80m had been spent up to June 30, 2015. Work was being carried out by the works and services department.

Replying to another question regarding the departmental criteria for selection of a place where motel/hotel could be constructed and why Garhi Khuda Bakhsh was selected, the minister said that such facilities were constructed where visitors/tourists came in large numbers like at Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's shrine in Sehwan and Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's shrine in Bhitshah as well as Garhi Khuda Bakhsh, which was selected as people in large numbers also came to visit the Bhuttos' mausoleum there.

Responding to another question regarding the construction of a compound wall around Faiz Mahal in Khairpur, the minister said that a scheme of over Rs20m for the construction of the compound wall had been approved, but when the department wanted to start the excavation for construction work at the site, the owner was not willing to hand over the site for excavation so after some effort, the government dropped the scheme.

Replying to a question, the minister said he was unaware why the owner denied permission.

The minister agreed with MQM legislator Rana Ansar that many palaces in the Indian state of Rajasthan had been converted into tourist spots and attracted a large number of locals as well as foreign visitors and in the process generated huge funds, which not only went to the owners, but the palaces were also kept/maintained in good condition.

The minister said that probably, awareness level in Sindh needed to be raised so that owners not only recognised the importance of the buildings, but also maintained them.

He urged the legislators to help the government as he intended to approach the owners of Faiz Mahal once again to convince them and seek their permission so that the architectural gem, which was protected under the Cultural Heritage Act, could be protected and maintained in a better condition.

Responding to a question asked by PML-F legislator Rafique Bhanbhan about why entrance fee of Rs100 was being charged at the Keenjhar Lake, the minister said that the fee was Rs20, but nobody had ever made a complaint regarding high fees being charged there.

Responding to a question raised by Ms Abbasi, the minister said no complaint box was available at the Keenjhar Lake so far, but he would ensure that such boxes were put not only at the lake but at other department facilities to get feedback from visitors.

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf legislators Samar Ali Khan and Khurram Sherzaman; MQM members Sardar Ahmed, Diwan Chand Chawla, Sumeeta Syed, Zubair Khan, Hargundas Ahuja, Kamran Akhtar and Qamar Rizvi; PPP legislators Ghazala Sial, Naeem Kharal, and others participated in the discussion.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1319460/huts-at-keenjhar-lake-being-given-to-influential-people-for-free-admits-minister>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 27TH TO MARCH 5TH 2017

‘STEEL MILLS NOT CONFORMING WITH ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS’

Dawn, February 27th, 2017

Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: Residents of the federal capital are fighting air pollution from emissions from steel mills in the local industrial area that continue to poison the air they breathe.

“We are fighting a losing battle,” said I-9 resident Hameed Butt, adding that all the complaints registered with the Pakistan Environment Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) have been in vain.

“The government and the steel mill owners are playing with our lives,” added Raja Naveed, who also lives in the sector.

Dozens of written complaints are sent to the Pak-EPA offices every month from residents of I-9 and I-10. The Pak-EPA, in turn, only responds when the letters continue to come in and pressure mounts.

Pak-EPA Director General Farzana Altaf Shah told Dawn she has received dozens of complaints every month from residents, as well as factories that produce edibles in the same area.

“The steel mill owners do not want to cooperate. Their attitude is extremely non-serious. The industry is blatantly violating environmental laws.

“There is a Supreme Court order to shut down steel mills emitting poisonous gases into the atmosphere, polluting the air people breathe. They are leaving us with no option but to implement SC orders to do just that,” Ms Shah said.

In 2010, the SC observed: “From the report of the Director General, Pak-EPA, as well as reports in newspapers, it is evident that the pollution in the residential area has reached a dangerous level and the local residents are feeling difficulty in breathing. In this state of affairs, we have no option but to order sealing of all the steel mills in I-9 and I-10, Islamabad, until the online dust monitor is installed.”

But more than a dozen steel furnaces have failed to comply with environmental laws. They have disregarded Pak-EPA warnings to install equipment, such as bag air filters and online dust monitors to reduce emissions, or face legal action, a senior government official said.

Residents have complained that steel furnaces begin running around 5am. “Thick black smoke blankets the area for hours. They also operate near midnight, when the black smoke rising from the chimneys is not visible in the darkness,” said I-9 resident Malik Najeeb.

Steel mills sealed five months ago by the Pak-EPA have also resumed their activities without being cleared by the concerned authorities. In October last year, the agency sealed three steel furnaces for not complying with environmental laws.

According to Ms Shah, the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) told the government that steel mills would control emissions and would install the necessary equipment.

“We met ICCI representatives and conveyed our concern regarding emissions and asked them to comply with the laws. We will shut down all steel mills not complying with environmental laws. We need all the assistance from the district administration and the Capital Development Authority to implement court orders,” she said.

However, ICCI President Khalid Malik claimed: “Emissions from steel furnaces are very much under control. All the steel mill owners have installed equipment to control emissions.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1317241>

COAL INDUSTRY CASTS ITSELF AS A CLEAN ENERGY PLAYER

International New York Times, Feb. 26, 2017

Clifford Krauss

President Trump has questioned the science behind climate change as “a hoax” in positioning himself as a champion of coal. The three largest American coal producers are taking a different tack.

Seeking to shore up their struggling industry, the coal producers are voicing greater concern about greenhouse gas emissions. Their goal is to frame a new image for coal as a contributor, not an obstacle, to a clean-energy future — an image intended to foster their legislative agenda.

Executives of the three companies — Cloud Peak Energy, Peabody Energy and Arch Coal — are going so far as to make common cause with some of their harshest critics, including the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Clean Air Task Force. Together, they are lobbying for a tax bill to expand government subsidies to reduce the environmental impact of coal burning.

The technology they are promoting is carbon capture and sequestration — an expensive and, up to now, unwieldy method of trapping carbon dioxide emitted from coal-fired power plants before the gas can blanket the atmosphere and warm the planet.

The coal executives say the steady gains of renewable energy — along with robust environmental regulations in recent years, many of which they still oppose — are not sufficient to stabilize the climate and still meet energy needs in the years to come. They reason that coal and other fossil fuels will still dominate the fuel mix for the next several decades, and that only capturing carbon from coal-fired and gas-fired power plants can meaningfully shift the world to a low-carbon future. Their argument is backed, at least in part, by many world energy experts and environmentalists.

A similar, at least partial metamorphosis has taken place in the oil and gas and utility industries in recent years with mixed results, although there has been progress in expanding the deployment of renewables like wind and solar for power and in the capture of methane in oil fields to stem a powerful greenhouse gas. The coal executives argue that given the same incentives and subsidies as renewables, carbon capture and sequestration can also take off.

Support among coal executives for capturing carbon at power plants is not entirely new, but their increasingly vocal acknowledgment of climate science in support of the technology is a far stretch from many of the views expressed in recent years.

“We need a low-carbon fossil solution,” said Deck S. Slone, senior vice president for strategy and public policy at Arch Coal. “The political landscape is always shifting and carbon concerns are certainly not going away. We think there is a solution out there in the form of technology that is an answer to the climate challenge and that quite frankly will be good for our business long term.”

Coal executives remain strongly opposed to the Obama administration’s blueprint for reducing dependence on coal for power, known as the Clean Power Plan, which is being contested in the courts.

But they say that any rollback of Obama regulatory policies by the new administration may not be enough to keep utilities from switching from coal to low-cost natural gas and renewables, and that only assurances of government support for carbon capture and sequestration can give utilities certainty that coal has a long-term future and encourage them to retrofit old power plants to be cleaner burning.

Last year, total United States coal production was 18 percent lower than in 2015 and was the lowest level since 1978. Many companies were forced into bankruptcy. With gas prices rising in recent

months, coal made a modest rebound at the end of last year, especially in the Powder River Basin of Montana and Wyoming, where the production economics are generally best.

Vic Svec, a Peabody senior vice president, said that his company was looking to make “a fresh start” as it comes out of bankruptcy, and that part of that fresh start was recognizing that fossil fuels “contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and concern regarding these emissions has become part of the global, societal regulatory landscape.” He added, “There is a market for low-carbon energy sources, and we want to be part of that future.”

Environmentalists say they believe that the coal industry, having dealt with a sharp downturn in recent years and facing an aggressive investor divestment movement, may be shifting its views on climate change more for its own business interests than any newfound love for the environment.

“To the extent that they are saying things that seem much more rational than in the past,” said David Hawkins, director of the climate program at the National Resources Defense Council, “they are trying to persuade skeptical investors that coal has a future.” Nevertheless, he added that his group was willing to work with the companies, even while it was suing them in court on other issues, “if they are willing to join in properly crafted legislation.”

The carbon legislation, introduced last year, would increase the federal tax credit for capture and sequestration to \$50 per ton of carbon dioxide from \$20. And it would expand available credits by more than a third for permanent storage for the purpose of flooding the carbon into declining oil fields to coax production. The method, already popular in West Texas and supported by the oil and gas industry, gives utilities that deploy the technology an added revenue stream.

When introduced, the measure had broad support from senators as varied as Sheldon Whitehouse, a Rhode Island liberal who is active on climate issues, and Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader from Kentucky, who is one of the strongest backers of the coal industry in Congress. Proponents are preparing to reintroduce the legislation, and coal executives say they hope the Trump administration will get on board.

Senator Heidi Heitkamp, Democrat of North Dakota, who is a leading sponsor of the legislation and a former director in a coal gasification company, said she had seen a shift in the stance of coal executives. “I see people at the table who weren’t at the table before,” she said. “As long as they see that the issue of CO₂ is not going to go away, they are going to roll up their sleeves and try to find a way that works for the utility industry and the coal industry.”

One obstacle to the bill could be cost. Supporters have asked the Joint Committee on Taxation to evaluate the effect of the legislation on the federal budget but have not heard back yet.

Opponents say it would merely extend the life of the coal industry.

“For 40 years, I’ve been told clean coal is right around the corner, just give us another few subsidies,” said Dan Becker, director of the Safe Climate Campaign, an environmental group. “Carbon capture and sequestration may work someday in the distant future, but right now it barely works on a technical level. It’s way far away from working on a cost-effectiveness level.”

There are only a handful of commercial-scale operations for carbon capture and sequestration globally. But coal executives say proper permitting and legal protections, along with the tax credits, could bring a surge in construction in the United States within a decade. And as the technology improves and implementation becomes less expensive, the United States could export the technology and make coal-fired power cleaner around the world.

But developing commercial-scale carbon capture has been bedeviled by cost overruns and long delays. The operations not only are expensive to build but also require a lot of power, making plants less efficient. The federal government canceled one such project, called FutureGen, after it was granted more than \$1 billion by the Obama administration.

Still, coal executives are staking much of their futures on the technology.

“We’re confident,” Mr. Svec of Peabody said, “that it needs to be a part of any serious effort toward reducing greenhouse gases from industrial sources.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/26/business/energy-environment/coal-industry-clean-energy.html>

LAL SUHANRA GETS HUNDREDS OF CAPTIVE-BRED HOUBARA BUSTARDS
The Express Tribune, March 3rd, 2017.

BAHAWALPUR: More than 300 Houbara bustards from the Pakistan-resident species bloodline, given as a gift by Abu Dhabi government, have been released into the wild in Lal Suhanra National Park, Bahawalpur on Friday. The birds were released with an aim to augment the population of the specie which is considered by international conservationists to be a vulnerable species.

The birds released had been individually tagged with identification rings and satellite transmitters to help scientists in monitoring them. The data will be generated bi-weekly in order to detect movements, habitat preferences and breeding behaviours. The birds’ locations will be communicated to the Houbara Foundation for field validation and further investigations.

Established in 1995, the Houbara Foundation International Pakistan works in collaboration with reputed conservation organisations and law-enforcement authorities to curb the trend of hunting, illegal trapping and loss of habitat that all contribute to the decline in wild houbara populations in the country.

Houbara Foundation said the move would add to several previous bird releases in previous years. Earlier, 600 birds and 200 birds were released in Pakistan in March 2015 and February 2016, respectively.

Since the bustards are originally from Pakistan’s resident houbara population, the organisation hopes most of them will settle easily for breeding.

The houbara bustard migrates from the Central Asia to Pakistan every year in the winters and returns to its breeding grounds after the end of season. Despite a ban on its hunting, the government issues

between 25 and 35 special hunting permits annually to wealthy Arab dignitaries, who like to hunt the bird both as a sport and because its meat is considered an aphrodisiac.

The Abu Dhabi-based International Fund's research centres are involved with the preservation of all houbara populations ranging from Mongolia to Morocco, encompassing North African, Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries.

The breeding programme in Abu Dhabi had bred over 206,000 houbara bustards, of which around 137,831 birds have been released into the wild. The International Fund for Houbara Conservation is now producing over 50,000 houbara every year.

Earlier, Prime Minister (PM) Nawaz Sharif had approved the grant of Rs250 million for Houbara bustard endowment fund. The fund will be utilised for the rehabilitation centre and breeding of the rare bird.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1344339/lal-suhanra-gets-hundreds-captive-bred-houbara-bustards/>

GREEN LINE BRT FAILS TO KEEP PROMISE OF TRANSPLANTING 800 TREES

Oonib Azam

The Express Tribune, March 3, 2017

KARACHI: If you happen to drive through Nagan Chowrangi towards Sakhi Hassan, you will come across a deserted concrete central median, which once used to be lush green.

Thanks to the construction of the Green Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), the concrete structure will be running over the corpses of as many as 7,321 trees.

The contractors of the project were supposed to replant over 800 of these trees last year in the month of July in the premises of Mazar-e-Quaid. They were able to transplant only 12 in a football ground near Mazar-e-Quaid, said a civil engineer at Quaid-e-Azam Mazar Management Board, Jawad Mughal.

Out of those 12, he pointed out, hardly four survived. The transplantation activity, he said, occurred last year in the month of August and the authorities dedicated not more than two days for the care of the trees.

“The contractors had assured that for two years, they would be taking care of the trees,” said Mughal. “However, no one turned up the third day after transplantation.”

He added there was already water shortage in the area and no one was there to water the transplanted trees, which was why only four survived. He believes the survival of even these four trees is no less than a miracle.

The Green Line BRT will run on segregated lanes from Surjani Town to Saddar. For a city severely lacking mass transit, the Green Line offers a much-needed respite. However, it comes at the cost of nearly all the greenbelts in District Central.

From Nagan Chowrangi onwards, the Green Line will run on the median – the central greenbelt of the road — once lined with thousands of trees. Even at Gurumandir, the Green Line has trampled over some trees that date back to before Partition.

Out of the 7,321 trees that have been removed for the construction of the Green Line, 6,321 are *Conocarpus* and *Eucalyptus*, according to the Landscape Architecture Studio's principal landscape architect, Komal Parvez.

She added that these trees have already been banned by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) as they harmed invasive plant species.

The Studio, which numbered the trees to be chopped down, has been hired as consultants by the Karachi Infrastructure Development Company Limited (KIDCL), which is managing the Green Line's construction.

According to the Studio's survey conducted around two years back, there were 23 chandi, 51 neem, 33 ficus, 18 date palm, 33 burna, 300 bhindi and 318 lignum trees on the Green Line BRT's track.

However, the track from Karachi Development Authority (KDA) Chowrangi till Board Office Chowrangi and the one from Nazimabad till Lasbela had 400 and 600 trees, respectively. Species of these are not available.

Former KIDCL chief financial officer Bilal Memon had told The Express Tribune earlier that apart from the transplantation, the Green Line contractors plan to plant 19,500 new trees, estimated to cost Rs88 million.

The timing of the plantation of new trees and transplantation of the older ones does not sit well with environmentalist Dr Zafar Iqbal Shams. The identified trees, he said, should have been transplanted before commencing the project.

He pointed out that in order to pave way for the Green Line BRT, thousands of small and huge trees have already been chopped off without planting new ones. With summer round the corner, this, he said, will result in much harsher weather conditions than before.

“Every tree counts,” said horticulturist Tofiq Pasha. “For the Green Line BRT, it is a matter of thousands of trees. Imagine what impact it will create on the environment.”

According to Shams, the jungle of concrete buildings absorbs the heat from sun and enhances the temperature by at least five to seven degrees when they release that heat. The process is known as ‘urban heat island’.

In such a case, he explained, the trees in the surroundings keep the concrete structures cooler and reduce the effects of urban heat island. Now, he said, with thousands of trees completely uprooted, this urban heat island phenomenon can be far deadlier than that of the heat wave – a natural process that struck the port city two years back.

However, according to architect Pervez, the heat island effect has been in the city much before work on the Green Line BRT kicked off. She said they kept the number of trees to be transplanted at 800 but if some of those trees are not obstructing construction work, they will not be removed.

Meanwhile, KIDCL's chief engineer pointed out that apart from Mazar-e-Quaid, 77 trees were transplanted in a school near Anda Mor in North Karachi. Responding to the situation, District Municipal Corporation Central chairman Rehan Hashmi said he will pursue litigation against the KIDCL's environmental plunder.

In their Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report, he pointed out, the KIDCL had promised to plant 17,000 new trees, for which Rs150 million were allocated.

They also promised to look after the trees for two years, he added. "Now they are reluctant to do their job and their consultants for the transplantation have also gone."

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1344085/green-line-brt-fails-keep-promise-transplanting-800-trees/>

'STARVING' PEAFOWL BEING SHIFTED TO QUARANTINE AREAS: OFFICIALS Dawn, March 5th, 2017

KARACHI: Over a dozen sick peafowl have been shifted to quarantines established in parts of Thar for treatment, officials in the Sindh forest ministry said on Saturday, adding that the people in the desert region had been asked to make sure that their diseased poultry was kept away from the beautiful birds.

"The teams from Nagarparkar have reported sighting of 1,492 peacocks and shifting of some sick peacocks to quarantine," said an official in the forest ministry.

The officials denied the reports in parts of the media that the peafowl died because of Newcastle disease (rani kheta) as it happened three years ago, saying that it was 'starvation' that caused their death.

The forest and wildlife ministry, said a senior official, had consulted livestock and poultry experts about the issue as well as the district administration of Thar and dispatched monitoring and rescue teams to different parts of the desert district.

The officials, however, did not rule out the chances of the spread of Newcastle disease in future, for which they had taken certain 'special' measures.

"Special attention has been given to avoid outbreak of any peacock disease such as Newcastle disease. Teams composed of poultry and wildlife experts are in the field for vaccination and oral administration of medicines to peacocks and chickens," said an official.

They added that the people of Thar had been asked to cooperate with the forest and wildlife ministry and to report immediately sighting of any diseased peafowl in their area, and keep the diseased poultry away from the peacocks.

“Such instructions have been given as healthy peacocks get affected by the poultry virus immediately. Poultry vaccines, multivitamins, antibiotics and other medicines are available at all rescue centres and are being administered to poultry and peacocks by the field teams.”

Quoting the field teams, the ministry reported that on March 2, 450 poultry heads were vaccinated in taluka Mithi and one dead peacock was buried.

Similarly, in Chhachhro 79 peacocks were sighted and one sick peacock was found and shifted to quarantine, the officials said.

The teams said that the rate of mortality as being reported by the media was exaggerated, as the actual reason of mortality was not Newcastle disease, but starvation, ie deficiency of food and safe water due to delayed or little rains.

Secretary of the forest and wildlife ministry claimed 35 peacocks died since February in Thar, and majority of them had died because of starvation.

“The sick peacocks have been taken to the quarantine areas and are being given vaccine and multivitamins. After recovery, the peacocks will be released in the jungle.”

The officials said anyone who brought diseased peacocks to the rescue centre will be paid transportation charges.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1318408>

OFFICIAL SAYS SINDH COASTAL BELT FACES ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION Dawn, March 5th, 2017

BADIN: Federal secretary for climate change Syed Abu Ahmad Akif has said that Sindh’s coastal belt faces environmental degradation and stressed the need for concerted efforts to fight climate change and its negative impacts on peoples’ socio-economic condition.

Members of civil society, journalists and social activists would have to play their role to highlight issues of Badin and other parts of lower Sindh which were caused by climate change and environmental degradation, he said.

The federal secretary was briefing journalists at Badin Gymkhana on Saturday on his visit to several villages of the coastal belt of the district.

He said the federal government was making sincere efforts to cope with climate change and its effects and said it was the need of the hour to focus on sensitive environmental issues, particularly of Sindh’s coastal belt, which was badly affected by environmental degradation.

He advised people to cooperate with the government and save themselves from the vagaries of climatic change and its effects on their lives and livelihood, disasters and degradation since Pakistan was facing consequences of climate change.

Masood Ahmed Lohar, national coordinator of UNDP's Jeff Small Grants Programme Pakistan, briefed the secretary on the projects being funded by the organisation in the region.

Mr Lohar said that there was a need to encourage people engaged in creating awareness about climate change and its terrible impact on human lives.

Environmentalists Afia Salam, Shabina Faraz and others accompanied the secretary during his visit and the press briefing.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1318404>

ECO UNFRIENDLY: KWSB DRAWS IRE OVER PLAN TO UPROOT TREES

The Express Tribune, 5 March 2017

Sheharyar Ali

KARACHI: The Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) should not blame their inefficiency on the trees that provide oxygen to the city and should instead focus on enhancing their own system, said the deputy director of the parks and horticulture department of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, Nadeem Hanif.

He was speaking to The Express Tribune in response to a press statement issued by the KWSB where its managing director Misbahuddin Farid demanded chopping off trees along the routes of its pipelines.

In the press statement released on Friday, Farid demanded the municipal authorities, including cantonment boards, remove eucalyptus, conocarpus and other trees as their roots have penetrated underground water pipelines, causing hurdles in water supply. He also said that they have found 25 to 30 foot-long roots in the pipelines, therefore the trees above these pipelines should be immediately removed.

However, Hanif was of the view that it takes 10 to 15 years for a tree to grow and cutting them in a single day for such a thing is very painful for him. He said he is worried about the number of trees that have been chopped up in the past years in the name of development work.

He added that God knows what is coming this summer, as instead of increasing plantation, greenery has been reduced in the name of development work. We will fight such actions at any cost and will demand the water board either fix their pipelines or replace them but we will not sacrifice our trees, he vowed.

Farid said KWSB has written to the authorities to remove the trees immediately and threatened that the KWSB would take action if nothing was done.

We are not against trees but eucalyptus specifically spreads its roots towards moisture, such as our pipelines, he explained, adding that it should be removed immediately, as well as other problematic trees. Farid point blank refused to participate in a plantation campaign as a conciliatory gesture for those opposing the removal of the trees.

Horticulturist and ecologist Rafiul Haq said the situation has emerged due lack of planning. The KWSB should point out problematic trees and their location and later the relevant department should remove them in such a way that they can be replanted elsewhere.

However, he said that usually people find situations like this as an opportunity and chop down trees for their own interest, which should not happen. The relevant authorities should ensure that only trees that are causing problems are removed, said Haq.

He explained that while there are types of trees, such as eucalyptus, which penetrate the ground vertically and can easily pierce concrete pipelines. However, we should also learn more about trees before planting them and focus on trees with roots that grow horizontally, he said.

Sharing his views on urban planning, chairperson of NED University's department of architecture and planning Dr Noman Ahmed said authorities should focus on finding alternatives to removing trees, KWSB should also replace its older pipelines and should adopt modern technology like replacing the concrete pipelines with PVC pipes, as many countries have also adopted this.

He added that no roots can penetrate PVC pipes and no one will be able to create illegal connections from a PVC pipeline, as a small hole can damage the whole pipeline, therefore PVC has a lot of benefits.

He was of the view that this will help them in the long run, as step-by-step we should improve our existing system.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1346176/eco-unfriendly-kwsb-draws-ire-plan-uproot-trees/>

April 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 24TH TO APRIL 30TH 2017

ENVIRONMENTAL OPPORTUNITY COST

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, April 24th, 2017

Afshan Subohi

Lucky Pakistanis who succeed in dodging death through bombing or by being shot stand a lean chance of escaping the hazardous effects of industrial practices leading to environmental degradation.

The communities settled near industrial areas are vulnerable: exposed to poisonous emissions and a sub-standard water supply owing to dumping and seepage of effluents flushed out by factories. Environment Laws of the provinces prohibit private businesses from indulging in such practices and require factories to install primary effluent treatment plants, if necessary.

The business community, multiple tiers of administration and environment protection establishments have not shown any interest in applying technological solutions or the determination to deal with environmental degradation. Why do affectees not react?

“People are busy fighting fear, earning their livelihood and securing basic necessities and so have no time to care for community concerns, even when it is about the air they breathe or water they consume”, a community activist told Dawn.

“The futility of efforts to move the system against polluters and risks involved for campaigners from the ‘unholy alliance’ of law enforcers and powerful violators discourage public action”, she added.

For anyone interested, a random visit to settlements close to industrial areas would show them the sad plight of the dwellers there.

The case of Syed Nagar, Alipur Chatta, Gujranwala, is a typical example of commission and omission by environmental law violators and those responsible for checking such excesses. According to records provided to Dawn, one such case is a black oil refinery, Sheikh Brothers Lubricant, which has been flouting environmental law.

The pollution has compromised the health of residents of nearby settlements. According to dwellers, who requested not to be identified, the incidence of hepatitis and respiratory complications is dangerously high in Syed Nagar. The local doctors were scared and declined to come on record though endorsed the perception.

When reached over phone Sheikh Ghazanfar Iqbal, co proprietor of the said plant, dismissed allegations of any wrongdoing. “Our plant has been cleared by environment inspectors who gave the factory a fitness certificate based on the test results of water samples. Yes, the ground water in the vicinity is dirty but the culprit is the sewage drain and not our factory”, he said over phone.

Wasim Cheema, an official of the Punjab Environment Protection Agency, was evasive in the beginning. It took a call from the minister to persuade him to share the official position. He confirmed to Dawn on the phone from Lahore that he had called the management of Sheikh Lubricant for a hearing to address the issue.

“A complaint was launched in 2013. We held a hearing the same year and in Nov 2013 ordered the plant management to comply with legal requirements on environment standards. In March 2014 the inspecting party reported compliance.

“In Jan 2017 we again received a complaint for which a hearing was held the same month and inspection was ordered. We will ensure full compliance and seal the plant if the management is found guilty”, he said admitting that the EPA is not sufficiently equipped to deal with the huge challenge of disciplining the powerful industrial sector in Punjab.

“A delay in enforcing environmental standards by industrial units could push Pakistan further back in its standing as a responsible nation that honours its commitment to improve the quality of life for its citizens”, commented an expert.

“The deadly industrial pollution is a result of twin factors: the irresponsible conduct of businesses blinded by the zest for profit maximisation; ignorant vulnerable communities; the lack of will and capacity of regulators to enforce relevant laws”, he added.

Pakistan was ranked 113th among 133 nations assessed for the 2016 Social Progress Index that also includes environment standards. The country was behind others in the region trailing Sri Lanka at 83rd, China 84th, Iran 93rd, India 98th and Bangladesh on 101st. According to online information on the said Index site, “Social progress depends on the policy choices, investment and implementation capabilities of multiple stakeholders, government, civil society and business”.

When contacted Majyd Aziz, Chairman, Employers Federation of Pakistan, admitted that the situation was far from satisfactory.

“We are focused on the issue, trying to increase awareness among our members. The risk of losing market in the West and the GSP status is real. The Environment Protection Agency, instead of using the law to harass and extract money from the business community, needs to get serious. They should take business leaders on board to collectively deal with the issue”, he argued.

Muhammad Ali Malkani, Sindh minister for environment and alternate energy, who recently assumed the portfolio, expressed hope that the situation in the province will improve under his charge. “I will try everything within means to reverse the trend of environment degradation”, he asserted.

Zamir Ahmed Khan secretary, environment and alternate energy, Sindh, did not contest the sorry state of affairs. “We have limitations. This department can only be effective if related departments such as water and power, the industry and law enforcement extend full cooperation”.

Ashiq Ali Langa, director, Karachi, Sindh EPA, told Dawn that the department lacked funds, staff and power to execute its mandate. “There are about 4,500 registered industrial units in six industrial areas of Karachi and many more unregistered units scattered all across the city. An authentic profile of these factories is not available. Laboratories required to test standards are dysfunctional for paucity of resources. The moment we proceed against violators they get a court stay order. There is no Environment Protection Tribunal. How do you expect us to function efficiently?”, he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1328787/environmental-opportunity-cost>

MARINE POLLUTION BADLY AFFECTING SHARK POPULATION: MALKANI
Business Recorder, 29 April 2017

Anwar Khan

KARACHI: Marine pollution and excessive hunting have pulled down the population of Shark species by 81 percent in the country’s sea since 1999, Sindh Fisheries Minister, Muhammad Ali Malkani told the provincial legislature on Friday.

“Unchecked fishing and increasing pollution are the major factors behind reduced shark stocks across Pakistani seawaters,” Malkani said replying to one of the queries raised by PML-F legislator, Nusrat Sehar Abbasi, during the Sindh Assembly’s questions and answers session.

He said that the species are falling off with low breeding. He said since 1999, shark species stocks have reduced by 81 percent and their further decline continues

“The sharks are also hunted in Iran and Oman. In Pakistan, the fishermen net more than what is needed and do it excessively,” said the minister.

He further said that the farm fisheries in Sindh have not reduced. He said that Badin had 114 fishing farms in 2014, 119 in 2015, 127 in 2016, Tando Bago had 120 in 2014, 127 in 2015 and 129 in 2016 and Talhar had 38 in 2014, 45 in 2015 and 49 in 2016. He said that there is no built-in medical facility on vessels; however, the government is taking steps to ensure healthcare assistance across the coastal belt communities.

Malkani informed the house that the provincial government will soon announce a monetary aid policy for the families of fishermen arrested by the Indian maritime forces. He said that each fisherman family, whose bread-earner is jailed in India will be paid Rs10,000 per month to make both ends meet. He said that the government has approved the summary of the policy.

“Government is also founding model colonies for the fishermen at Zero Point Badin, besides providing them with fishing nets, vessel engines, plastic crates, bicycles, lifejackets and boats,” he said, adding that Pakistan Mercantile Marine registers all vessels operating in the country’s waters under the Pakistan Merchant Shipping Ordinance of 2001, but, he pointed out that boats from Balochistan rarely follows the rules.

Replying to a call-attention notice of MQM’s Heer Ismail Soho, Sindh Health Minister, Dr Sikandar Mendhro expressed concern over the fast-spreading Chikengunya disease in the province. He said that there is no vaccine to treat the epidemic.

“We conducted several attempts in different areas to catch tiger mosquitoes but failed to find one,” he told the house.

He said that the disease was first discovered in Malir last year where some 63,000 people in Saudabad suffered from it. At present, he said, there are around 75,000 patients who are diagnosed with the epidemic. He said though the disease has killed about 1000 patients around the world, by the grace of Allah, no such death has been reported in the province.

The house also discussed the recent controversy over the donkey hides found in Karachi. MQM’s Dilawar Qureshi pointed out that discovery of some 4736 donkey skins in the metropolis is a matter of concern for the public. He asked the PPP government to explain its policy in this connection.

“A donkey hide is priced at Rs25,000 while a live donkey costs between rupees 100,000 and rupees 300,000,” he said, adding that owner cannot sell the animal’s hide for Rs25, 000 while he bought that at Rs100,000 to the minimum. He said it means its meat must have been sold to earn remaining money from that. However, his arguments engendered exchange of jokes by treasury and opposition benches on the issue.

MQM’s legislator expressed apprehension that the meat of donkeys might have been sold at restaurants and cooked at homes while people were unaware of it.

Sindh Senior Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Nisar Khuhro acknowledged that the discovery of around 5000 hides is a real matter of concern. However, he made it clear that the government has already made its policy.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/04/29/3-page/870798-news.html>

CIVIL SOCIETY SEEKS FRESH ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT OF OLMT

Business Recorder, 29 April 2017

ISLAMABAD: Submitting written arguments on behalf of the civil society before the Supreme Court in the Orange Line Metro Train (OLMT) project case on Friday, Advocate Muhammad Azhar Siddique asked the apex court to issue directives for a fresh environmental report of the project.

The 5-member larger bench led by Justice Ejaz Afzal Khan reserved its ruling On April 17 while hearing appeals of Nespak, Lahore Development Authority (LDA), Punjab Mass Transit Authority and the Punjab government challenging the Lahore High Court (LHC) stay order against the project.

Reserving its verdict in the OLMT project case, the Supreme Court had asked Muhammad Azhar Siddique to file reply on the reports of the LDA, Nespak and the Punjab government, whereas the bench also asked Nespak counsel Shahid Hamid to file a rejoinder to architect Kamil Khan Mumtaz's report in the matter.

Counsel for the civil society said that shortcomings of the environmental report are so serious that they require immediate remedy in the form of a new environmental report. Siddique requested the Supreme Court that review report must give a clear statement as to how the additional information can be collected and presented.

He requested the court to declare the approval for the OLMT null and void, seeking that no further demolition of residences must be undertaken.

He prayed the court that a full study of solid waste disposal must be carried out, with measures in place as required and all evictees must be identified and interviewed so that remedial action may be undertaken.

Meanwhile, issuing a press statement on Friday, Civil Society Network Pakistan for Human Rights requested Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar to re-hear the OLMT case for protection of the cultural heritage

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/04/29/57-page/871012-news.html>

THARI VILLAGERS BOYCOTT PUBLIC HEARING ON RESURVEY OF GORANO RESERVOIR SITE

Dawn, April 30th, 2017

Hanif Samoon

MITHI: Villagers living in the area that falls within the proposed site for Gorano waste-water reservoir boycotted on Saturday a public hearing for the resurvey of the controversial reservoir's site, arguing that officials of revenue department and Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company were only trying to "buy time" and were not serious in addressing their genuine fears.

The frustrated villagers led by advocate Leela Ram, Lakho Bheel, Anwer Ali Lodho, Allah Jurio Chachar, walked out of the venue for public hearing at Gorano camp office and resumed their protest outside the Islamkot press club.

The protest entered its 190th day on Saturday.

They told journalists that they rejected the new map prepared by the revenue officials because it had added new land to the reservoir site. They were informed seven months ago that land of 35 survey numbers of Gorano, Katan and Began Shah areas would be acquired for the construction of the reservoir. But the officials now disclosed that they had added 27 more survey lands of Kehari area to the reservoir site, they said.

On April 10 the officials told them that they were conducting a resurvey to measure the land but they did not have authentic maps and other documents necessary for the survey, they said.

They alleged that both the officials of the mining firm and the revenue department had no idea about their job and therefore, they would henceforth not attend any public hearing until the officials showed them 'authentic' maps and study reports.

They termed the resurvey of their land "a big fraud" being perpetrated to serve vested interests. They would not hand over documents of their land to the officials until and unless they were shown study reports and authentic maps, they warned.

Islamkot mukhtiarkar Abdul Ghaffar Lakheer told journalists that they were trying their best to persuade the protesting villagers to give them their documents so that they could start the process of resurvey and complete the work within stipulated time.

Shutter down strike in Chhachhro

Chhachhro town remained completely shut on Saturday on a protest call given by local leadership of Pakistan Peoples Party against the government's failure to resolve the town's civic issues. All shops, business centres and bazaars remained closed throughout the day.

PPP activists and townspeople who held a sit-in on Umerkot Road said that their town faced multiple issues which had not been resolved so far by the elected members of the area.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1330029>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 17TH TO APRIL 23RD 2017

PEAFOWL DEATHS

Dawn, April 17th, 2017

MITHI: A mysterious disease continued to claim lives of peafowls in Tharparkar with 20 more fatalities reported from different villages of Nagarparkar and Diplo talukas on Sunday.

Mohammad Sajan Charo, a resident of Dedsar village told Dawn that 15 peafowls died in his village and the adjacent Bitra Bheel village leading the collective toll of various villages in the Diplo taluka

to around 100 over the last couple of days. Five more birds reportedly died in Veerawah village and Nagarparkat.

Local people believe the birds are falling to the new castle disease.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1327430/peafowl-deaths>

INDUSTRIAL WASTE POLLUTING GROUNDWATER RESERVES: EXPERTS

Business Recorder, 21 April 2017

FAISALABAD: Industrial effluent is polluting groundwater reserves badly, resulting in the outbreak of diseases and environmental pollution whereas the crops and vegetables, which are being cultivated by this water, can cause serious health hazards.

It was echoed by experts at international seminar titled “water footprint of cotton value chain” jointly arranged by US–Pak Center for Advanced Studies for Agriculture & Food Security, and Faculty of Agri Engineering and Technology, University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF).

UAF Vice Chancellor Dr. Iqar Ahmad Khan stressed upon effort to control effects producing with chemical waters released by industry. He said that industry is polluting ground water which is harmful for agriculture and drinking usage and urged the experts, scientist and policy makers to play their effective role to cope with this challenge.

He viewed that one of the major socioeconomic challenge is the mismanagement of water resources. He said that no life is possible without water as water is key factor for irrigation, food security, economic growth, energy production, industry and human health. He said time is right for promoting the rational use of water across the country to save coming generation. He added we are not treating industrial waste which is deteriorating water quality. He said that massive amount of water is being pumped out from tube-wells, which is lowering the groundwater levels and worsening water health.

Talking about water efficient crops, he added that we need to promote less water intensive crops in view of water shortage in Pakistan. Water reserves have shrunk from 5000 Cusec meter to 850 cusec meter.

Dr. Franck Andreas Weber from Aachen University Germany said that nitrate pollution for the ground water was the largest challenge in Germany. He said steps are needed to curb increasing pollution. He said that Pakistan-Germany enhanced ties in academic and research would help address the issue. He said the whole world is faced with water shortage problem and it can pose a threat to food security.

Dr. Bernhard Tischbein from Bonn University Germany said that rivers are being polluted due to the effluent of industries. He said that the collaborated efforts and interdisciplinary approaches are vital to fight the issue and to provide a healthy environment for the people.

Dean Faculty of Agri Engineering Dr. Allah Buksh said that industrial effluent treatment was essential to provide the healthy environment to the citizen. He stressed the need to expedite joint efforts for the cause. He said that it is the need of the hour to treat the industrial and waste water. He stated that the climate change is a serious threat to the people and Pakistan will be its worst victim.

Dr. Christopher Conrad said natural ecology system is suffering. He said that the industrial effluent will pose a serious threat if tangible steps are not taken. Dr. Christian Grim and Dr. Usman also spoke on the occasion.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/04/21/13-page/868795-news.html>

‘MARGALLA HILLS THREATENED BY HUMAN INTERVENTION’

Dawn, April 23rd, 2017

ISLAMABAD: A large number of children and youngsters on Saturday held a hike at the Margalla Hills Trail-V and participated in a painting competition to mark the World Mother Earth Day.

The theme of the day this year was “Environmental and climate literacy.”

The event was organised by the Sustainable Tourism Foundation Pakistan and the Development Communications Network (Devcom).

Biodiversity specialist Z.B. Mirza said Margalla Hills National Park, which was established in 1980, spread over approximately 17,386 hectares (67.13 square miles) and had become one of the most popular picnic spots because of Daman-i-Koh and Pir Sohawa.

He said the park was rich in biodiversity and home to around 600 plant species, 250 bird varieties, 38 mammals and 13 species of reptiles.

“But the biological diversity of the park is threatened by human interventions and environmentally unfriendly practices. The city management has no check on the misuse of the national park,” he said.

Devcom Director Munir Ahmed said we should hand over a worth living earth to the next generation as it was given to the pre-industrial generation.

About the misuse of natural resources in and around the federal capital and the national park, he said the mixing of sewage in natural streams should be stopped.

Zobia Jameel, who took part in the competition, said: “We have only one earth and we need to pledge to take care of it. Such art competitions give us an opportunity to reflect what is in our heart and what we feel about the exploitation of natural resources.”

Meanwhile, a statement issued by the Ministry of Climate Change said the overexploitation of natural resources was the biggest threat to the earth.

The head of the environmental advocacy and communication section in the ministry, Mohammad Saleem, said environmental protection and climate change mitigation through sustainable use and protection of the natural resources, particularly water, land, animals and forests, were more critical than ever.

He said about 90pc of land spreading over around 80 million hectares in the country had been classified as arid or semi-arid, meaning extremely inadequate rains, decreased soil fertility, deforestation, expanding desertification and a loss of crop productivity and biodiversity.

“Nearly one-fourth of the country’s population is poor and directly dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods whether agriculture, hunting, forestry or fisheries,” he said.

Mr Saleem said water and energy crises were key challenges to the socio-economic sustainability of the country. But the government is taking all-out measures to cope with these challenges.

He said a US-based think-tank, World Resource Institute, had ranked Pakistan 23rd among 33 countries that would be facing an extremely high water stress in year 2040.

The organisation has called upon these countries to take urgent policy measures to improve water efficiency and conservancy in the agriculture sector which accounts for around 96pc of the total surface and ground water use, he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1328660>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 10TH TO APRIL 16TH 2017
PA DEMANDS BAN ON USE OF PLASTIC BAGS FOR EDIBLE ITEMS
Dawn, April 10th, 2017

Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: The Balochistan Assembly has unanimously adopted a resolution, demanding an immediate ban on the use of polythene bags for carrying edible items.

Adviser to the Chief Minister on Information Sardar Raza Mohammad Bareach presented the resolution during a session of the assembly which continued till late on Saturday. Speaker Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani presided over the session.

Speaking on the resolution, Mr Bareach said that plastic bags, bottles and other disposable stuff were being used for edible items on a large scale in the province. He said chemicals were used in the manufacturing of such plastic items and research had proved that they were very dangerous for health. The large number of these used plastic bags was also badly affecting the environment, he added.

The adviser said the sale of substandard soft drinks in plastic bottles often caused health issues.

Deputy Opposition Leader Engineer Zamarak Khan Piralizai of Awami National Party strongly supported the resolution and said the government should immediately impose a ban on the use of polythene bags and plastic bottles for edible items. He was of the view that without imposing a ban the practice of using plastic bags for carrying edible items could not be stopped.

Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetiran of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-F) also supported the resolution and said plastic items were affecting the health of people.

Health Minister Rehman Saleh Baloch, while supporting the move, said that the world wanted Pakistan to fulfil its responsibility in protecting the environment. He said the government would take whatever measures were required for protecting the environment.

Provincial Minister Dr Hamid Khan Achakzai talked about the danger of the use of utensils made of plastic.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1326030>

GOVT BANS NON-BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC BAGS

Dawn, April 14th, 2017

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Thursday announced a ban on the production and sale of non-biodegradable plastic bags in the province.

It however said the ban would take effect after three months with its violation punishable by a fine ranging from Rs50,000 to Rs5 million and two years imprisonment.

The announcement was made by PTI MPA Shaukat Yousafzai during a news conference at the Peshawar Press Club.

Mr Yousafzai, who is also the chairman of the government's relevant committee, said the ban had been slapped on plastic bags to ensure provision of clean and healthy environment to the people.

He said non-degradable plastic bags were a menace for environment, which caused diseases, including cancer, clogged drains and created unhygienic conditions.

The lawmaker said the ban had been imposed after the government held thorough meetings with all stakeholders, including businessmen.

Accompanied by forest secretary Nazar Shah and director general of the environmental protection agency Dr Mohammad Bashir, Mr Yousafzai said the government had delayed the ban's enforcement at the request of the business community to enable them to dispose of the available stock of non-biodegradable plastic bags.

He said there would be no leniency against the production and sale of such plastic bags after the ban became effective.

The MPA said the traders failing to clear out non-biodegradable plastic bags in three months would be given fine ranging from Rs50,000 to Rs5 million each and those failing to comply with the ban thereafter would be put behind bars for two years.

He said first, plastic used for the packaging of toffees and chewing gums would be allowed but the use of plastic to cover sweets as well as that of plastic bags would be restricted, and afterwards, the plastic used for packaging would be tested for harmful effects and if it was found to be injurious to health and environment, its use would be banned.

Mr Yousafzai directed all administrative officers including deputy commissioners to begin collecting samples of all plastic bags after the three months period was over.

He said the ban on non-degradable plastic bags wouldn't cause unemployment and that it would ensure provision of clean and healthy environment to the people.

The lawmaker said plastic bags were used abroad but they were biodegradable but ironically, manufacturers used substandard material to make such bags to make unreasonable profits.

He warned against the transportation of non-degradable plastic bags to KP from other provinces and said retailers would be held responsible if they were found buying such bags.

“Neither the production of non-degradable plastic bags will be allowed in the province nor will anyone be allowed to import and sell or use these products after the enforcement of the ban,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1326899/govt-bans-non-biodegradable-plastic-bags>

GOVT EASES ENVIRONMENT CRITERIA FOR CHINESE FIRM

The Express Tribune, April 14th, 2017.

ISLAMABAD: The government has eased the condition of adopting super-critical technology, which is environment-friendly and increases plant efficiency, for a Chinese company that is setting up a coal-fired power plant in Gwadar, Balochistan under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

This is no less than an about-turn over the policy proposed by the Ministry of Water and Power, which asked the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) not to set tariff for the coal-based power projects that had lower specifications than the super-critical technology.

For the coal-based power projects of 300-megawatt generation capacity being built in Gwadar, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC), in a meeting held on March 30, eased the technology criteria.

The ECC took the decision following constitution of a committee on March 28 comprising the law minister, finance secretary and water and power secretary tasked with examining the issue historically including the status of the project and the award of contract without bidding.

Consequently, the law minister presented a report for consideration of the ECC. He said the committee held threadbare discussions on the environmental impact of the project in its meeting on March 29 in the light of environmental laws and the power generation policy of 2015.

The super-critical technology would not be used in the project as it was not economical for power generating units of less than 350MW capacity, he said.

However, he added, the chief secretary of Balochistan had assured them that all relevant provincial environmental laws would be applied during the execution of the project.

After comprehensive discussions, ECC members arrived at a consensus that the project was in line with the applicable environmental laws irrespective of the technology adopted.

The ECC underlined the dire need for keeping a close watch on the application of prevailing environmental laws and regulations to the proposed project in order to protect environment in the area.

It suggested that the Ministry of Climate Change and the Balochistan government should continue to monitor the implementation of environmental laws and regulations in order to ensure a hazard-free atmosphere.

Later, the ECC approved the award of the project to a Chinese company without bidding.

The 300MW coal-based power project was part of CPEC for which Pakistan and Chinese governments signed an agreement in November 2014.

The Chinese nominated China Communication Construction Company (CCCC), a large state-owned infrastructure group, for investment in the project, which was ratified by Pakistan.

However, Islamabad proposed that the nomination may also be forwarded by the National Energy Administration formally through the Chinese embassy in Pakistan, which was later approved in the fifth meeting of the Joint Cooperation Committee on CPEC.

In accordance with the plan, CCCC approached the Private Power and Infrastructure Board in September 2015 for the construction of two power plants of 150MW each based on consumption of imported coal.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1383113/govt-eases-environment-criteria-chinese-firm/>

‘WASTEWATER BEING RELEASED INTO GORANO RESERVOIR’

Dawn, April 15th, 2017

Hanif Samoon

MITHI: Residents of Gorano and some other villages of Tharparkar on Friday expressed their deep concern over release of wastewater into the controversial reservoir being built across their lands.

Speaking to local reporters they noted that Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (which is executing the project in Block II of the Thar coal fields) had started releasing wastewater into the reservoir, locally known as Gorano dam.

Advocate Leela Ram and his associates who have been spearheading a sustained campaign against the reservoir for more than five months, said the wastewater being discharged into the reservoir would definitely be destructive to the lands belonging to the local people as it was being extracted from coal mines.

“Throwing caution to the wind, the company has resorted to releasing the mine water which is bound to destroy the arable lands and cause damage to the ecology of the entire desert region on a large scale,” said Advocate Ram.

He observed that the gushing water had already hit three acres of the land coming in the way, adding that it was being discharged at a point 35 kilometres away from the Block II site. The land belonged to the Meghwar community, he said.

The protesting villagers also noted that discharging of wastewater had been started while the construction work of the reservoir was in its initial stage.

They recalled that the firm had only a few days ago came out with an offer of conducting a fresh survey of the lands to be affected by the reservoir project, and questioned the release of water without the consent of other stakeholders.

They urged the authorities concerned to look into the “high-handedness” of the firm and stop it from going ahead with its plan before the matter was decided by the Sindh High Court.

On behalf of the company, its spokesman, Mohsin Babar, said that the activity of releasing mine water into the reservoir was not started on Friday, rather it had been continuing for the last two months.

He told Dawn it was true that the matter of reservoir construction was pending adjudication but the court had not ordered a halt to the construction work nor did it stop the firm from releasing mine water into it.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1326996/wastewater-being-released-into-gorano-reservoir>

SC COMMISSION SEEKS IMMEDIATE STEPS TO STOP FLOW OF TOXIC EFFLUENT INTO PHULELI CANAL

Dawn, April 16th, 2017

Mohammad Hussain Khan

HYDERABAD: The Supreme Court commission tasked with inspecting water supply and drainage installations and quality of drinking water being supplied to people in Sindh has asked the authorities concerned to form a short-term plan immediately to stop flow of toxic runoff and sewage into Phuleli canal.

The one-man commission headed by Justice Mohammad Iqbal Kalhoro said during his second visit to the canal and other sites following a hearing at the Sindh High Court’s Hyderabad circuit bench on Saturday that the plan must be put in place till work on a federally-funded scheme for a modern treatment plant being executed under the Hyderabad Development Package was completed. The scheme was aimed at treating industrial and domestic waste water before releasing it into the canal.

The judge was highly displeased during his visit to Darya Khan pumping station where the plant was being established. He asked why no plan had been prepared thus far and the canal continued to receive toxic effluent and municipal waste.

He formed a committee to immediately devise the plan for stopping flow of toxic effluent into Phuleli and asked it to submit a report on April 22.

An irrigation officer, Ejaz Qureshi, who accompanied the judge suggested that a reverse osmosis plant on rent could be installed to treat the effluent. Dr Ghulam Murtaza of Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources and water technologist Dr Ahsan Siddiqui disagreed with the officer but the judge said the proposal should not be dismissed outright. “I want an immediate plan till the treatment plant is set up,” he remarked.

Hyderabad Commissioner Dr Suhail Rajput agreed with him, saying the effluent's treatment was necessary considering the fact that the scheme was not yet completed and its cost also must have escalated by now. The federal government would have to be approached for its execution, which was a lengthy process, he said.

Masood Jumani, HDA's director general, said that Rs500 million out of total cost of Rs915m had been spent on the treatment plant which was a modernised effluent treatment plant of 22 million gallons per day.

Justice Kalhoro directed Hyderabad sessions judge to visit the remaining filtration and treatment plants along with managing director of Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa) and Hyderabad deputy commissioner Anwar Ali Shar within a week and submit a report about quality of water supplied by the plants.

He directed SSP Irfan Ali Baloch to set up a police picket around the filter plant to stop trespass by anti-social elements from the area and ordered Hyderabad commissioner and managing director of Wasa to construct boundary wall around filtration plants and water lagoons with barbed wire on top to protect them.

He asked the officials to file reports in a month.

He observed that only one part of filtration process — chlorination — was being carried out and until complete process of filtration was ensured quality of water would not improve.

He regretted that no strategy had been formed to make things better and ground realities suggested that no substantial progress had been achieved since the directives were passed by the apex court.

He lamented that authorities did not show concern over the worsening situation caused by dumping of municipal and industrial waste into canals in Hyderabad.

He expressed his displeasure over delay in repair of pipes required for chlorination of water in the filtration plant and was informed by a Wasa officer, Saleemuddin, that post-chlorination of water had started on trial basis and a month's time was needed to repair pipes so that pre-, intermediate and post-chlorination of drinking water — three separate stages of chlorination process — was ensured.

Hyderabad deputy commissioner Anwar Ali Shar complained that the administration was facing FIRs for its drive against encroachments from banks of canals. He was told the commission would look into it but the administration should continue to do its job.

Justice Kalhoro observed that except for an operation in Seri for removing encroachments from the canals' banks nothing tangible had been observed so far.

He directed the officials that action against encroachers should be across the board and not selective as he had received complaints that only poor people were being targeted and those who had built plazas were being spared.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1327179/sc-commission-seeks-immediate-steps-to-stop-flow-of-toxic-effluent-into-phuleli-canal>

UNDERGROUND COAL GASIFICATION

Business Recorder, 16 April, 2017

Syed Akhtar Ali

There is an R&D project under which Thar Coal is being gasified underground (hence the name Underground Coal Gasification-UCG) for electricity production and possibly for producing other products such as fertilizers and chemicals. The project has managed to attract quite some attention as well as controversy. There are proponents and opponents having strong and weak arguments defending their positions. We will take the stock of project and try to guide the readers as to the merits and demerits of the arguments and the project itself.

UCG is an old process of gasifying coal mostly developed in Russia and Uzbekistan. Coal gas used to be piped for the usage in homes and elsewhere before the World War II. There are three processes through which coal can be used productively, including UCG. One is of digging the earth and getting the coal out and burn it in boilers of the power plants and produce electricity. Currently, in Pakistan, there is a major move to utilise both imported and Thar coal in the CPEC programme and outside of it.

The other is of gasifying coal, once coal is brought onto the surface through underground mining or open-pit mining. Coal is half-burnt (under sub-stoichiometric conditions, plainly speaking, with less air or oxygen) in closed pressure vessels and a mixture of carbonmonooxide, CO₂, and hydrogen is produced which has a calorific value. The process of Coal Gasification in vessels over-ground is well established for many years.

Fertilizers and chemicals are being produced, especially, in China and South Africa, using this process. Big and credible Companies like GE, Texaco, Conco-Phillips, Lurgi and Shell have developed and perfected their processes. Thus per se, there is no doubt as to the gasification of coal and even of its economics.

However, UCG is not commercially established and could not proceed beyond R&D projects in several countries. There was a surge of interest since the last decade which unfortunately could not be sustained for a variety of reasons. And under the same surge, Pakistan also launched this programme under the courageous and enthusiastic leadership of famous nuclear and missile scientist Dr Samar Mubarakmand.

What I can testify is that he has been able to successfully gasify gas and producing electricity out of it and is doing that currently and in that the stated R&D objectives have been achieved. However, for such projects, third-party validation is usually required for approving more resources or closing down the project or continuing with it in some form or the other. According to the Minister of Planning Prof Ahsan Iqbal, the same has not been provided. I can perhaps also testify that this is true as well.

Third Party validation is a must and should be financed by the Planning Commission, as resources are not left with the UCG project and also because the independence requirements dictate so. Bulldozing

the next stage of the project through press campaigns is not a very good idea and it should have been avoided.

Many people including myself appreciate the efforts of Dr Mubarakmand and his able team. Sincere and persistent R&D efforts are in short supply in Pakistan and those who do it must be appreciated and encouraged. However, there are issues and questions on the road ahead. Dr Mubarakmand insists that further resources be committed to commercialize his project to a capacity of 50-100MW as against a few MWs that he claims he is producing and consuming itself.

What skeptics argue is that if some net electricity is being produced, why it is not being supplied to nearby villages or road-lighting or to the nearby projects. Is it not the case, God-forbid, that no net energy is being produced or the efficiency is below 10%, not worthwhile to be pursued? Data and answers should have come out of the project in public domain in writing. Sceptics also argue that nobody in the world is pursuing UCG and that if UCG and our R&D are worthwhile, why don't IPPs and foreign developers take interest in it.

Unfortunately, coal is going down and companies are withdrawing from coal. In older times, companies could invest for the hack of it. Scientists like ours cannot go possibly beyond R&D. There are unresolved issues such as environmental impact, sustaining an interrupted and sustained combustion, coal wastage and efficiency (it is apprehended that only 10% of coal may be utilized in the process and the rest being rendered unutilized for good resulting in simple waste and thus poor economics).

There are issues like this that have to be answered by the third-party validation. Besides, commercializing requires a variety of resources and technologies which may not be possibly mobilized or available within our national system. Financing of the R&D itself, perhaps was a major enterprise and all decision-makers and stakeholders have to be appreciated in this respect.

There are other technologies which should receive the attention of our scientists and decision-makers; Coal Slurry and coal Briquettes. Significant R&D has been done by PCSIR on coal slurry making under very limited financial resources developed directly by the current chairman of PCSIR. I have personally seen their work and samples.

Coal slurry can be used as a substitute of Furnace Oil and Diesel. Recently, quite some interest has developed in this area and diesel engines have been modified and adjusted to work on coal slurry. Under this process, coal is micronized and water added along with some additives. The resultant slurry as thin as varnish is thus produced. It may not be used in small vehicles, but can be used in furnaces and large engines including possibly heavy trucks used in mining.

Similarly, coal briquettes can be made after grinding coal, adding water and additives and make bricks or what is called briquettes which are used in industries as an energy source. It can be used as home fuel in rural areas which may help save deforestation.

On the other hand, abandoning the project to be depreciated and stolen away in the Thar Desert may not be a good idea as well. There should be new technologies and skills that should be absorbed, retained and documented. It should serve as a focal point and a nucleus for allied research. The project should be fenced. PCSIR itself may be the right institution to conduct third party validation and to suggest as to how to go ahead in consultation with the team of Dr Mubarakmand.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/04/16/16-page/867454-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 3 RD TO APRIL 9 TH 2017

‘SAVING THE LAST BIRDS’

Dawn, April 3rd, 2017

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: “The quiet departure of avian species indicates city’s fast-deteriorating environment. While many bird species have lost their habitats thanks to increasing pollution and the so-called development, an amazing variety of birds still exists in the rural parts of Karachi and along its beach. We must save these last sanctuaries of birds, now facing serious threat from private developers.”

This was how Mirza Naim Beg, a wildlife photographer, responded when asked about his wonderful photographic collection that he had put on display on Sunday on the premises of Mrs Haque Academy.

Titled ‘Disappearing Bird Life of Sindh’, the show featured 30 photographs taken from Karachi, Kathore, part of Gadap town, Tharparkar, Larkana, Tando Mohammad Khan and Mirpurkhas.

A long-legged buzzard flies in the Phase 8 of Defense Housing Authority.—Mirza Naim Beg

An avid photographer for the past three decades, Mr Beg gradually developed an interest in wildlife photography and started capturing birds through his camera three years ago.

“We are losing all our natural gifts and I thought it to be a great opportunity to record them before we lose them all,” he said, adding that it was his third show in Karachi on the avian diversity.

Mr Beg has recorded more than 275 species across the country, around 180 from Sindh alone. Over the past years, he has been a frequent visitor to the interior parts of Sindh as well as to the Margalla hills in Islamabad, Bhalwal and Kalar Kahar in Sargodha and Chakwal districts of Punjab, some places still rich in avian diversity, he says.

An important feature of his collection, however, is to record a range of beautiful birds in and around Karachi that the city seems to have lost a long time ago. His collection includes pictures of plovers, herons, sanderlings, gulls (at least four species) stilts, grey francolins, red-wattled lapwings, lesser whitethroat, shrikes (four species) rosy starlings, kestrels, steppe eagle, flamingos and painted storks, which come from Siberia in winters.

“I have recorded more than 30 species of birds, some of them, never photographed before, for instance, the yellow-wattled lapwings and the grey Francolin teetar in the Phase 8 of Defence Housing Authority (DHA), where I live for the past eight years,” he pointed out.

He regretted that the bushes where these birds had found refuge were cut off by the DHA as it carried out its development activities. His suggestion to create a bird sanctuary was paid no attention by the authorities concerned.

“Wildlife conservation is not a hi-tech science. It can be as simple as making no disturbance in their habitat that means that the trees, the thorny bushes where they live shouldn’t be destroyed. The way construction is taking place, the DHA, Phase 8 will soon lose its bird diversity and will be left with only crows and kites,” he lamented.

In developed countries, he said, societies took extraordinary measures to protect wildlife habitats. This was so because these small creatures were an essential part of our ecosystem and played a critical role in keeping it healthy.

Replying to question as to how he managed to find a variety of birds in Karachi, he said: “They are still around, though away from human population. I always say you will not see them if you are not looking for them. I work with locals, show them pictures and know where they still occur.”

According to him, a good site to watch birds is Kathore, hardly 20km from Toll Plaza, which is now under serious threat on account of massive construction by a private developer along the Superhighway.

Rampant indiscriminate hunting, he said, was another reason for decline in bird population and there was a need for action on part of wildlife authorities.

“I have twice stopped netters trying to catch birds in Phase 8. Please try and stop private developers from going into Kathore. Please come forward to save your wildlife.

“As citizens we can at least increase awareness of this loss. Keep bird feeders at home and provide water in summers,” he said when asked to give some suggestions on how to conserve bird sanctuaries.

A one-hour talk on wildlife conservation was also part of the show.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1324421>

SOCIAL IMPACT OF COAL MINING IN THAR

Dawn, Economic & Business, April 3rd, 2017

The projects with more benefits and least adverse environmental, economic or social impacts are considered fruitful for the people.

One easy and immediate way of solving the energy crisis in Pakistan is to exploit coal energy because of a shortage of gas and the lack of consensus on the construction of new big hydro projects. Thar coal project will not only bring development in the area in the form infrastructure and new job opportunities but will also resolve energy crisis.

However in the course of a survey of the ground realities, interaction with SECMC officials and take from the concerned villagers, some environmental and social issues related to utilisation of Thar coal surfaced which need to be addressed in the interest of the local community.

So far coal mining activities have started at one block only and the issue of disposal of water waste at Gorano depression has triggered a protest from many villagers. They are protesting against the construction of Gorano pond/dam to collect mine effluent.

Villagers ask: Where will the water waste be disposed of when all blocks become active, as Gorano pond has a capacity of receiving effluent from Block-II only? Will separate ponds for each block be constructed and the soil, water, and environment of all of Thar be spoiled?

It is recommended that, if possible, the effluent from all blocks should be discharged directly into Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD) near Shadi Large town by laying main drainage pipeline as there is enough slope between coal field and LBOD for the gravity flow.

Construction and ponding of Gorano dam with saline water may alter the ecology, morphology, biodiversity, groundwater hydrology, local weather and soil composition of the area. Hence, detailed research on the direct and indirect impacts of the saline water storage, seepage, contaminant/solute transport and evaporation should be conducted.

The use of dewatered water for bio-saline agriculture should be tested as it contains salt concentration tolerable for growing many salt tolerant crops. If irrigated agriculture area expands, it will not only improve the livelihood of the local population but it will also have a positive impact on the environment. Technical support on bio-saline can be sought from Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam.

Aqua farming should also be tried and encouraged at Gorano dam/pond for shrimp and other seawater fish farming.

The use of extracted groundwater from coal mine area having TDS of about 5,000 ppm can be considered for use in power plant and for drinking purpose after treatment through Reverse Osmosis (RO) process. It will not only reduce water inflow into Gorano dam but will also be more economical than bringing LBOD effluent having TDS of more of than 7,000 ppm and treating it at Nabisar RO plants at the cost of Rs30bn.

Priority should be given to locals in all jobs in Thar Coal Field. Only when technical persons are not available locally, outsiders may be hired.

Trees, shrubs, and grass along the roadsides and Gorano pond embankments should be planted using trickle irrigation system which will minimise wind erosion and silting of the pond and have a positive impact on the local environment.

There is also a need compensate all those farmers who are likely to lose their earnings due to the construction of the plant and have 'Yaksala'. They may also be considered for jobs in the mining projects.

To minimise seepage, the bed and banks of the Gorano and Dukkar Chho ponds, if possible, should be lined with clay; geomembrane or any soil sealant.

Instead of conventional power plants, Supercritical and Ultra-Supercritical coal-fired power plants should be used so as to minimise emissions (including carbon dioxide, sulphur, and mercury) for cleaner and safer environment and increase efficiency and decrease fuel costs per megawatt.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1324567/social-impact-of-coal-mining-in-thar>

SIX MORE FIRMS SUBMIT EOIS FOR MINE-MOUTH POWER PLANTS

Dawn, April 4th, 2017

MITHI: Six more firms have submitted formal expressions of interest (EOIs) in installing mine-mouth power plants in Tharparkar and procuring coal from Thar Coal Block II.

This is in addition to three power plants already under construction in Block II that would produce 4,000MW from just one per cent of the huge coal deposits for the next 50 years.

This was stated by Shamsuddin Shaikh, chief executive officer (CEO) of the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) while talking to Dawn on Monday.

Out of the 175 billion tonnes of coal deposits available in Tharparkar district, Block II has just 1.75 billion tonnes of it being exploited by the SECMC, a joint venture between Engro Corporation and the government of Sindh.

Mr Shaikh was of the view that a 330MW power plant was being constructed at a fast pace along with construction of two more 330MW plants initiated by Thar Energy Limited and Thal Nova Limited.

He said the Asian Development Bank (ADB)-funded Jamshoro Power Company Limited (JPCL) had also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the SECMC to supply 0.8 million tonnes of coal annually to produce 1,320MW of power at Jamshoro.

“We would be able to sign six more contracts at the end of this year for installation of mine-mouth power plants. This would produce total 4,000MW electricity from Thar Coal Block II only,” said Mr Shaikh.

He said that the mining project had achieved 72 metres of mine depth successfully while the construction work at Engro’s power plant was also ahead of schedule.

In reply to a question, he hoped that commissioning of all power plants would create more than 50,000 jobs, majority of which would go to the locals of Tharparkar.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1324631>

PROTEST AGAINST ROUND-THE-CLOCK DUST, SMOKE EMISSION

Dawn, April 5th, 2017

THATTA: Dozens of citizens belonging to the twin towns of Makli and Thatta took to the streets here on Tuesday in protest against the intensifying dust and smoke emissions from the stone crushing plant installed by the Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) very close to a polytechnic institute, some private hospitals, NGO offices and shopping arcades etc. The plant is said to operate round-the-clock.

Led by Faisal Sattar, Syed Azhar Shah and social worker Syed Rizwan Shah, the protesters raised slogans against pollution.

Carrying placards, they marched through the main road and converged on the Thatta-Karachi National Highway and staged a sit-in, suspending vehicular traffic for more than an hour.

Addressing the demonstrators, Faisal Sattar, Azhar Shah and Rizwan Shah claimed that since the installation of the heavy stone crushing plant at the Makli bypass by the FWO, the local population was feeling miserable.

They contended that the heavy pollution had made the lives of people, especially patients suffering from asthma, skin, eye and stomach problems, difficult.

They said that as per rules, the construction company should have established the stone crushing plant far from human settlements, but despite repeated requests, nobody paid heed.

During the protest, Thatta Headquarter ASP Farooq Ahmed on behalf of the construction company contacted the protesting citizens and ensured installation of a filter plant in the crushing plant within one week to minimise the dust and smoke emission and avert any damage to human settlements.

On the assurance, the demonstrators dispersed peacefully.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1324847/protest-against-round-the-clock-dust-smoke-emission>

CPEC ROUTE: PBIF ALERTS GOVT ON CO2-EMITTING TRUCKS

Business Recorder, 8 April 2017

KARACHI: President of Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum (PBIF) Mian Zahid Hussain has demanded of the government to study the environmental impact of the carbon dioxide-emitting trucks on CPEC, thoroughly, and adopt measures to handle it.

“It is estimated that around 7000 large trucks will use the economic corridor daily, producing 36.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum that will be 25 percent of the total national emission of CO₂ in the country,” said Mian Zahid, adding that proper planning is needed to get maximum benefit of the game changing project of CPEC as slip-ups can inflict irreparable loss the economy.

He alerted that the pollution would speed up melting of the glaciers. He said it would adversely affect environment, agriculture, tourism, water system and general health in Gilgit-Baltistan which would also result in disaster. He said that the melting glaciers would not only damage Gilgit-Baltistan but would have a very negative impact on the whole agricultural and industrial system in the country.

“A number of economic zones under CPEC and dozens of power plants will also increase the pollution which must be tackled carefully,” he urged.

The PBIF preside said that the economic corridor would generate millions of jobs including 50,000 jobs for truck drivers in which people of Pakistan should get proper share.

He advised that a few families or selective people alone should not benefit from the project. He urged that secrecy should be avoided, all stakeholders including chambers and trade association should be taken on board so that the expectation of masses should be fulfilled and that would increase support of the masses for the project.

“Increased transparency will augment support of the common people for the project and also bring Pakistan and China further closer,” he said, adding that public support would help foil the nefarious designs of the enemies of the project.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/04/08/3-page/865466-news.html>

SC CONCERNED OVER SINDH'S WASTE DISPOSAL AGREEMENT

The Express Tribune, 9 April 2017

The top court has expressed serious reservations over an agreement between the Sindh government and a Chinese company for the disposal of solid waste in Karachi.

“Solid Waste Management Board Karachi has to pay almost \$29 per tonne to collect solid waste from front point and to dispose of it at a transit point.

Each truck normally can carry 12-15 tonnes of solid waste, which means more than \$435 per truck will be paid to the Chinese company by the local government in foreign exchange for the aforesaid job. This amount if converted into Pakistan rupees will come to more than Rs46,110 approximately,” the Supreme Court judges said.

Hearing a constitutional petition against the Sindh government and others for their failure to provide potable water to people, the court wondered whether the project was feasible.

“On one hand the Sindh government is paying public money towards the salaries of the sanitary workers and on the other hand through the agreement with the Chinese agency it is required to pay in foreign exchange for the job which ex-facie would not improve the disposal of solid waste in Karachi”, it was observed in the 64-page verdict.

Justice Amir Hani Muslim, who retired as SC judge on March 31 has authored the judgment, wherein he observed that there is nothing on record to show that the board or the local government has even marked any land fill site for disposal of the solid waste which needs to be transported from the transit point for disposal to land fill site.

Likewise, the bench has expressed dissatisfaction over the skill and expertise of the in charge of Sindh Solid Waste Management Board as he has no administrative experience of the job description.

The court observed that if this board is allowed to exist, it would be a permanent liability on the Sindh government.

“We under these circumstances are compelled to observe that this court has serious reservations with regard to the continuation of Sindh Solid Waste Management Board programmes, which have failed to deliver in any part of Sindh including Karachi, and as the government continues to also pay to Local Government Departments for the same work,” the decision added.

The court observed that such amounts need to be utilised by strengthening the departments which are meant for the aforesaid job. “Running a parallel organisation to perform the same function leads to bad governance and lack of responsibility and accountability, which is sadly the order of the day, as

clearly demonstrated from the material collected by the commission and by viewing the records. Experiments should end now,” the bench stressed.

It said that the non- functional board which has never performed should be dissolved by transferring its functions to the local bodies as provided under the rules of business. In doing this, the agonies of the residents of the cities will be minimised.

The court also asked the commission comprising of Justice Muhammad Iqbal Kalhor appointed pursuant to SC’s direction to continue to work.

Last month, the same commission in its 130-page comprehensive report had highlighted the government’s failures to provide safe drinking water and sanitation facilities to people across the province of Sindh.

Now the SC has asked the commission to ensure compliance of the SC’s directions and its recommendations contained in its earlier report.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1378578/sc-concerned-sindhs-waste-disposal-agreement/>

May 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 29TH TO JUNE 4TH 2017

NOT A DIME SPENT ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Express Tribune, May 30, 2017

Ammar Sheikh

LAHORE: Environment protection, recreation, religion and cultural activities were clearly the most ignored sectors as the Punjab government spent the least amount of development money on them in Fiscal Year 2016-17, despite sizeable allocations.

According to a summary of the development budget expenditure in FY 2016-17, not a single dime has been spent on environment protection up till April 30, despite Rs185 million being allocated in the budget.

The document also estimated that around Rs154.167 million, or 83.33%, will be spent during the fiscal year. However, as stated earlier, the provincial government spent nothing.

A recent report revealed that the entire province lacked an efficient mechanism to monitor emissions or the quality of air. Therefore, it was unable to identify the real causes of pollution. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has only one operational ambient air quality monitoring system, which was purchased in December 2016.

Apart from environment protection, the Punjab government was able to spend only 12.94% of the development budget allocated for recreation, culture and religion. Documents of the Finance department, available with The Express Tribune, revealed that Rs3.04 billion were allocated for

recreation, culture and religion. It was estimated that around Rs2.54 billion would be spent. However, only Rs394.637 million ever saw the light of day.

According to the document, the total development budget for Punjab was Rs550 billion for Fiscal Year 2016-17. Only Rs263.86 billion, or 47.97%, was spent during the same time. The biggest piece of the pie was spent on health.

An amount of Rs31.77 billion was allocated for the year and Rs29.62 billion, around 93.24%, was spent. The second highest expenditure was for general public services as an amount of Rs65.66 billion was allocated and around 82.81%, or Rs54.37 billion, was spent.

The documents revealed that the largest allocation was for economic affairs, which included general economic, commercial and labour affairs, agriculture, food, irrigation forestry and fishing, fuel and energy, mining and manufacturing, construction and transport and other industries.

The economic affairs development budget was of Rs301.691 billion, however, the government was able to spend only 36.17 %, or Rs109.91 billion, out of the allocated sum for 2016-17.

Similarly for public order and safety affairs, 41.67% of the total budget, equaling Rs5.43 billion was spent out of the total Rs13.03 billion. For housing and community amenities, 42.78% or Rs28.75 billion was spent in the current fiscal year out of a total of Rs67.2 billion. For education affairs and services, 52.56% of the allocated budget or Rs33.12 billion was spent out of the total Rs63.01 billion. Social protection was allocated Rs4.39 billion and Rs3.03 billion were spent, amounting to 69.01%.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1422466/not-dime-spent-environmental-protection/>

CHINESE FIRM GETS LOI FOR GWADAR COAL POWER PROJECT

Dawn, May 31, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB) on Tuesday issued a Letter of Interest (LoI) to China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) for the development of 300-megawatts imported coal-fired power project in Gwadar at a cost of Rs55 billion.

The project is part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). PPIB Managing Director Shah Jahan Mirza and CCCC Vice President Xu Jun signed the document.

CCCC will develop the 300MW power project by utilising imported coal in Gwadar.

The company will obtain tariff approval from the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) and start construction after achieving financial close. The project has already been approved by the Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) of the CPEC and the PPIB Board.

Gwadar is blessed with a deep-sea, warm-water port, which is considered a crucial link between the ambitious One Belt, One Road and Maritime Silk Road projects.

With the addition of 300MW Gwadar Power Project, the portfolio of power generation projects being processed by PPIB has increased to nine coal-based projects of 8,220MW and three hydro-based projects of 2,714MW, constituting a total of 12 projects of 10,934MW under the CPEC.

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet allowed the award of Rs55bn worth of 300MW coal power project in Gwadar to a Chinese firm a month ago without bidding at a single-point meeting.

The authorisation was given a special case under Rule 5 of the procurement rules that allowed project award in exceptional circumstances. The rule stated that “whenever these (Pakistan Procurement Regulatory Authority) rules are in conflict with an obligation of commitment of the federal government arising out an international treaty or an agreement with state or states or any international financial institutions, the provisions of such international treaty or agreement shall prevail to the extent of such conflict”.

Originally, the project was of 600MW capacity, but was reduced to 300MW on the request of the Chinese in November 2014.

At a meeting of the Joint Energy Working Group in August, the Chinese government nominated CCCC, a state-owned entity, to invest in the project and Pakistan readily agreed to oblige. The company requested the PPIB in September 2015 for the development of 300MW plant on imported coal using supercritical technology.

Reports suggest the PPIB put on the record of the ECC that the proposed plant and machinery of the Gwadar project were not of supercritical technology.

The summary to the ECC claimed that in November 2016, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on the power ministry’s request desired the ministry and the PPIB to proceed on the earlier application of CCCC for the grant of LoI/letter of support for the project “after completion of necessary legal formalities as the project was part of the CPEC”.

The government announced in April 2015 the power generation policy. The policy required the project should be covered by bilateral agreements between the government of Pakistan and foreign governments, thus enabling the exemption of pre-award process and procedures, including pre-qualification.

The ECC approved the proposal by the power ministry for authorising the PPIB to proceed with the award of the project to CCCC under Rule 5 of Public Procurement Rules 2004.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1336376>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 22ND TO MAY 28TH 2017

FAO-LED MAPPING OF SMOG IN PUNJAB

Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, May 22nd, 2017

Amin Ahmed

THE FAO has initiated a technical assistance project on the Punjab agriculture department’s request at the start of last winter season when heavy smog engulfed major parts of the province, especially in Lahore.

The project is to identify the relationship between smog and the unsafe agricultural practices like crop residue burning by farmers in the rice and wheat belts of the province.

Crop residue burning is believed to contribute in the formation of smog – a visible kind of air pollution that combines smoke and fog. Factors causing this kind of pollution include nitrogen oxide, sulfur oxide, ozone, smoke or particulates.

The project, called ‘TCP R-SMOG’ is in line with the third priority area of the FAO country framework for Pakistan which relates to increased capacity of the government institutions related to designing and implementing the policies and strategies for integrated natural resource management and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Common sources of smog include coal emissions, power plants, vehicular emissions, industrial emissions, forest and agricultural practices such as fires and crop residue burning and photochemical reactions of these emissions.

The one-year remote sensing for ‘Spatio-Temporal Mapping of Smog’ in Punjab and identification of the underlying causes using GIS technologies launched last week, would determine the levels of air pollutants in areas where crop residue burning is in practice.

While speaking at the launch of the study, the FAO representative for Pakistan, Mina Dowlatchahi said that an action plan will be developed to contain unsafe agriculture practices such as crop residue burning and propose necessary steps to reduce the contribution of agriculture-related practices towards the formation of smog.

The study will also provide scientific evidence to understand the impact of crop residue burning and the need for adequate mitigation and adaptation strategies in the future.

Smog can cause a plant to lose 10-40pc growth, according to the University of California. Agriculture globally loses \$2-6bn per year as a result of smog-driven reduced productivity.

The R-SMOG project uses satellite-based measurements. Satellite data of atmospheric pollutants are becoming more widely used in decision-making and environmental management activities of public, private sector and non-profit organisations. Air quality is important to our health and environment, but sources of contamination are often difficult to monitor.

Remote sensing methods and GIS technology provides powerful decision making tools by providing spatio-temporal satellite images. GIS and RS methods offer management, visualisation and analysis of air pollution data with spatial and time dependent attributes.

Dr Muhammad Munir Ahmed, Director of Climate Change and Alternate Energy and Water Resource Division of NARC, said that the burning of residues not only causes smog but also affects the fertility of soil and, eventually, the quality of crops. He believes that farmers should adopt scientific methods to dispose off the residue which also has economic benefits.

This FAO project will also undertake other factors like urban tree cutting, vehicular and industrial emissions, and increase in number of road vehicles along with others to understand the underlying causes of smog.

Dr Muhammad Tariq, Director Barani Research Institute Chakwal believes the study will prove instrumental in moving forward to tackle the smog situation in the province if used to create awareness programmes for the farming community in this regard.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1334572>

THAR MINING FIRM TO SUPPLY 1.9M TONS OF COAL TO TWO POWER PLANTS

The Express Tribune, May 23rd, 2017.

KARACHI: With the aim of increasing the share of domestic resources in energy mix, Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) signed two separate agreements with ThalNova and Thar Energy for the supply of 1.9 million tons of coal per annum each from Thar deposits, said a statement.

After the commissioning of these power projects, SECMC will be mining 7.6 million tons of coal per annum from Thar coal block-II, which will bring down coal tariff to around \$41.35 per ton.

ThalNova is a joint venture between Thal Power (Private) Limited and Nova Powergen Limited, which are subsidiaries of Thal Limited and Novatex Limited respectively.

Thar Energy Limited is a subsidiary of Hub Power Company (Hubco), which is one of the largest independent power producers (IPPs) in Pakistan.

Thar Energy and ThalNova are setting up mine-mouth power plants of 330 megawatts each at Thar block-II, which will be fully capable of running 100% on the domestic coal production. Both the power plants are scheduled to be commissioned by early 2020.

Earlier in April 2016, SECMC and Engro Powergen Thar Limited achieved combined financial close for the supply of 3.8 million tons of coal per annum to the latter.

Currently, the project to mine 3.8 million tons of coal and establish a 660MW power plant is progressing ahead of schedule and is expected to come online by June 2019.

The coal supply agreements were signed by SECMC CEO Shamsuddin Shaikh, Hubco and Thar Energy CEO Khalid Mansoor, ThalNova CEO Khalid Siraj Subhani and COO Rana Zulfiqar at SECMC's office in Karachi.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1416569/thar-mining-firm-supply-1-9m-tons-coal-two-power-plants/>

PM TO INAUGURATE LARGEST COAL POWER PROJECT TOMORROW

Business Recorder, May 24, 2017

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Shahbaz Sharif said on Tuesday that Pakistan's largest 1320MW coal power project is going to be formally inaugurated on Thursday by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

"This project costing 1.8 billion dollars has been completed in a record period of time under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The foundation stone of this project was laid on 31 July 2015,

and it has been completed in a record period of 22 months. Till date 660MW of electricity through this project has been added to the national grid,” the chief minister said.

He said there was a time in the past when agreements were signed but were never implemented.

Sharif said during the 70 years’ history of Pakistan thousands of agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) were signed but quite few of them were materialized. “That is why I have lost trust in MoUs. I try to enter into agreements. The speed with which the accords signed during Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to Pakistan in April 2015 have been implemented has surprised the whole world from Washington to Tokyo and from Delhi to Moscow,” Shahbaz said

The Chief Minister expressed these views while addressing the concluding session of second international seminar on investment opportunities in Punjab.

On the occasion, more than 60 agreements and MoUs were signed. Provincial ministers, diplomats, consul generals of China and Turkey, members of the parliament, chief secretary, investors from 26 countries of the world, and local traders and industrialists attended the seminar.

He said the political and military leadership had provided best security to all the CPEC projects, adding the Punjab government had set up special protection unit which was providing security to CPEC and other important projects on its own.

He also said that IMF, World Bank, Moody’s and other international institutions are acknowledging the improved economy in Pakistan; while the economy of Pakistan has been termed as the emerging economy. He said this seminar has proved success from every respect as more than 400 investors from 26 countries had gathered under one roof.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/05/24/11-page/877251-news.html>

NEW GARBAGE COLLECTION SYSTEM SPARKS CONCERNS Faiza Ilyas

Dawn, May 25, 2017

KARACHI: Some major problems with the proposed new garbage collection system came to light when details of the project were shared with stakeholders during a public hearing of its Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report organised on Wednesday at a local hotel by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa).

While concerns over the government’s “absolute failure so far” to ensure proper disposal of garbage in the city, particularly hazardous medical waste, dominated the event’s proceedings, one of the major concerns raised pertained to the fact that the project, which claimed to be based on modern waste disposal methods, did not have a system to segregate waste at source.

The EIA report also overlooked the issue.

Segregation of waste at source stressed in Sepa public hearing

The public hearing was called to discuss the EIA report of the project titled Establishment of six garbage transfer stations with material recovery and refuse derived fuel facilities in Karachi.

The garbage stations, according to the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB), the project proponent, would be developed at the old Irani Asphalt Plant, Mewashah graveyard, District West (eight acres), Deh Ganjiaro in District Malir (40 acres), Sharafi Goth in the Korangi Industrial Area (10.14 acres), old asphalt plant in Korangi township (4.13 acres), Deh Okewari in Gulshan-i-Iqbal (3.5 acres) and Korangi township near the naval/Coast Guard base (11.47 acres).

Highlighting their concerns, stakeholders said that mixing non-infectious municipal waste with highly infectious medical waste being dumped in every nook and corner of the city by clinics, maternity homes, laboratories, blood banks and hospitals, was a serious public health hazard, but the subject had been ignored in the project.

It was also questioned that how segregation of municipal waste from the highly harmful industrial waste would be ensured in the proposed system.

“Steps must be taken to ensure bio-safety of all workers who would be involved in the project,” said senior engineer A. A. Chandani.

It was also inquired why the government could not introduce a door-to-door garbage collection system in the present project to address the problem of infectious agents’ spread.

There were also queries over the presence of over 4,000 ‘kuchra kundis’ (garbage dumps) in the city and the fate of hundreds and thousands of poor people, a majority of them young boys dependent on garbage for survival, if the government planned to remove those dumps.

Some participants complained over the prolonged time taken by authorities to lift waste from garbage dumps and said overflowing dumps and dustbins, recently placed by the SSWMB in some areas of the city, were a common sight in the city.

On hazardous medical waste, officials representing the board, Sepa and the company, Environmental Management Consultants which has carried out the project EIA, argued that all healthcare facilities were bound under the Sindh Solid Waste Hospital Management Rules 2014 to properly dispose of their waste on their own and its violations could be taken up by Sepa.

Director of the board Dr Abdul Karim Jamali explained that vehicles carrying waste to the garbage stations and then to the landfill site would be covered, garbage dumps would not be removed and the government’s ultimate goal was to move towards door-to-door garbage collection, which would take time to materialise.

“The project would be implemented in phases and it would take two to three years to complete. There is no shortage of funds,” he told the audience, admitting that at present landfill sites were actually garbage dumping sites and would be developed scientifically in the following phase.

Answering a question, he said the municipal staff of East and South districts now received salaries from the board and there was no conflict between the board or the district municipal corporations or the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation.

A feasibility study on Karachi's medical waste, he said, was being conducted and would be ready in a few months.

Some questions, including whether the dumping of garbage at six stations in the city would negatively impact the surrounding communities and how plastic waste would be handled, remained unanswered.

Earlier, a presentation highlighting the project's need, its objectives and some main operational features was shared with the audience according to which solid waste, after its collection through vehicles at the six garbage stations in the city, would be sorted out mechanically and manually before its onward journey to the landfill sites.

Electricity generation from waste was also part of the project, which, according to the EMC, did not pose a significant threat to the environment if EIA conditions and recommendations were implemented.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1335222>

CHINA'S COAL-SHRINKING GOAL WINS BELIEVERS AS GAS USE SURGES

Dawn, May 28, 2017

WITH factories and power plants across China burning half the world's coal, the government's latest targets for using more natural gas to ease the country's worsening air pollution seemed too ambitious.

Though gas remains a small and expensive component in China's fuel mix, demand is rising faster than expected for domestic and imported supplies. In April, consumption was 22 per cent higher than the same month in 2016, and the total for the first four months of the year is up more than 12pc, data from the National Development and Reform Commission show.

The results are encouraging analysts to upgrade their demand forecasts and may signal the government is on track to reach its goal of getting as much as 10pc of its energy from gas by 2020. It's also bolstering the outlook for hundreds of billions of dollars in possible investments by companies as far away as Russia, Australia and the US to build gas pipelines and export infrastructure to feed the growing Chinese market.

"China's targets are looking more and more achievable," said Laban Yu, head of Asia oil and gas equity research at Jefferies Group LLC in Hong Kong. "It has nothing to do with China's economy, or natural gas and coal prices. It's policy driven, and it's about whether the government is serious about doing what it says it will do."

Unlike the US, where cheap and ample supplies of gas led to a surge in use by power plants and factories that now exceeds coal, China's domestic output costs more to produce and the country relies on long-distance imports, including liquefied natural gas carried by tankers. Government-set prices are among the highest in the world, leaving no incentive to switch unless pushed by regulation.

President Xi Jinping's government is leaning on gas as one tool for easing the air pollution that's choking cities from Beijing to Shanghai. Coal burning is the biggest culprit in the smog that's a

frequent urban blur and poses risks to the health of the world's biggest population.—Bloomberg-The Washington Post Service

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1335777/chinas-coal-shrinking-goal-wins-believers-as-gas-use-surges>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 15 TH TO MAY 21ST 2017

‘SERIOUS MEASURES’ TAKEN TO SAVE AILING PEAFOWL IN THAR: OFFICIAL

Dawn, May 16th, 2017

Hasan Mansoor

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has taken serious notice of the diseases afflicting peafowl in Thar desert and ordered the wildlife ministry to take immediate measures to safeguard the bird and ensure its health.

“We have received orders from the chief minister to make available all necessary vaccines and antibiotics in the area to protect the bird,” said a senior official in the wildlife ministry on Monday.

Manzoor Shaikh, secretary of forests and wildlife, told reporters at his office that teams had been formed which would be present in various talukas of Tharparkar district.

“They have sufficient stock of vaccines and antibiotics to distribute in villages and keep ample quantity of drugs at the wildlife camps set up there for the purpose,” he said.

He appealed to people to report ailing peafowl in their vicinity to the wildlife reporting centre or the control room at the deputy commissioner's office in Thar.

“As soon as a report is received, teams will take the ailing bird in custody and put it in quarantine till [it has] recovered completely,” he said.

Officials in the Sindh government said that villagers who would bring the ailing peafowl to a reporting centre would be compensated for travelling expenses.

They said that with the approach of summer, the mortality rate in peafowl had gone up due to increasing heat and low levels of resistance in the bird. “The mortality in the peafowl is (on the rise) not only because of Ranikhet [Newcastle] disease but also because of heat and certain poultry viruses,” said an official.

The wildlife ministry appealed to local population to separate the diseased poultry from peafowl immediacy as the birds were highly sensitive to poultry viruses and got affected immediately.

Officials said the livestock ministry had also been taken in the loop and requested to visit the affected area and vaccinate poultry and livestock.

Mr Shaikh said that his ministry had taken measures to combat the peafowl mortality, for which three teams comprising wildlife officials and veterinarians from poultry unit of the livestock ministry had been constituted in seven talukas of Nagarparkar, Dalhi, Chhachhro, Kaloi, Islamkot, Mithi, and Diplo.

Officials said that all the teams had been tasked to visit villages in their respective jurisdiction on daily basis to create awareness and distribute multivitamins and antibiotics to villagers to provide advance treatment to the ailing peafowl.

Such medicines, they added, would increase immunity levels in healthy population of peafowl. Furthermore, officials claimed, the teams were already spreading awareness among general public about how to take care of the diseased bird through banners and posters in the area. "Awareness messages are also being aired on local FM radio stations," said Mr Shaikh.

He said that an emergency cell had also been set up at the Tharparkar deputy commissioner's office at Mithi to meet emergencies and ensuring quick response.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1333409>

THAR VILLAGERS TO CHALLENGE REPORT ON GORANO SALINE WATER RESERVOIR Dawn, May 19th, 2017

MITHI: Villagers of Gorano and its adjoining areas who have been protesting for the past six months against the construction of a saline water reservoir in their midst by the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) have decided to challenge the report on the controversial reservoir prepared by a high court-mandated commission.

The four-member commission had submitted a day before the report to the Hyderabad circuit bench of the Sindh High Court (SHC), which was hearing a petition filed by the villagers against the reservoir project.

The committee had termed the projects of saline water reservoirs in Gorano and Dukkrachhu villages 'environmentally, technically and administratively sound' and declared the facts and figures filed by the petitioners against the projects as 'highly exaggerated'.

The villagers led by advocate Leelaram, Lachhman, Malook and others told journalists outside the Islamabad press club that the report had failed to address their genuine fears.

They claimed the members of the committee did not physically visit the sites. They considered it suffice to have an aerial view of the areas mentioned in their report, they said.

"The commission relied on various 'fake' studies including the one carried out by Tharparkar deputy commissioner," they said.

They said that they would challenge the report in the next hearing of the case and expressed the hope that the two-member bench of the SHC would pass judgement in their favour.

SECMC spokesperson Mohsin Babar said in a statement that the company's lawyers were busy studying the detailed report.

He also dismissed the villagers' claims as 'baseless'.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1333961>

MPAS ALLEGE CORRUPTION IN TSUNAMI AFFORESTATION PROJECT

Dawn, May 20th, 2017

PESHAWAR: Both treasury and opposition members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on Friday alleged corruption and irregularities in the provincial government's flagship Billion Trees Tsunami Afforestation project and demanded that the speaker either order inquiry into the matter or refer it to the house's relevant committee for discussion.

However, Dr Mehar Taj Roghani, who was in the chair, approved the issue for detailed discussion in the house at the request of JUI-F MPA Mufti Syed Janan and announced that the matter would be taken up soon.

The debate on the multibillion rupees initiative took place during the question hour.

In a written reply to the question of ANP's Syed Jaffar Shah, the forestry department said 853 million trees had so far been planted across the province at a cost of Rs7.137 billion under the afforestation project.

It added that of those trees, 520 million were not planted and instead, they were protected from the cattle and fire in the pastures.

The department said 164 million more trees had been 'grown through plantation' and 137 million through 'farm forestry' (given to the people to plant on their lands), while 32 million seasonal trees were grown in different areas. "All planted trees cover 551,673 hectares of land," it said.

Syed Jaffar said he had many reservations about the reply, especially about the tree plantation and use of billions of funds and therefore, the matter should be referred to the house's relevant committee for detailed discussion.

However, the government didn't agree to the idea.

Mufti Syed Janan of the JUI-F requested the chair to admit the matter for detailed discussion under Rule 48 of the assembly's rules of business.

Public health engineering minister Shah Farman opposed the request and said there was no need for detailed discussion on the matter.

In the meantime, the assembly's staff members told the chair that she couldn't disapprove the request.

In a supplementary question, Mufti Janan said it was strange that the taxpayers' money had been misused in the name of tree plantation.

Mohammad Ali of the Jamaat-i-Islami, which is a coalition partner of the ruling PTI, said there were 'many problems' in the execution of the billion trees plantation project.

"Many irregularities have been occurred in this initiative," he claimed.

The MPA demanded that an inquiry be conducted into the matter or it be referred to the house's standing committee on forestry for thorough discussion.

Shiraz Khan of the PML-N demanded that a committee comprising leaders of all parliamentary parties be formed to dig out the 'facts' about the afforestation project.

Parliamentary secretary for forestry department Fazl Ilahi rejected the allegations and said he could provide all sought-after details of the project.

"If the members want, I can produce each and every thing of the project, which is on record," he said.

The chair later adjourned the session due to a lack of quorum annoying lawmakers, who insisted that some PML-N and treasury members had intentionally created a lack of quorum by stepping out of the house.

Sobia Shahid of the PML-N pointed out the lack of quorum before walking away along with other party members. Some treasury members followed them.

The chaired asked the assembly's staff members to ring bells for two minutes. As the order was complied with, quorum continued to be lacking.

Mehmud Bittani of the JUI-F complained that he and many others came to the assembly from far-off areas to discuss the people's problems but unfortunately, some lawmakers intentionally created quorum issue.

"Some legislators don't take the sittings seriously," he said.

Other lawmakers also flayed the relevant colleagues on the matter.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1334210>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 8TH TO MAY 14TH 2017
HUNDREDS OF TREES CHOPPED FOR METRO BUS IN ISLAMABAD
The Express Tribune, May 8th, 2017.

Shahzad Anwar

ISLAMABAD: As Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif broke ground on the Peshawar Morr-New Islamabad International Airport section of the Metro Bus on Saturday, nearby work continued on removing obstacles in the path of this progress: dozens of trees.

According to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) study of the MBS project conducted by the National Engineering Services Pakistan (NESPAK), around a thousand trees of up to 110 years are set to become prey to the Metro Bus Service (MBS) which is being extended from Peshawar Morr to connect the city to the New International Airport (NIIA).

The trees which stand to be affected by the project include Shisham, Sirris, Phulahi, Kikar, Sukh Chain, Jacaranda, Fiddlewood, Amaltas, Mulberry, Paper Mulberry, Eucalyptus and Citrus. Moreover, there are a number of shrubs and herbs such as Lantana, Phog, Bhekar, Malla, Sanatha, Pataki and Arind.

Moreover, scores of fauna species including mammals, amphibians and reptiles lying along the MBS route are also expected to be affected by this development.

The project would see the bus move at either along the road, over or under it at various points through underpasses and bridges. The project would have 10 stations – connected through pedestrian bridges – which would be equipped with platforms, screen doors, escalators, turnstiles for automatic fare collection and other standard amenities for passengers. In addition to these stations, the plan has left space for adding four stations along its route in the future.

According to the EIA report, the construction of the MBS and its planned route are considered to be the best option for providing safe, efficient and reliable public transport with the lowest cost and have the least environmental impact in the long run.

Despite that, the project would see over 960 trees between the ages of five to 110 years being uprooted. Further, faunal species including mammals, amphibians and reptiles would be affected.

The report says that the total environmental impact of the project would cost the state – and hence taxpayers – Rs10 million.

These costs, included in the project concept (PC-I), would pay for environmental monitoring and miscellaneous items. The cost of replanting trees removed for the project has been worked out to around Rs11.87million.

Due to the extensive urbanisation, most of the wild animals in the area have largely migrated to the surrounding Margalla Hills. However, some wildlife such as wild boars, jackals, foxes, mongoose, rats, Indian hares and porcupines still inhabit the densely wooded green belts along the Kashmir and Islamabad Highways – right in the path of the project.

Moreover, reptiles including the spine-tailed lizard, fringed toed lizard, Indian Monitor and amphibians such as the common frog and common toad while birds including house sparrow and house crow will be affected.

Moreover, the report underlines that the use of heavy machinery during the construction of the project would cause air and noise pollution apart from generating solid waste. It would also generate municipal wastewater from construction activities, accidental leaks, spills of hazardous chemicals, health safety issues of workers, contamination of water bodies, removal of vegetation besides relocation of public utilities.

The EIA report notes that public movement and daily routine activities of locals visiting educational facilities including NUST, FAST, International Islamic University and Al-Huda educational institute would also be affected. Further, the construction, excavation and vibrations caused by work on the project may affect the stability of nearby buildings.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1403943/hundreds-trees-chopped-metro-bus-islamabad/>

CBC TURNS CLIFTON'S BLOCK 9 INTO GARBAGE DUMP

Sheharyar Ali

The Express Tribune, May 11, 2017

KARACHI: A putrid stench lingers in the air due to piles of rotting garbage, causing residents to don surgical masks, shielding their mouths and noses from the foul odour.

This is the scene in one of Karachi's most affluent areas – Clifton. A street in the locality's Block 9, adjacent to Submarine Chowk, has become a dumping ground for the Cantonment Board Clifton (CBC).

When The Express Tribune visited the area, a Suzuki pickup was already parked and men garbed in t-shirts emblazoned with the CBC logo were unloading mounds of garbage.

"Garbage is brought here every day but later we shift it to our main garbage disposal site," claimed the driver of the vehicle, who reluctantly identified himself as Nadeem.

The street and rainwater drain were covered in garbage, a sure-fire way to flood the streets in the monsoon. This particular street has been sealed off with concrete barricades, around which even more trash has accumulated. The street is home to several residential complexes – both apartments and town houses – such as Bath View Apartments, Seafield Apartments and Shangrilla Cooperative Housing Society.

According to Dr Nauman Ansari, a resident of Shangrilla Cooperative Housing Society, two days ago, the garbage was lying right in front of the main gate of the complex, even though the place where the CBC dumps the trash is at a distance from their gate. He criticised that their street has been converted into a temporary garbage transfer station.

Dr Ansari said that even though the area is home to many VIPs and considered a 'posh' locality, the situation is terrible. He shuddered to think about the situation in the less posh areas. We residents complain about the situation to the CBC, who clean the area and rid it of garbage, but this is a temporary solution, as within a few days the now familiar stench of decaying garbage is back again, he said.

Muhammad Nadeem, a resident of Seafield Apartments, said that even though they pay their taxes regularly, this is what they get in return. The condition is unhygienic and our children cannot even play outside in the evening, he lamented, adding that it is embarrassing for residents who have guests over as their visitors have to park near piles of garbage.

According to the local MPA, Khurram Sher Zaman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, he has complained to the CBC about garbage. He said due to this, the situation is currently better than usual but garbage should not be dumped in residential areas.

CBC spokesperson Amir Arab said the area was merely a temporary garbage dumping site. However, he did say they have asked their workers to remove trash from the area immediately. The CBC has

always tried its best to present itself as the most competent civic agency, therefore immediate action is always taken after such complaints are lodged, claimed Arab.

Urban Resource Centre Director Zahid Farooq told The Express Tribune that while there is a concept of garbage transfer stations throughout the world, these should definitely not be situated in residential areas as they pose hazards to both the environment and human health.

He said that municipal authorities should try to take the garbage directly to the landfill sites instead of keeping it in residential areas.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1406412/cbc-turns-cliftons-block-9-garbage-dump/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 1ST TO MAY 7TH 2017
DUST POLLUTION LEADING CAUSE OF RISE IN ASTHMA IN KARACHI
Dawn, May 2nd, 2017

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: Increased dust pollution due to road repair/construction is creating serious health problems for asthma patients, as a large number of them are reporting to hospitals, said health experts on Monday. Prolonged exposure to polluted air was a leading cause of asthma, said the experts while speaking to Dawn on the eve of World Asthma Day.

“Asthma is on the rise in the city due to multiple factors including dust pollution. It’s also affecting people with sensitive eyes or those already vulnerable to any kind of allergy. Everybody needs proper protection from increased dust pollution, especially those [who] are directly exposed to it,” said Dr Kamran Khan of the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre’s (JPMC) chest department.

Often the patients included motorcyclists, bus commuters and pedestrians, he added.

According to him, over 800 asthma patients are registered with the JPMC; these patients are visiting the facility more frequently these days with complaints of nasal/eye discharge, coughing and wheezing. Many patients are directly reporting to the emergency department with severe asthma attack.

“An asthma attack can result in respiratory failure and the patient will then be put on a ventilator. Given the fact that ventilator facility is available at a few public sector hospitals, one can imagine how dust pollution affects public health in profound ways,” he said.

In reply to a question about how one could protect oneself against dust pollution, he said personal protective measures such as covering one’s nose and mouth, frequent face wash and nose cleaning, gargling with warm water and steam inhalation, helped a great deal, but asthma patients must properly use inhalers.

Seconding his opinion, Dr Saifullah Baig at the Ojha Institute of Chest Diseases (OICD) said asthma was on the rise across the world and its increase had been linked to modern lifestyle. According to him, other risk factors included exposure to hazardous fumes and smoke from factories, restaurants and even homes where firewood is used for heating/cooking purpose.

He said industrial masks were far more effective to avoid dust pollution than the surgical masks which some people had started using in recent years. “Unfortunately there is hardly any awareness about it. Such masks should be readily available,” he noted.

Dr Javaid A. Khan, consultant chest physician at the Aga Khan University Hospital, said it’s not surprising that the number of asthmatics was increasing in Karachi, ranked among the top-most polluted cities in the world by WHO last year.

He said: “We eat food thrice a day but breathe air every few seconds. All things that pollute air tend to aggravate asthma whether it is road work or the garbage being burnt openly. We see factories operating in densely populated areas which badly affect lungs’ health. Our public places are full of tobacco smoke that makes life of asthma patient very difficult because their airways are very sensitive.”

Experts also showed concern over the extremely low level of awareness about asthma and misconceptions surrounding inhaler use as indicated by a study involving the AKUH, the JPMC, Civil Hospital Karachi and OICD.

According to the research covering 400 respondents, 19 per cent participants thought that asthma was a psychological disorder while 45pc considered it an infectious disease. Nearly 57pc participants believed that inhaled medications had significant side effects and 25pc believed that syrups and tablets work as effectively as inhalers.

Around 66pc considered steam inhalation to be an effective treatment for asthma. Misconceptions about diet and asthma were common.

Over 42pc considered milk as a common trigger for asthma, while 67pc thought that patients with asthma should avoid rice in their diet.

In another study, 58pc patients concurred that they were not compliant with the usage of inhalers and frequently missed their doses. Similarly, 33pc patients had the misconception that inhalers were prescribed for severe diseases only. Forty per cent patients said they would prefer oral medicines over inhalers for management of lung diseases.

“These misconceptions not only lead to poor compliance with prescribed medications but also to frequent visits to hospitals. There is a need to educate patients regarding inhalers to improve not only their symptoms but also to improve their quality of life,” the study concludes.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1330450>

CPEC WON’T CREATE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS FOR PAKISTAN: CHINA ENVOY
Dawn, May 4th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador Sun Weidong on Wednesday underscored the importance of Pakistan’s role in promoting China’s ‘Belt and Road’ initiative as he sought to dispel ‘myths’ about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

“China and Pakistan can play a major role in promoting the Belt and Road initiative as all-weather strategic cooperative partners. Among the countries along the Belt and Road initiative, CPEC is one of the earliest, fastest and most effective project,” Ambassador Sun said while delivering a lecture on the ‘Belt and Road’ initiative jointly organised by the Chinese embassy and the Pakistan-China Institute.

The lecture was held in connection with the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation being held in China from May 14-15. Top leaders from 28 countries, including Pakistan, and representatives from 110 countries and 61 international organisations will take part in the forum. UN Secretary General António Guterres would also attend the forum.

The ambassador said that One Belt, One Road concept was based on traditional Chinese culture whose core values were peace, development and harmony.

He expressed satisfaction over the pace of projects under construction under the CPEC, noting that 19 early-harvest projects were under smooth construction with a total contract amount of \$18.5 billion.

Mr Sun said China’s projects under the CPEC would not create environmental problems for Pakistan, adding that Beijing would not transfer outdated capacity production here. Besides, he said, the CPEC would not increase the financial burden on Pakistan.

He said China would not pursue unilateral trade surplus with Pakistan and would welcome export of Pakistani products to China and would provide facilitation in this regard.

The chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on the CPEC, Senator Mushahid Hussain, said Pakistan-China ties had seen quantitative expansion.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1330979/cpec-wont-create-environmental-problems-for-pakistan-china-envoy>

PAKISTAN RAMPS UP COAL POWER WITH CHINESE-BACKED PLANTS

Dawn, May 4, 2017

With much of the world pouring investments into renewable and clean energy, Pakistan is drawing criticism for welcoming Chinese investment in coal-fired power plants as part of a plan to boost urgently needed generating capacity.

Officials at the Water and Power Ministry have said Chinese companies and their partners are expected to spend around \$15 billion over the next 15 years to build close to a dozen coal power plants of varying sizes around the country.

Mohammed Younus Dagha, the former federal secretary for water and power, who became commerce secretary at the end of March, emphasised that the coal plants are part of a larger plan.

That is the \$54 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which includes spending of about \$33 billion on a total of 19 energy projects, including coal-fired and renewable power plants, transmission lines, and other infrastructure.

“Hefty investment under the CPEC project has held out hopes of significantly spiking domestic power generation (by) around 6,000 megawatts by the end of 2018,” Dagha said.

Combined, the projects will eventually generate 16,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity, which the government says is urgently needed.

About three-quarters of the newly generated power will come from coal-powered plants, and the government insists that these will be fitted with the latest technology to reduce pollution and climate-changing emissions.

But environmentalists and energy experts have lambasted the plans for coal-fired plants as a waste of money that will badly damage the environment and tarnish Pakistan’s image as one of the lowest-carbon emitters.

“Such plants would only accelerate the rising trajectory of the country’s carbon emissions, (accelerating) environmental degradation that costs billions of rupees to the national exchequer annually,” said Syed Jawad Hussain Shahzad, an energy expert at the Comsats Institute of Information Technology in Islamabad.

Pakistan has long needed more power than it can produce, with the energy deficit currently around 4,000 MW. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), average energy demand in the country is around 19,000 MW, against generation of around 15,000 MW.

Demand soars beyond 20,000 MW during peak summer months of May to July, when air conditioning systems place an extra burden on the national power grid, often causing power cuts.

The IEA forecasts that total electricity demand will rise to more than 49,000 MW by 2025 as the country’s population increases.

Only 67 per cent of Pakistan’s approximately 190 million people have access to electricity, according to the World Bank.

To improve access and keep pace with economic growth, the country needs to invest between 3.7 per cent and 5.5 per cent of its GDP each year in increasing electrical production, the bank said in a report on South Asian infrastructure published in 2013. Part of the motivation for building coal-powered plants lies in the availability of the fuel within Pakistan.

The federal minister for planning, development and reform, Ahsan Iqbal, said that the sprawling desert region of Tharparkar in southern Pakistan, home to some of the world’s largest coal reserves, cannot be left unexploited.

“Pakistan must tap these unutilised vast underground reserves of 175 billion tonnes of coal, adequate to meet the country’s energy needs for several decades, for powering the country’s economic wheel, creating new jobs, and fighting spiking unemployment and poverty,” Iqbal said.

Pakistan currently ranks 135th in the list of global emitters of carbon on a per capita basis, accounting for less than 1 per cent of total global carbon emissions, according to World Bank data.

According to the report submitted by Pakistan to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change last year, the country's emissions in 2015 stood at 405 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO₂ eq.).

However, emissions are increasing at a rate of 3.9 per cent (16 MTCO₂ eq.) annually.

Iqbal touts the green credentials of the planned coal power plants, which will use the latest "supercritical" emission-reducing technology that is used in China itself and elsewhere.

"The latest coal power plants (will) be as clean as gas-based power generation," Iqbal insisted. "(They) require less coal per megawatt-hour, leading to lower emissions, including carbon dioxide and mercury, higher efficiency and lower fuel costs per megawatt."

Nevertheless, independent renewable energy experts say the government's love affair with coal power plants is a huge worry.

"No sane person would want electricity from dirty energy sources, even though supercritical technology is used," said Malik Amin Aslam, a former state minister for the environment who serves as global vice-president of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

"These plants, not being completely free of carbon emissions, will still harm the public health and the country's environment," he said.

Pakistan is considered one of the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, from worsening floods and scalding summer temperatures to erratic rainfall that can kill crops.

China's ambassador to Pakistan, Sun Weidong, stressed that coal power is only part of the projects China is supporting through its investment in CPEC.

"We are equally helping Pakistan to bring more and more renewable energy sources into its energy mix by tapping its massive wind and solar energy potential," Sun said.

Planned renewable energy projects under CPEC include a solar park, four wind farms and three hydro plants that together would generate around 3,900 MW, at a cost of about \$7.5 billion

According to the Pakistan Alternative Energy Development Board, Pakistan has the potential to generate annually 2.9 million MW of clean energy from solar, 340,000 MW from wind and 100,000 MW from hydropower.

"We really fail to fathom the government's inclination towards environmentally damaging coal power plants while the country can generate millions of megawatts of solar, wind and hydro electricity," said Mir Ahmad Shah, executive secretary of the Pakistan Renewable and Alternative Energy Association.

"Even countries like Saudi Arabia – rich in oil resources – are gradually switching over to clean energy sources," Shah said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1330812>

THAR VILLAGERS TURN DOWN DC'S INVITATION FOR TALKS OVER GORANO RESERVOIR

Dawn, May 4th, 2017

MITHI: The group of villagers whose protest against the controversial Gorano reservoir entered its 194th day outside Islamkot Press Club on Wednesday refused to meet Mithi deputy commissioner at his office to hold talks over their reservations about the reservoir.

Tharparkar DC Mohammad Zaman Narejo had issued a letter a day before, summoning 11 of the petitioners, who had filed a case against the project in Sindh High Court, to his office to explain their point of view on the reservoir.

Some of the petitioners including Lakho Bheel, Mohammad Suleman, Dost Ali and Mohammad Yousuf told journalists that the meeting time Mr Narejo had suggested collided with the hearing of their case in SHC.

Besides, they said, they feared the DC might want to 'lure' them so they refused to go and meet him. They were being pressured in different ways to desist them from their protest and demand, they said.

They said that before they had started the protest the DC had no time to meet them, but now he was issuing letters, inviting them to his office. They termed the DC's letter 'illegal'.

Advocate Leela Ram, one of the leaders of the protesting villagers, claimed that both the coal mining company concerned and officials of the Sindh government were using 'unfair' tactics to silence the protest.

The waste-water being pumped into the site through a pipeline was causing serious damage over a vast area, it was claimed.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1330903/thar-villagers-turn-down-dcs-invitation-for-talks-over-gorano-reservoir>

MINISTRY WORRIED ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF COAL POWER PLANTS

Dawn, May 6 2017

Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: Emissions from the new coal power plants will increase green house gases, said Minister for Climate Change Zahid Hamid on Friday.

`The ministry is concerned about these major impacts on air quality, about ash and waste water disposal and ecological and socio-economic impacts,' Mr Hamid told the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change, which met to discuss the impacts of emissions from coal fired thermal power plants on the climate of the country. However, the meeting began with the committee taking notice of an incident when an official of the climate change ministry beat a Pakistan Television reporter. The official had taken offence when he was requested to keep quiet while the minister was addressing an event on Wednesday. The incident coincided with World Press Freedom Day, observed on May 3 each year. PML Senator Mushahid Hussein Syed asked the climate change minister to look into the matter

while the chairman of the committee, Senator Mir Mohammad Yousaf Badini asked Mr Hamid to punish the official after which the minister assured the committee he will look into the matter. In his briefing on coal power plants, the minister said after devolution, provincial environment protection agencies will have to ensure that once power plants were operational, emission will remain within the limits according to the National Environment Quality Standards. Nevertheless, he said, coal power plants are needed to meet the energy deficit in the country. 'Coal power plants are the only way to get energy quickly. If there is compliance, the power plants will not hurt the environment as much, he said. PTI Senator Samina Abid objected to these power plants saying the rest of the world was discarding coal as fuel. 'We all know once the coal power plants start operating there will be no check on emissions,' she said. Mr Zahid explained that coal fired power plants will have 'supercritical' emission-reducing technology and that the reduced emissions have been assured by the Chinese as well. 'We have to keep in mind that Pakistan has the sixth largest coal reserves in the world, with deposits in four provinces. It is time Pakistan utilised this resource to meet its energy needs,' he added.

PML-N Senator Pervaiz Rasheed said the new coal power plants had better technology than those from 40 years ago.

'Instead of protesting and trying to stop the power plants from coming up, the committee should ensure the emissions from them are kept in accordance with the law,' Mr Rasheed said.

Some of the under construction coal power plants are the Sahiwal Power plant, Port Qasim Coal Power Project Karachi, Sindh Engro Tharparkar, Hub Coal Power Project Balochistan which are all 1,320 MW.

The 40 MW Maple Leaf Power in Mianwali, 330 MW Thalnova Power Tharparkar, 350 MW Siddique Sons Energy Karachi, the 720 MW K-Electric Coal Power Plant Karachi, and the 120 MW Muzaffargarh Sugarcane Power Plant are also under construction.

Letter of intents have been issued for The Oracle Coal Fields Tharparkar, Rahim Yar Khan Power Plant, Gagani Energy Park which are all 1,320 MW projects besides the 600 MW Jamshoro Coal Power Project and the 300 MW Gwadar Coal Power Project.

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=06_05_2017_004_007

ENVIRONMENT: ARE WE LOSING OUR MINDS TO POLLUTION?

Dawn, EOS, May 7th, 2017

Maryam Murtaza Sadriwala

Living in a throbbing metropolis such as Karachi, the rattling of buses on the roads, the incessant blaring of horns, the constant whirring of the rickshaws, coupled with the omnipotent cloud of pollution hanging over us are things which we simply have surrendered to.

We raise a hue and cry about pollution — be it air or noise — well aware that it is a cause for grave health concerns. Air pollution results in aggravated cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses. Noise pollution may result in seemingly trivial ailments such as sleep disturbance and annoyance and even lead to hearing impairment, hypertension, ischemic heart disease, changes in the immune system and birth defects.

However, it is not just the body that is susceptible to damage at the hands of noise and air pollution. According to a recently published research which followed nearly two million people in the Canadian province of Ontario over 11 years (between 2001 and 2012), air pollution or noisy traffic could be contributing to mental disorders as well. The study was published in the *Lancet* — one of the world's oldest and best known general medical journals.

Among the illnesses caused by pollution is dementia, a disease marked by memory loss, personality changes and impaired reasoning. Nearly 50 million people around the world suffer from dementia. About 243,611 cases of dementia were diagnosed during the study, but the risk was greater among those living close to major roads. In this large population-based cohort, living close to heavy traffic was associated with a higher incidence of dementia.

According to Dr Jawad Chistie, a prominent environmentalist and principal consultant at Subhe Nau, a non-profit engaged in conserving nature and improving public health, the link between dementia and air pollution is not something to be taken lightly.

“The science to prove such links is not easy and generally takes many years, if not decades,” argues Dr Chistie. “Just like public health experts spent about a full 100 years before they could come up with ‘conclusive evidence’ that smoking causes cancer. The studies to suggest the link were there, and people also knew that smoking could cause cancer, but convincing governments, and the tobacco industry, proved to be extremely difficult.”

The environmentalist explains that besides dementia, there are many other diseases such as multiple sclerosis that have been suspected of having an aetiology linked to pollution, or more generally, environmental causes. “Common air pollutants such as PM 2.5, PM 10 and NOx (fine particulate matter and nitrogen oxide) are all leading to major problems, including harmful gases that people are exposed to living near major highways,” he continues.

Previously, scientists have linked air pollution and traffic noise to reduced density of white matter and lower cognition. A recent study suggested that magnetic nano-particles from air pollution can make their way into brain tissue.

Professor Caleb Finch at the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology says, “Microscopic particles generated by fossil fuels enter our body directly through the nose into the brain. Cells in the brain treat these particles as invaders and react with inflammatory responses, which, over the course of time, appear to exacerbate and promote Alzheimer's disease.”

According to Dr Qurat Khan, assistant professor at the department of psychiatry at the Aga Khan University Hospital, noise and pollution are important contributors to the environment which play a vital role in the bio-psycho-social model of psychiatric conditions. They may cause unmasking and manifestation of psychiatric conditions such as anxiety, depression, bipolar illnesses, psychotic illnesses and may also cause agitation, irritability, and restlessness among people, especially those who are vulnerable.

When asked if this may be the reason doctors advise people to move to quieter areas to recuperate from stress, she says: “Increased work-load, multi-tasking as well as noise and air pollution may cause mental exhaustion, stress and fatigue. Moving away from these and other stressors, along with engaging in exercises such as relaxation and meditation, may help one recuperate.”

Dr Chistie also mentions that in the case of Pakistan, the development versus the environment debate continues to rage. “The easy answer to which is to allow people to suffer, literally die, while unabashed ‘development’ continues. We know very well that this development is actually nothing but private business interests that governments want to promote at the expense of the health of the nation.”

He laments that over the years, governments and businesses have forgotten the ‘precautionary principle’ which is just common sense — don’t get into something that may cause damage to the health of not only people, but also other species. “It is being increasingly learnt from research that major highways may not be the answer to burgeoning populations and economic activity. Smaller, self-sufficient town planning, with good public transport is the way to go,” he says.

It is certainly alarming that according to the World Health Organisation three million people die every year due to outdoor air pollution.

The rise in population and urbanisation has resulted in people living close to heavy traffic and even a modest effect from near-road exposure could pose a large public health burden. It is tragic that air pollution is not taken into consideration in urban planning and building design to reduce exposure.

This just might be the proverbial last straw on the camel’s back to prove why life in urban centres continues to get more stressful. More than ever we need to clean up the air.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1331212>

June 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 26TH TO JULY 1 ST 2017

PLASTIC POLLUTION

Dawn, June 26, 2017

FEW issues facing the globe are of such urgency as tackling environmental pollution. From climate to the food we eat, our very existence is impacted by it. According to the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan, the unabated dumping of plastic products in the waters off the coast has become a serious threat to marine animals and to plants that are native to offshore waters. To illustrate the spread of pollutants, the organisation reported that a needlefish caught a couple of days ago 270km south of Karachi was stuck in the handle of a plastic cup.

Studies carried out by the WWF-P show that on beaches such as Clifton, plastic contributes up to 50pc of beached garbage. However, it seems only the KP government assigns environmental pollution the importance that it deserves, and is taking measures to address it. The provincial environmental protection agency on Tuesday issued a notification banning the manufacture of non-biodegradable products across KP.

The world is reaching a critical stage where environmental pollution is concerned — some would even argue we have crossed the tipping point. While Pakistan, in global terms, figures far down on the list of contributors to greenhouse gas emissions and solid waste, our disposal mechanisms of the solid waste that we produce and how we dispose of it has dire, ongoing implications for our quality of life. Non-biodegradable plastics leach harmful carcinogens, among other lethal substances into the soil,

polluting our sub-soil water and increasing the health burden on the country's already overburdened health sector.

When plastics are ingested by marine life, including by plankton — the lowest rung on the food chain — many of the toxins ultimately end up inside humans. According to a reputable organisation working on global environmental issues, there are over five trillion plastic pieces afloat at sea. Forward-thinking, civilised societies dispose of their waste responsibly and are increasingly switching to the use of biodegradable products. Other provinces should take a leaf out of KP's book.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1341819/plastic-pollution>

KP NOTIFIES RULES FOR PROHIBITION OF NON-BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC PRODUCT
Business Recorder, 26 June 2017

PESHAWAR: The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Wednesday notified rules and regulations for prohibition of non-biodegradable plastic products under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Environmental Protection Act, 2104 (Act No. XXXVIII of 2014).

A notification of Forestry, Environment and Wildlife Department Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa issued here said that in the rules a non-biodegradable plastic product means the product that is not oxo-biodegradable and made of polymer containing a pro-degrading additive, supplied by an additive supplier, registered with the agency and result in oxidative and cell mediated phenomena, either simultaneously or successively.

After commencement of the rule, a complete ban will be imposed on the manufacturing of non-biodegradable plastic products and no one will import, manufacture, stockpile, trade, supply, distribute, sell or use any non-biodegradable plastic products; provided that the existing stocks of non-biodegradable plastic products shall be disposed of by the wholesale dealers and retailers within a period of three months, after the commencements of these rules.

It further said that any license or permit, issued to any person for the manufacture, sale, distribution or import, as the case may be, of non-biodegradable plastic products, under any law, for the time being in force, before the commencement of these rules, shall cease to be effective and the holder of any such license or permit shall not commence or carry a business of the manufacturing, selling, distribution or import, as the case may be, of non-biodegradable plastic products.

It further said that no oxo-biodegradable plastic product, except for garbage sacks shall be made in black colour and no oxo-biodegradable plastic products, be of less than fifty (50) micron thickness, adding that the oxo-biodegradable plastic products ad recycled shall be marked as "Recycled Plastic Unsafe for Contact with Food".

The notification said the Director General may proceed against the violator whosoever contravenes, infringes or violates the rules as per provisions of section 17 of the Act.

The Director General from time to time would seek certificate, records and information or any other relevant documents for inspection.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/06/26/3-page/885156-news.html>

IN RAWAL LAKE : RESIDENTS COMPLAIN ABOUT GROWING POLLUTION

The Express Tribune, June 26th, 2017.

ISLAMABAD: The health of over two million residents of Rawalpindi is at risk owing to the apathy of Islamabad city's managers who have not constructed any Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) on the catchment areas of the Rawal Lake. With effluents and raw sewage continue to be dumped into the lake, residents have complained that not only the water in the lake has turned its colour, it seems unfit to drink.

Rawal Lake is among the main sources of drinking water for Rawalpindi. However, the lake also receives the bulk of untreated sewage and other wastewater from the fast growing population located

on the banks of the lake including in Bara Kahu, Bari Imam, Shaadra, Bani Gala, Quaid-i-Azam University and other adjoining areas.

Despite the urgency of a sewage treatment plant, the authorities and government departments have been entangled in the familiar web of bureaucratic red tape. Earlier in 2012, on the directions of the Supreme Court, the Rawal Lake Monitoring Committee had asked a private firm to identify the causes of pollution and propose a solution. The consultancy firm, Usman and Company, had proposed five sites where sewage treatment plants should be built.

In 2012, the firm had estimated that the plants would cost around Rs2.4 billion to build. The ICT Administration subsequently submitted a PC-1 to the finance ministry for final approval. The concept paper was ultimately sent to planning division, however, progress on the project stalled with apex planners distracted with other projects and their approval, required to get the project off the ground, remained pending.

Later in December 2015 an independent commission constituted by Islamabad High Court had recommended setting up multiple sewage treatment plants in the catchment areas of the Rawal Lake. But over 18 months later, little to no action has been taken to build five sewage treatment plants and a sewage network along the lake.

The project, jointly prepared by the Capital Development Authority (CDA), the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and the Cabinet Division, had aimed to ensure the supply of clean drinking water to the residents of the capital by building five decentralised sewage treatment plants in the Rawal Lake upstream at an estimated cost of Rs2.258 billion. Funding to pay for the plants, have yet to be released by the Planning Commission, delaying construction of the decentralised sewage treatment plants.

The delay in funds came even as the IHC's Environmental Commission in October 2015 had recommended urgent approval of funds for the project from the Ministry of Planning and Development Reforms. "Many years ago, the Rawal Lake had the capacity to store between 37,000 and 47,000 acre-feet of water, and its water was crystal clear, but now its storage capacity has reduced due to the continuous flow of silt and other sewage into the lake. Its colour, too, had turned slightly brownish owing to the influx of polluted material," said Saeed Malik, who lives in Bani Gala near the Rawal Lake.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1444827/rawal-lake-residents-complain-growing-pollution/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 19TH TO JUNE 25 TH 2017

MANUFACTURE, USE OF NON-BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC PRODUCTS BANNED

Dawn, June 22nd, 2017

Manzoor Ali

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has imposed complete ban on manufacturing and use of non-biodegradable plastic products in the province.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a notification on Tuesday to ban manufacturing of non-biodegradable plastic products across the province.

Dr Mohammad Bashir, the director general of EPA, said that forestry, environment and wildlife department also notified KP Prohibition of Non-Biodegradable Plastic Products and Regulation of Oxo-biodegradable Plastic Products Rules, 2017 at the same time.

Chief Minister Pervez Khattak had earlier in August 2015 imposed ban on manufacturing and use of polythene shopping bags in the province, saying use of those bags was main cause of choking of sanitation system as well as environmental degradation.

The rules have been enacted under the section 7 clause XII of KP Environmental Protection Act 2014, which provides EPA with powers to impose ban through an official notification on commencement or operation of any activity or work or mobility or transport in a particular area or premises by declaring it as environmentally sensitive or protected or prohibited for a particular time period as and when

required to safeguard the natural environment, prevent and control pollution with prior approval of the government.

The rules state that soon after the commencement, there shall be a complete ban on manufacturing of non-biodegradable plastic products and no person shall import, manufacture, stockpile, trade, supply, distribute, sell or use any non-biodegradable plastic products; provided the existing stocks of non-biodegradable plastic products shall be disposed of by the wholesale dealers and retailers within a period of three months, after the commencements of these rules.

The rules say that any licence or permit, issued to any person for manufacturing, sale, distribution or import, as the case may be, of non-biodegradable plastic products, under any law, for the time being in force, before the commencement of these rules, shall cease to be effective. The holder of any such licence or permit shall not commence or carry a business of manufacturing, selling, distribution or import, as the case may be, of non-biodegradable plastic products.

The rules have also laid pre-conditions for the purpose of registration and make test certificates compulsory for pro-degradant additive from independent third party laboratory that is accredited in accordance with ISO 17025.

These tests shall be carried out in accordance with the methods specified by the authority, ASTM D-6954-04 standard or any other well-reputed international standard and quality authority, duly recognised by government. The reports must clearly state the percentage of pro-degradant additive, which should be consistent for all the tests namely degradation, bio-degradation and eco-toxicity. About the manufacturing of biodegradable plastic products, the rules state that Oxo-biodegradable plastic products shall be transparent or in a natural shade or white, whereas items, used for purposes other than storing and packaging foodstuffs, shall be manufactured, using pigments and colorants as per ISO 787/1-1 982.

The rules say that no biodegradable plastic product, except for garbage sacks shall be made in black colour and biodegradable as well as recycled plastic shall be marked as unsafe for contact with food. The rules say that all biodegradable plastic products and all packaging in which such products are offered for sale, shall be prominently marked “biodegradable” and shall bear the identification mark or logo of the supplier of the pro-degradant additive.

These say that those people, who violate the provisions of the rules, may proceed under the section 17 of the Act, which provides for Environmental Protection Order.

Dr Bashir said that they had also taken the manufacturers as well retailers on board before notifying the ban. “It is not permanent solution, rather it is like to lead to such a solution in the future,” Dr Bashir added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1341056/manufacture-use-of-non-biodegradable-plastic-products-banned>

SEPA IGNORES CALLS FOR TRANSPARENCY AT PUBLIC HEARING

Dawn, June 22nd, 2017

KARACHI: The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) went ahead with another public hearing on Wednesday, ignoring calls for transparency and access to complete information on an industrial project planned to be built in the Gadap Town area.

How much due lawful process was followed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report approval process was evident from Sepa officials’ ignorance when they were repeatedly asked whether the project area was a notified industrial zone.

The hearing pertained to the EIA report of an automobile assembling plant proposed by Pak-China Motors Private Limited. The EIA was conducted by Global Environmental Management Services (GEMS).

This was the second time within two days that the environmental watchdog had organised a public hearing with negligible public participation.

Clause 3, Section 17, of the Sindh Environmental Protection Act 2014 states: “Every review of an environmental impact assessment shall be carried out with public participation and, subject to the provisions of this act, after full disclosure of the particulars of the project.”

Responding to repeated queries over the status of the project area, Sepa officials came up with confused statements in an attempt to justify their action of bringing the project for a public hearing. While S.M. Yahya, the additional director general of Sepa, explicitly told the audience that the agency would consult industries and the commerce department over its status, another official had something different to say.

“To our understanding, the project area is very much industrial. A number of poultry farms and hatcheries are operating there with a plant for soft drinks,” he said.

Mr Yahya had earlier said: “We came to know this today [that the project area is not a notified industrial zone] and we will [further] ask the relevant department [about it].”

The conflicting statements from Sepa came after senior engineer A.A. Chandani in attendance objected to the construction of an industrial project in a residential area.

“The project area is not a notified industrial zone. It would be an illegal venture [if Sepa allows its construction in a residential area]. How many people sitting in the audience know this?” Mr Chandani asked, calling upon Sepa to meet the legal requirements of the EIA in letter and spirit.

He also criticised the composition of Sepa’s expert committee, the last stage for EIA report review on the basis of which the agency decides to accord approval to a project.

“We don’t know who are invited for comments in that committee which should consist of experts who have a practical body of knowledge,” he said.

Endorsing his comments, Zubair Ahmed Abro, a lawyer specialising in environmental issues, pointed out that Sepa by admitting its ignorance about the status of the project area had not followed Clause 1, Section 10, of the Sepa regulations 2014 under which the agency was required to carry out preliminary scrutiny.

“Within 15 days of filing of initial environmental examination (IEE), environmental check list or EIA report, the agency shall (a) confirm that the IEE or EIA or environmental checklist is complete for purpose of initiation of review process or require the proponent to submit such additional information as may be specified or return the IEE or EIA or environmental checklist to the proponent for revision, clearly listing the points requiring further study and discussion,” the clause states.

He also criticised Sepa’s decision to hold the hearing despite the fact that the EIA report was incomplete as it did not carry no objection certificates from the relevant departments — another mandatory requirement under the law — for instance from the industries and commerce department and the Malir Development Authority, the land owning department.

“Every IEE and EIA shall be accompanied by (a) an application in the form prescribed in Schedule-V (b) copy of receipt showing payment of review fee (c) no objection certificates from relevant departments in case of an EIA report (d) environmental checklist as per its guidelines,” says Clause 2, Section 9 of the Sepa regulations 2014.

By allowing the project proponent to bring an incomplete EIA report, Mr Abro said, Sepa had deprived the few people representing the public in the hearing of their right to complete information, which was their fundamental constitutional right.

On the scant public participation in the programme, Mr Abro said: “If you exclude the representation of project proponent, project consultants and Sepa in this programme, there are hardly four people representing the public here. Why couldn’t this public hearing be held after Ramazan that would have ensured more participation from the public and fulfilled an important legal requirement?”

Surprisingly, while Sindh Madressatul Islam University located in Saddar was included in the EIA stakeholder consultation meetings and the EIA report talks about it, the Baqai Medical University and Hospital located adjacent to the project site had no mention in the EIA report.

When this point was raised, Saleem-uz-Zaman, representing GEMS, said the EIA team went to the Baqai University thrice while the EIA was being carried out but “there was no response” from them. On air quality concerns, he argued that the “entire system would be enclosed and there was no threat to the environment”.

Answering a question about the quantity of total waste and its disposal, it was stated that the matter would be looked into once the project became operational.

Earlier, a detailed presentation on the project was given by Jibran Khalid of GEMS, according to which the automobile plant will initially assemble diesel trucks for which parts will be imported from China.

Later, the plant will assemble 1,000cc passenger cars and sports utility vehicles within the next three to five years. The total annual mixed production capacity of the plant will be 10,000 units.

The approximate area of the proposed plant is 37 acres with initial construction on 29,000 square metres covered area. The project was declared ‘safe’ by the EIA consultants if mitigation measures suggested in the report were followed.

Saqib Ejaz Hussain, an air quality expert who could not attend the public hearing as he was in Islamabad, shared with Dawn his concerns over the project.

“The EIA study in its present form does not address major environmental issues emerging from a vehicle assembly and its associated processes which include use of highly hazardous substances.

“The project is located in the midst of a sensitive area, including housing societies, and can pose a serious environmental/health risk. The site is not suitable for establishing such a large-scale industrial activity. In addition, the proposed vehicle assembly plant structures must be carefully designed to respond to seismic considerations of the area,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1341030/sepa-ignores-calls-for-transparency-at-public-hearing>

SEPA VIOLATES RULES, HOLDS PUBLIC HEARING

Dawn, June 23rd, 2017

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) once again violated its own rules on Thursday when it held a public hearing on a project whose Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report lacked a mandatory no-objection certificate (NOC) from a key government department, in this case the forest department.

Moreover, no forest department official had been invited to the public hearing so that people in attendance could directly communicate their reservations to the department concerned over the destruction of 889 mangroves the proposed project entailed.

“Every Initial Environmental Examination and Environmental Impact Assessment shall be accompanied by no-objection certificates from relevant departments in case of an EIA report,” says Section 9 of Sepa regulations 2014.

The entire mangrove cover in the province was declared protected in Dec 2010. Besides, the country is signatory to the Sustainable Development Goals; SDG 14 states that it is required to take measures for marine coastal ecosystems’ conservation and protection.

It also came as a shock to the participants that the environmental watchdog had held the public hearing of a project awaiting final decision on its site.

Titled LNG import terminal II, the project proposed by Pakistan Gas Port Limited (PGPL) is planned in the Chara Chan Waddio creek in the Port Qasim area. The project’s EIA has been conducted by Global Environmental Management Services (GEMS).

It came to light during the discussion that as per international practice a final decision on the LNG terminal site is taken on the basis of studies, an important one is a quantitative risk assessment (QRA), which is mandatory at least under the Port Qasim Authority regulations.

No QRA study on the proposed project, however, was shared with the audience during the programme. When this point was raised, the project proponent represented by senior programme manager Nasir Gill explained that the relevant study had been completed by a consultant company hired by PGPL but its findings were awaited.

Sharing his concerns, Saquib Ejaz Hussain, an environmental consultant who has been part of quite a few studies involving LNG terminals, said that the proposed terminal had been planned very close to the first terminal that could pose serious risk to human population and property.

“The project proponent has proposed a distance of 300 meters between the two LNG terminals, which is a serious safety risk and doesn’t comply with international standards,” he said.

According to him, a cumulative QRA study of the proposed LNG terminals in the Chara Chan Waddio channel was conducted by an Italian firm in 2017 in which it categorically stated that the minimum safety distance of 650m should be maintained if a new terminal was built in this particular creek.

Citing the Sandia National laboratories (US) report on large liquefied natural gas spillover, he said it had defined outer limits of three hazard zones. “The Zone 1 has a limit of 500m, the Zone 2 of 1,600m and Zone 3 of 3,500m. Within Zone 1, the thermal radiation can cause serious injuries or significant damage to structures. The EIA has no mention of this important report, which is a major deficiency,” he said.

In the absence of a QRA study, he pointed out, the justification of the site presented in the EIA report was questionable and Sepa should have returned the document to the proponents instead of calling a public hearing on a “flawed document”.

“If the safety aspects are not properly studied, then this project may result in a major catastrophe in the event of a worst case scenario,” he warned.

He also asked whether Sepa would call another public hearing when the QRA report was received and the project site was finally decided.

The EIA project consultants represented by Saleem-uz-Zaman and Gibran Khalid argued that their team had suggested three sites for the project and the EIA report covered all safety concerns.

Dr Munawar Saleem of the National Institute of Oceanography spoke about the threats the project posed to marine biodiversity.

“There will be dredging in a big way at the site which will have serious impact on marine flora and fauna. It would have been better if the audience was educated about the environmental impacts documented during the construction of terminal 1,” he said, suggesting a body at Port Qasim to monitor development projects, study their environmental impacts, if any, and recommend measures to mitigate them.

Jameel Junejo representing the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) said that though their organisation was a major stakeholder in the project to be built in an area surrounded by fishermen communities, no consultation was carried out with it.

“Promises of mangrove plantation after their destruction are often eyewash. There was no mention of the project’s impact on the fish in the EIA report,” he said.

Members of the EIA team responded to this concern by arguing that there were successful stories of mangrove plantation in Pakistan and the same would be followed in the case of this project. Decline in fish catch was a global trend, it was said.

Rafiul Haq, a senior ecologist, and Dr Shahid Amjad with expertise in oceanography, called for effective post EIA-monitoring of the project.

Responding to some queries, Sepa official Imran Sabir said: “A QRA study is not our (Sepa’s) requirement. The forest department is independent and will take notice (of the project) at its own time.”

Earlier, a detailed presentation was given on the project according to which the LNG was a safe fuel and posed no threat to environment and marine fauna. The proposed project would meet gas shortfall in the country, it was stated.

Under the project, 4.5 million tonnes of LNG would be imported annually. A 600m long pipeline that would pass through mangroves is also part of the project.

It was stated that if project activities were undertaken as described in this EIA and the recommended mitigation measures along with environmental management plan was adopted, the proposed LNG terminal would not result in any long-term impacts on the local community as well as on the physical and biological environment of the proposed project area.

Over the past few days, Sepa has held at least two public hearings with negligible public participation, which is a violation of its rules.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1341126/sepa-violates-rules-holds-public-hearing>

BILLBOARD MAFIA BLAMED FOR CHOPPING TREES ALONG SHARAE FAISAL

The Express Tribune, 23 June 2017

KARACHI: Several trees were chopped down along Sharae Faisal near the Duty Free shop by unidentified persons. This incident was brought to light after photographs of the trees were uploaded online by an activist.

According to social media activist and chartered accountant Abdul Hamid Dhagia, it is evident why these large trees – which included an old neem, peepal and akasia – were chopped down. He pointed his finger towards a large billboard. Once again the billboard and advertisement mafia has become active and, just like the past, there are no rules for them – they can install advertisements wherever they want to and chop down any tree in their way, he lamented.

Paan shop owner Khurram Qureshi told The Express Tribune that when they arrived at the scene in the morning the trees had already been cut. He added that the trees used to provide shade to passersby. He opened his paan stall on Sharae Faisal many years ago, said Khurram, adding that in all this time he has seen many trees chopped down but never any action against those responsible.

According to Urban Resource Centre Director Zahid Farooq, action should be taken by the concerned department, an FIR should be lodged and whoever is involved in the crime he should be ordered to plant more trees as penance.

You cannot expect the Supreme Court to run the affairs of the government; it is the duty of the government to ensure rule of law, he said. Farooq said once again the powerful mafia of advertisements and billboards is active in the city and they must not be allowed to install advertisements wherever they please.

According to District Municipal Corporation East Jamshed Town's Deputy Director of Parks and Horticulture Iqbal Qureshi, he is aware of the incident and will try to apprehend those involved. He added that as per his information, trees are often illegally chopped down before Fajr prayers.

No one chops trees unless it is of great benefit to them, he said, adding that the most common culprit in such crimes is the advertisement mafia. An FIR will be lodged against the criminals, under Section 132 of the Sindh Local Government Act, 2013 and the Pakistan Penal Code, said Iqbal.

A senior official of the department told The Express Tribune that he believes that some officials of the department are involved in this activity, as it is not easy to chop down trees on a main thoroughfare like Sharae Faisal. The official said it seems the trees were cut with the help of machinery, as it would not be possible to cut the trees so neatly with an axe.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1442213/billboard-mafia-blamed-chopping-trees-along-sharae-faisal/>

‘THOUSANDS OF FALCONS ARE SMUGGLED OUT OF PAKISTAN EVERY YEAR’

Dawn, June 24, 2017

Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: Nearly 5,000 to 6,000 falcons are trapped and smuggled out of Pakistan every year and sold to sheikhs in the Middle East, sources in the Ministry of Climate Change told Dawn on Friday.

To escape the harsh winters of Siberia, falcons migrate thousands of miles, making stops for rests and continuing on their journey to warmer regions in the south.

“Thousands of these birds are trapped during their transit through Pakistan, where they stop to rest. The rate at which falcons are trapped is so high that international conferences have been called in the recent past to find solutions to the massive decline in falcon population in Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizstan and Turkmenistan,” a senior official of the climate change ministry said. He added that the major cause of the decline is the demand for falconry in the Middle East. According to the officials, there are several methods of smuggling falcons out of Pakistan through Afghanistan and Iran.

In some cases, the falcons that Arab sheikhs bring with them to Pakistan on their hunting trips do not go back with them.

According to one of the officials, falcons cannot be used for hunting the endangered hubara bustard for more than two seasons and are released back into the wild after a year and a half.

Unlike in the wild where falcons hunt for food once or twice a day, falcons in captivity are forced to hunt several dozen hubara bustards in a few days.

The forced labour takes a heavy toll on the bird’s wings, making them less manoeuvrable in high speed hunting. These falcons become useless for hunting in the future, the official said.

“Once a falcon loses its charm in the eyes of its owner, it is dumped in Pakistan and a new bird of prey is purchased from illegal trappers,” the official said.

Ministry of Climate Change Director Biodiversity Dr Naeem Ashraf Raja said the illegal trapping and smuggling was a massive crime that was going unchecked. He suggested a method for saving thousands of falcons which is based on community involvement.

“We will like to suggest legalising falcon trapping. It sounds as bizarre as trophy hunting Markhor Goat, but if we can legalise trapping 10 to 20 falcons a day and sell them legally through auctions, sheikhs in the Middle East who pay millions for license plates, will happily pay an arm and a leg for a healthy falcon,” Dr Raja said.

The official explained that without a sustainable programme that benefitted communities who have been involved in the business for three or four generations, falcons will disappear from the wild.

“Once the communities know that a healthy falcon will fetch anywhere between \$0.5 million to \$1 million and the money would go to community development, the 6,000 birds trapped a year will be reduced to 60 or 70,” Dr Raja said.

He added that the proposal had been discussed and even hunters in the Middle East had liked the idea.

“Just like there was resistance to trophy hunting Markhors but it eventually helped in saving the endangered wild goat’s population, there is similar resistance by animal lovers to this idea of legally trapping falcons. However, we are open to better ideas to save the endangered species of falcons,” Dr Raja said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1341468>

PLASTIC POLLUTION POSES SERIOUS THREAT TO MARINE LIFE

Dawn, June 24th, 2017

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: How polluted our sea has become was indicated on Thursday when fishermen at sea around 270km south of Karachi caught a flat needlefish stuck in the handle of a plastic cup in their catch, the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWF-P) reported.

According to the organisation, fisherman Momin Khan took the fish on board with the aim to release it back into the water, but it died when he attempted to do so.

“Continued dumping of plastic products in the terrestrial and marine environment has become a serious threat to animals and plants inhabiting coastal and offshore waters of Pakistan. There is a dire need for efforts to control this pollution,” said Mohammed Moazzam Khan, technical adviser on marine fisheries at WWF-P.

Plastic pollution, he pointed out, was also contributed through flotsam (debris not deliberately thrown overboard) and jetsam (debris thrown overboard by a crew of ship in distress) generated from ships, including fishing vessels operating in the sea.

“Floating plastic is mistaken as food and many animals get entangled or stuck in such stuff with serious, often deadly consequences. High concentrations of plastic material, particularly plastic bags, restrict breathing of marine species, such as whales, dolphins, seals, seabirds, and turtles,” he said. It had been reported that globally one out of three marine mammals were found entangled in plastic litter, he added.

Studies initiated by WWF-P show that on beaches such as Clifton, plastic pollution contributes up to 50 per cent of beached garbage. Now, even remote beaches along Pakistan’s coast, including Kund Malir and Gwadar, are littered with plastic, which is affecting marine life, including sea birds along coastal and offshore waters.

According to some estimates, around 6.4 million tonnes of trash, which mostly contains plastic, is dumped in the world’s oceans every year. Around 90pc of sea birds take in plastic. Fish and other animals are also not spared as they consume microplastic or become entangled in plastic debris. If plastic bags, bottles, toys and packaging material are not disposed of properly, they reach the sea and damage coastal ecosystems. Plastic waste, which decomposes very slowly, remains floating in the open sea or piles up on beaches.

Senior director programmes at WWF-P Rab Nawaz called upon the local administration to ensure proper waste collection and disposal, especially in the coastal areas like Ibrahim Hyderi.

“There is also a need for creating public awareness of how to ensure minimum use of plastic in daily life and also promote use of recyclable material instead of plastic, a persistent chemical which takes hundreds of years [to decompose].

“Accumulation of plastic in the ecosystem, especially along the coast and in the offshore waters, poses serious threat to marine biodiversity,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1341332>

PAKISTANI CITIZENS GASP FOR CLEAN AIR

The Express Tribune, 24 June 2017

ISLAMABAD: Furhan Hussain moved to Islamabad seeking fresher air, only to find Pakistan’s leafy capital in a semi-permanent haze. Frustrated, he joined a vanguard of citizens monitoring pollution themselves amid a void in government data.

Fast-growing Pakistan is home to some 200 million people and suffers from some of the worst air pollution in the world, thanks to its giant population plying poorly maintained vehicles on the roads and unchecked industrial emissions.

Countries such as India and Sri Lanka publish statistics or warnings to help citizens cope when air pollution goes to dangerous levels.

But Pakistan is “one of few countries who do not monitor air quality”, says Hussain, of the informal PakAirQuality network, a group of concerned citizens monitoring pollution in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi then publishing their data on Twitter.

The lack of official information means citizens may be unaware of what they are breathing in. And without irrefutable data charting the scale of the problem it can be difficult to enforce change.

The issue is acute in developing Pakistan, where emissions standards often go ignored partly because of a belief the country cannot afford to hamper its economic growth, says Imran Saqib Khalid of the Islamabad-based Sustainable Development Policy Institute.

Government policies do not outline a long-term strategy or move towards renewables. Instead, Pakistan is building some 13 coal-fired power plants with Chinese assistance under a \$50 billion investment plan.

Officials insist these will not affect air quality. “Usage of ultra critical technology has been ensured to reduce emissions,” an official from the Ministry of Climate Change told AFP. Without data, it can be impossible to prove otherwise.

The situation becomes particularly dire in the north during winter, when cities are blanketed in thick toxic smog reminiscent of Victorian England’s ‘pea-soupers’.

World Bank estimates show that residents of the northwestern city of Peshawar, for example, breathe an annual average of 110 cubic micro-metres of fine particulate matter — tiny pollutants that reduce visibility and reach deep into the respiratory tract.

That is more than 11 times over the recommended upper limit, and is believed to be a factor in almost 60,000 deaths from related diseases each year, including lung and heart diseases, asthmas and cancers.

Pakistan does have a federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), whose chief Farzana Altaf Shah says data is collected via mobile monitoring stations — but “not regularly”.

“If government is not doing so, citizens themselves have to do it and generate data to show how bad the situation is,” says the activist Hussain.

Ali Nadir, a Lahore-based businessman who is part of the PakAirQuality network, says they use ‘nodes’ which can monitor air quality and share the data in real time through smart phones. The idea originally came from a Pakistani national living in China, who showed his friends the cheap technology.

“The basic purpose is to raise awareness among people about the air quality, because you cannot rely on the government,” Nadir told AFP.

“Many people have told me that they follow my tweets about air quality and sometimes if the reading is too high and beyond safe level, they adjust their exercise schedule and plan going out accordingly.” Nadir said the network hopes to build on the groundswell of awareness.

Meanwhile EPA chief Shah says there is some cause for hope, with a move toward higher fuel standards and the setting of pollution control units in Islamabad factories. “It is a slow process, but it is there.” But exposure remains inevitable for millions of ordinary people.

Walking into a clinic in the garrison city of Rawalpindi, Usman Rehman, 25, complains of a cough he can’t shake. “I live in Rawalpindi and travel on a motorcycle and there is so much pollution that sometimes it is difficult to breathe,” he says.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1441914/pakistani-citizens-gasp-clean-air/>

ENVIRONMENT: TACKLING CHANGE, ONE FARM AT A TIME

The Express Tribune, June 25, 2017

I often travel to different villages across Pakistan to see if all the chatter and policies about climate change in the development sector translate into something tangible for the local farming communities. One such trip, to a farm in Thati Gujran village on the outskirts of Islamabad, proved to be particularly enlightening. The farm, a 21-acre piece of land privately-owned by Malik Tariq, is located in a rain-fed zone of the Potohar Plateau which receives approximately 800-1,000mm of rain annually. The farm is irrigated by a seven-acre pond on the premises — one of the many small check dams built by the Punjab government’s Soil and Water Conservation Department across the Potohar region that harvests rainwater for agriculture.

Since the cultivated area of Tariq's farm is at a higher elevation than the pond, a diesel-fuelled pump was installed to supply water for irrigation. Unfortunately, as Tariq explained, crop productivity remained low because the irrigation system was uneconomical and inefficient.

However, when Tariq began working with the National Agriculture Research Centre (NARC), which functions under the auspices of the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), his situation drastically improved. Under NARC's guidance, he began using Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) technologies — industry jargon for green farming methods. The diesel pump was replaced with a five-horsepower (hp) submersible DC solar pump in a move towards decreasing dependency on fossil fuels and reducing carbon emissions.

Tariq's farm is not an isolated case. According to Dr Bashir Ahmed, the principal scientific officer at the Climate Change Alternate Energy & Water Resources Institute (CAEWRI), CSA technologies have been successful in improving crop yield and result in a better yield compared to traditional farming.

Tariq's farm is a NARC pilot project. Under the organisation's guidance, it has become more than simply a source for irrigation water. The pond, which has a capacity of 200,000-300,000 gallons, is used to irrigate the entire farm. In addition, it is also used to farm fish — almost 6,000 fish are harvested at one time in the pond. A rain-gun operated with the same DC solar pump aerates the pond ensuring ample supply of oxygen for the fish.

Generally, natural ponds in the area spread disease, increase waterlogging, and ultimately become a burden on the community but this pond has been used to transform the surrounding farmland into a haven for farmers.

Tariq's farm has also become a model for water efficiency, energy-saving, and climate change mitigation. For example, the farm operates on 24 mono-crystalline solar panels, which produce 4.8 KW of electricity. Even maintenance of the panels is automated: a rotating rain-gun washes the panels at fixed times to prevent build-up of dirt on the panels.

Another intervention is the overhead microsprinkler part of the systems known as High Efficiency Irrigation Systems (HEIS). Other examples of HEIS include drips and bubbler irrigation which ensure efficiency of water usage. With warnings of impending water scarcity within the next decade, the need to test the viability of such technologies is paramount.

Other interventions on the farm include a 5,000-gallon water tank located at a higher elevation than the cultivated parts of the farm. This is filled when the sun is shining and the solar pump is functioning at maximum efficiency and supplies water during cloudy days when the solar pump cannot be used. The elevation makes it possible to feed the HEIS using gravity flow, thus not requiring electrical pumping or flooding.

Finally, this farm has also broken the tradition of mono-cropping. With the introduction of multiple cropping and tunnel farming under the guidance of NARC, this farm has been transformed into a multi-crop agro-economic model farm.

What is perhaps even more important is to ensure that such technology is affordable for all farmers, not just landlords or corporate farms.

Tariq has inspired his fellow neighbours to also adopt the new CSA technologies and methods. Haji Asim — who owns 14 acres of land in Fateh Jang, located close to Tariq's farm — has replicated many of NARC's intervention.

For instance, Asim has installed a five-hp DC solar pump linked to solar panels; lined a depression to convert it into a pacca pond; installed tunnels equipped with drip irrigation; and diversified into horticulture (grapes and olives) to increase income and reduce vulnerability to market risk and climate-induced hazards.

Seeing the impact of such technologies first-hand, other farmers are more willing to adopt them; this impact is not lost on NARC officials either. The organisation conducts field days and professional trainings for farmers.

Another use of these experiments has been to inform policymaking. There is a lot of emphasis on having evidence-based public policies and such pilot farms are critical to generating that evidence. According to Dr Munir Ahmad, Director CAEWRI, the solar water pumps at Fateh Jang were used to demonstrate the viability of it to policymakers from Punjab. This demonstration along with other collected data was instrumental in convincing the Punjab government to subsidise solar pumps. A total of 30,000 solar pumps will be installed in the Potahar region in the Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Attock and Chakwal districts with individual farmers bearing only 30 percent of the cost.

Muhammad Ayub is an energetic 38-year-old farmer in the village of Saroba near the Chakri interchange on the M-2 motorway. A father of two, he served in the Frontier Corps for 18 years. Ayub has now returned to his ancestral home to take up the profession of his forefathers. His family has been practicing wheat and corn cultivation for decades.

Ayub expresses great affinity and respect for the practices of his forefathers. There is profound environmental and economic wisdom in those practices, as much as there is emotional and cultural significance, he explains. But he is now ready to leave behind those practices in order to keep up with modern developments and their benefits.

He stresses the need to maintain the spirit of sustainability and environmental consciousness — a hallmark of his ancestor's way of farming — but to accept that changes in climate, markets and demand patterns requires adaptation in agricultural practices.

Ayub's land in Chakri — slightly less than four acres — has been chosen as a site under the HI-AWARE project's pilot component being implemented by PARC in collaboration with the Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD) Pakistan.

Funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the project is simultaneously being implemented in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal with local partners. Ayub's farm is both a repository and a source of knowledge for researchers from the five countries.

Pakistan's team for the IDRC project consists of agronomists, engineers, hydrologists, climatologists, energy-sector specialists, gender specialists, sociologists, anthropologists, public policy experts, and political scientists from both the government and non-government sectors, who work in collaboration with a team of experts from outside Pakistan.

The constant learning involved among this group of researchers through collaboration is combined with lessons from the field to ensure that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' model but constantly evolving practices that can be implemented on the ground.

Some of the interventions taking place on Ayub's farm include the plantation of 80 Mexican Lime plants irrigated through drip irrigation — a plant that is not found in the region despite its suitability — as tested through crop trials conducted by NARC. Other innovations include switching from monocropping to multiple cropping. The farm now also has a kitchen garden, high-value vegetables are grown using tunnel farming (when plants are grown without soil in mineral nutrients in a water solution) and virus-free potato varieties have been planted.

The Persian wheel turns out to have practical 'green' benefits in addition to its cultural value. Ayub is kept in the loop by the team about what's marketable and what technology works. For instance, one micro-plot was used to harvest coriander just before the month of Ramazan, during which the demand for the vegetable results in a price hike in urban markets. The team discovered that the income from this micro-plot was higher than the economic gains from the remaining landholdings put together.

While new innovative technologies have been introduced on Ayub's farm, the researchers have retained certain traditional farming practices such as the donkey-driven Persian wheel. After feasibility studies, the Persian wheel that lifts water from an open well, is being converted to a solar-powered electrical motor.

The original plan was to replace the entire system with a solar water pump. However, the team realised that the Persian wheel is a cultural artefact, a link to the past to many people in the area and aerates the water (the mechanism is such that a proportion of the water lifted by the wheel falls back in the well).

This discovery makes sense to Ayub. "The water from my well is meetha (potable) and the locals prefer drinking from it, even those with water pumps on their own land," he says.

That generations-old farming practices and tools could have cultural and a practical value is something that the project team had not considered initially. However, now there is an attempt to combine modern technology with traditional wisdom and cultural practices.

On another site nearby, Amanullah's 13-acre farm has been chosen as the second site under the HI-AWARE project. On his farm, crop diversification is being promoted, as hybrid pulses and figs are grown side-by-side, with highly successful results so far.

Other initiatives on the farm include portable solar water-pumping to make the water from the nearby river Soan available for irrigation; a weather station; a kitchen garden with high-value herbs such as oregano, thyme, celery, parsley, and coriander; a variety of fruits such as falsa (*Grewia asiatica*), fig and loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*). Peaches planted on undulated slopes and a 1.5-acre orchard of citrus fruits is supported through drip-irrigation. These technologies will be tested by the HI-AWARE team and if they turn out to be feasible, the search for the next Muhammad Ayub and Amanullah will begin.

There continues to be a science-policy gap in Pakistan. Accusations of copy-pasting case studies from abroad, only focusing on big farmers, and prioritising donor satisfaction over end-user value (whether it's beneficial to farmers or not) still echo in conference halls and NGO offices.

However, the NARC projects reveal that there is valuable work being done to bridge the science-policy disconnect. But projects such as HI-AWARE can only be considered a long-term success if farmers like Muhammad Ayub no longer have to wait for foreign and local donors to help them adapt their farming methods to climate change.

While researchers deserve credit for converting theory into practice and for their close collaboration with the farming community, what stands out about these projects is that the farmers are considered the real agents of change. Only time will tell, however, if in the future all farmers will be open to changing agricultural practices like Ayub or Amanullah.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1341536>

PLASTIC PRODUCTS POLLUTING PAKISTAN'S COAST, SAY EXPERTS

The Express Tribune, June 25, 2017

KARACHI: In a rare incident, a flat needle fish, an ablenne hians that is locally called an alore, was ensnared in the handle of a plastic cup and caught on Thursday by Momin Khan, a Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) – Pakistan-trained fisherman, around 270 kilometres southwest of Karachi.

The fish was taken on-board a fishing vessel and managed to survive with the cup attached to its midsection. Unfortunately, when the fishermen attempted to remove the cup and rescue the fish, it died.

Studies initiated by WWF-Pakistan reveal that on some beaches, such as the Clifton beach, plastic pollution contributes up to 50% of beach garbage. Even remote beaches along Pakistan's coast, such as those at Kund Malir and Gwadar, are littered with plastic that is negatively affecting marine life along coastal and offshore waters. It has been reported that globally one out of three marine mammals have been affected by plastic litter. Similarly, studies indicate that about 90% of sea birds digest

plastic. Fish and other sea creatures are also not spared, as they often consume micro-plastic or become entangled in plastic debris.

Uncontrolled dumping of plastic products in the terrestrial and marine environment has become a serious threat to animals and plants inhabiting Pakistan's coastal and offshore waters. According to one estimate, around 6.4 million metric tons of trash, which mostly contains plastic, is dumped in the world's oceans every year, said an official of WWF-Pakistan. If plastic bags, bottles, toys and packaging material are not disposed of properly, they reach the sea and damage coastal ecosystems. Plastic waste, which decomposes very slowly, remains floating in the open sea or piles up on beaches. Pakistan is no exception to this, as improper dumping of city garbage at unauthorised locations such as along the shores of Ibrahim Hyderi in Karachi has resulted in an unprecedented increase in plastic pollution on the beaches and sub-tidal environment along the coastline.

"Plastic pollution is becoming a serious threat in Pakistani waters. This is not only being littered on our beaches but is drastically increasing in offshore waters as well," said Muhammad Moazzam Khan, technical adviser of marine fisheries at WWF-Pakistan. He also said that plastic pollution contributes through flotsam and jetsam generated from ships including fishing vessels operating in the sea.

"Floating plastic is mistaken as food and many animals get trapped in it, with serious and deadly consequences," he explained. High concentrations of plastic material, particularly plastic bags, are found to restrict the breathing and stomachs of many marine species, including whales, dolphins, seals, seabirds, and turtles.

Khan added that the flat needlefish is a fast moving fish that possibly misidentified the floating plastic cup as a food item and became entangled in it.

Rab Nawaz, senior director of programmes at WWF-Pakistan, urged the local administration to properly remove garbage from the city and called for adequate disposal at dumpsites and controlling of unauthorised dumping of garbage at Ibrahim Hyderi and along other parts of the coast.

He also stressed the need to create awareness among the general public about rational use of plastic in their daily chores and also promote the use of recyclable material instead of plastic. It is a persistent chemical and takes hundreds of years before degrading, he said.

According to Nawaz, the accumulation of plastic in the ecosystem, especially along the coast and in the offshore waters, poses a serious threat to marine biodiversity and resultantly urgent steps are needed to address this growing issue all over the world.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1444147/plastic-products-polluting-pakistans-coast-say-experts/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 12TH TO JUNE 18 TH 2017

PLASTIC IN RIVERS MAJOR SOURCE OF OCEAN POLLUTION

Business Recorder, 12 June 2017

THE HAGUE: Plastic that is dumped in rivers and then ends up in the world's oceans is one of the major sources of marine pollution, a new study said last week, with Asian waterways the main culprits.

Researchers at The Ocean Cleanup — a Dutch foundation developing new technologies for ridding the oceans of plastic — say rivers carry an estimated 1.15-2.41 million tonnes of plastic into the sea every year, an amount that need between 48,000 to over 100,000 dump trucks to carry it away. Their latest study, published in Nature Communications journal on Wednesday, added that two-thirds of the pollution comes from the 20 most polluting rivers, the overwhelming majority in Asia with the Yangtze River in China topping the list.

The Yangtze, the world's third-longest river, "is the largest contributing catchment", dumping some 330,000 tonnes of plastic into the East China Sea.

This is followed by the Ganges River in India and a combination of the Xi, Dong and Zhujiang Rivers in China as well as four Indonesian rivers: the Brantas, Solo, Serayu and Progo.

The rest of the world shared the remaining 14 percent of plastic pollution via rivers, The Ocean Cleanup researchers said.

“Most of this river plastic input is coming from Asia, which emphasises the need to focus on monitoring and mitigation efforts in Asian countries with rapid economic development and poor waste management,” they said.

The researchers however issued a disclaimer saying “there is very little data to document these assumptions and thoroughly verify the validity of our model.”

“Yet, the relatively high concentrations of ocean plastic found at the surface of the North Pacific Ocean where buoyant plastics originating from Asia can accumulate, suggest that our assumptions are plausible,” they said.

The study comes against the backdrop of the UN’s first ocean conference opening in Miami on Monday, where plastic pollution was singled out as particularly harmful.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres cited a recent study that showed plastic could outweigh fish in 2050 if nothing is done.

Every year, more than eight million tons of plastic ends up in the ocean, costing at least \$8 billion (7.1 billion euros) in damage to marine ecosystems and killing an estimated one million sea birds, 100,000 sea mammals and untold numbers of fish.—AFP

BATTERY RECYCLING WORKSHOPS CONTRIBUTING TO ENVIRONMENTAL LEAD: KU STUDY

Dawn, June 13th, 2017

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: Highlighting high levels of lead concentration in roadside dust and plants and its harmful impact on health and environment, a recent study has described battery recycling workshops as a major contributor to environmental lead and suggested their removal from densely-populated areas. Titled Lead concentration in urban dust and leaves of street plants, Karachi, the study was jointly conducted by the Institute of Environmental Studies (IES), Karachi University, and Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR).

Hassan Farid, a researcher at the IES, carried out the study under Prof Zafar Iqbal Shams of the IES and Dr Farooq Ahmed Khan of the PCSIR.

The study found varying levels of lead concentration in dust and roadside plants from 29 city areas including Aziz Bhatti Park in Gulshan-i-Iqbal, Quaid-i-Azam mausoleum, Tariq Road, Commissioner’s Office in Saddar, Sindhi Muslim Housing Society, Soldier Bazaar, Denso Hall, Jama Cloth Market on M.A. Jinnah Road, Finance and Trade Centre on Sharea Faisal and Merewether Tower.

According to the study’s findings, the highest concentration of lead in dust was found in Nazimabad No. 2, followed by Pakistan Quarters and Tibet Centre, whereas the lowest lead concentration in dust was found along Shahrah-i-Liaquat.

The highest concentration of lead was found in the leaves of *Conocarpus erectus* at Dak Khana, Liaquatabad, while the lowest concentration was found in the leaves of *Guaiacum officinale* (lignum) at Quaid’s mausoleum.

According to the study, the main source of lead in the dust at designated sites seems to be the roadside workshops for welding and soldering, particularly recycling shops of lead-acid batteries. The used lead-acid batteries of motor vehicles are generally recycled and repaired in shops along busy streets of inner-city areas.

“Due to continued electricity shortages in Karachi over the past few years, demand for recycled batteries, often used in uninterrupted power supply (UPS) systems, has increased dramatically. Inner-city areas have over 1,000 recycling shops of used lead-acid batteries,” it says.

These shops, according to the study, are located in densely-populated areas and contributing to environmental lead, suggesting that the work should be transferred to factories, where batteries are manufactured, for their proper recycling and proper disposal.

It also highlights the adverse impact exposure to lead could have on human health and points out that urban dust is an important pathway that increases blood lead level (BLL) particularly in young children. "Blood lead level in children living in Karachi has been studied over the past few years which demonstrate that children are currently exposed to high level of environmental lead," it says. According to the World Health Organisation, lead is a cumulative toxicant that affects multiple body systems and is harmful to young children. "Young children are particularly vulnerable to the toxic effects of lead and can suffer profound and permanent adverse health effects, particularly affecting the development of the brain and nervous system. Lead also causes long-term harm in adults, including increased risk of high blood pressure and kidney damage. Exposure of pregnant women to high levels of lead can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth and low birth weight, as well as minor malformations," the WHO website says.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1339123/battery-recycling-workshops-contributing-to-environmental-lead-ku-study>

PROVINCIAL FOREST DEPTS DENYING USF ACCESS TO CONSTRUCT CELLULAR TOWERS

Dawn, June 14th, 2017

Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: A parliamentary committee was informed that provincial environment and forest department are denying Universal Service Fund (USF) access to construct cellular service towers in forest areas.

These include more than 120 towers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Senate Subcommittee on Information Technology met on Tuesday to discuss progress made on extending mobile and broadband internet services to far-flung areas in KP, Fata and Balochistan.

Though USF official asserted the significance of connecting the citizens of KP with mobile and internet service to bring them at par with other provinces, KP Secretary Forest Nazar Shah said the government intended to install cellular mobile towers in forest land, which was not permitted under environment laws to protect natural habitats.

USF is a department of the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication and has a mandate to extend cellular services to un-served and under-served locations across the country.

"We also do not have provisions in the law which deals with the development of infrastructure in forest lands," said Nazar Shah.

He said the matter had been discussed with the law division which had suggested de-notifying forest area to allow infrastructure development.

"By doing that, the forest area will lose its status and will no longer be protected under law," Mr Shah said.

According to USF Technical Officer Syed Asif Kamal Shah, the government was facing similar difficulties in Kohistan where the local forest departments are not allowing the government to develop cellular sites in 119 locations, all inside protected forest lands.

"Work is also on hold in another four sites in Chitral," Asif Shah said, explaining that more cellular towers were needed in hilly areas for uninterrupted mobile and broadband internet services including 3G and 4G.

Nazar Shah said his office was cooperating with USF to help them introduce mobile and internet services in far-flung areas.

The committee's chairman, Senator Taj Mohammad Afridi said it was imperative to connect all areas of the country with telecommunication and internet services. He urged officials from provincial forest and IT departments to assist the USF in connecting far-flung areas with technology.

Nazar Shah said he has already sent a summary to the Chief Minister's Office for further action.

"We expect a positive outcome. The KP government realises the importance of telecommunication services in these areas that will connect the people of far off locations with the rest of the world and will also create jobs and boost the business environment," he said.

Kamal Shah said USF has been issued an NOC for conducting surveys in Fata to identify sites for installing more cellular towers.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1339374/provincial-forest-depts-denying-usf-access-to-construct-cellular-towers>

NEAT AND TIDY: CM PUTS MICROSCOPE OVER RURAL CLEANLINESS

The Express Tribune, June 14th, 2017.

LAHORE: Matters related to solid waste management and sanitation programmes in rural areas came under the microscope during a high-level meeting on Tuesday.

The meeting also pondered over different issues relating to clean drinking water programmes. While addressing the meeting, Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the government had developed a mega programme to keep villages neat and clean.

He maintained the initiative was unique programme and had been launched for the first time in Pakistan. "This will ensure the villages and rural hinterlands are kept neat and clean, just like cities. He said village dwellers will get the same facilities which are available in cities and the cleanliness system would be devolved up to the level of union councils.

He ordered that skilled human resource should be hired for the implementation of the drive. Shehbaz warned he would personally supervise the plan. "A huge sum of Rs15 billion has been allocated for this programme in the upcoming financial year. He maintained an efficient solid waste management system would be available in the villages, adding collective efforts were needed to provide a clean atmosphere to people. "Cleanliness of villages, alongside cities, is our commitment."

Shehbaz said a clean drinking water supply programme will start from southern Punjab and the scheme would commence in all the tehsils of the region. He added a sum of Rs25 billion was being provided in FY2017-18.

He hoped the implementation of the programme would help to eradicate waterborne diseases. He also expressed hope that the project would prove beneficial for the health of the people. He said the initiative would be implemented on a fast-track basis by uniting all energies. He observed clean drinking water was one of the fundamental rights of people. "In the Bahawalpur region, 116 water filtration plants are providing clean drinking water to the people," he added.

Provincial ministers Mansha Ullah Butt, Syed Haroon Sultan Bukhari, PML-N leader Khawaja Ahmad Hasaan, the chief secretary, Planning & Development chairman, Saaf Pani Company (South) Chairman Chaudhry Arif Saeed, senior officials, secretaries concerned and other experts attended the meeting.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1434761/neat-tidy-cm-puts-microscope-rural-cleanliness/>

MINING FIRM READY TO TALK AGAIN TO PROTESTING GORNAO VILLAGERS: CEO

Dawn, June 15th, 2017

MITHI: Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) chief executive officer Shamsuddin Ahmed Shaikh has said that even though the judicial committee on Gorano wastewater reservoir has declared the project as technically and environmentally sound, they are still ready to hold talks again with protesters to allay their fears most of which are based on misinformation.

Mr Shaikh told Dawn on Wednesday that the feasibility study for the reservoir had been prepared by reputable international firms and it was in no one's favour to challenge their reports which had been carefully drafted after comprehensive research covering all aspects.

He said that contrary to the misconceptions spread by certain elements, the project would benefit the Thar and Tharis on a large scale which would surely change the face of the area and develop it into a prosperous region.

"If we want to pull the backward region of Tharparkar out of poverty and destitution, the dividends of coal projects in Thar must go first to the locals before the rest of the country," he said.

He said: "We are in a process finalising a development model for Thar, which will change the very basics of development paradigm in Tharparkar region."

Mr Shaikh said the company had started making interventions in education, health, livelihood and drinking water sectors for the people of the area — and some schemes had already started benefiting locals. "The social sector interventions are well beyond our mandate and promises made towards social uplift of the area," he added.

He said that Thar Coal Block-II project was one of the largest energy schemes of Pakistan with promised investment of \$2 billion. It was indeed a blessing for the people of Thar, he said.

"The total duration envisaged for the completion of the project was 42 months but the pace of the work ensured completion duration within 38 months," he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1339539>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 5TH TO JUNE 11 TH 2017

ENVIRONMENT DAY

Dawn, June 5th, 2017

Neil Buhne

TWENTY-FIVE years ago, the world came together at the United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and agreed that the world's environment could not be endlessly exploited. It had to be conserved through sustainable development. Around the same time, Pakistan was a world leader in 'localising' the global agenda with the approval of the National Conservation Strategy.

Therefore, this World Environment Day, a quarter century later, is a good time to reflect on whether the objectives of the Earth Summit were met, and if Pakistan met the objectives it set for itself in the National Conservation Strategy.

This question is not an abstract one for Pakistan. If the world does not slow climate change, Pakistan is among the six countries that will be most affected. As glaciers melt in the Himalayas, flooding is projected to substantially increase with the possibility of a repetition of the floods of 2010 and 2011. Moreover, in the longer term as glaciers recede, the country must cope with the challenges of decreased river flows with the obvious effect on agriculture and urban water supplies, but also the less obvious effect of the depletion of underground aquifers from overuse and in some cases from insufficient recharge. Monsoon rains are likely to fluctuate more as climate change increasingly affects patterns of rainfall, thus provoking alternating floods and droughts.

The likely increase in climate-related disasters would take a heavy toll on people, on infrastructure and on the economy. The harsh effects on people from the current extended drought in Sindh's Tharparkar district shows what could happen in other parts of Pakistan as climate change accelerates. It is not an accident that four of the Sustainable Development Goals are related to the environment, for if those issues are not dealt with, it will not be possible for the other goals to be met — whether that means a reduction of poverty, reduced inequality, peaceful and inclusive societies, access to energy, health, education and more.

But what can Pakistan do to reduce its vulnerability to climate change? The 1990 National Conservation Strategy laid out a series of actions that would make Pakistan more resilient to the

effects of climate change, while conserving what is unique and special in the environment and enabling human development.

Action was taken in many areas: vast areas in Gilgit-Baltistan are better protected than they were, renewable energy is used much more and Pakistan has some of the leading expertise in the world on that. There is much more capacity in government, civil society and academia, and there is whole set of environment-related laws that did not exist before.

However, the many challenges Pakistan has been facing, whether from a complex regional security environment, or from larger-than-projected effects of climate change, means that Pakistan still has immense work to do in adapting to these changes. Adaptation will require significant investment in alternatives — both alternative energy sources and extensive water conservation and management — as well as in protecting people and infrastructure. As the frequency and duration of major climate change patterns accelerates, this could affect economic growth, particularly in Pakistan's vitally important agricultural sector, on which tens of millions of people depend.

This year Pakistan has taken crucial strides in battling these global challenges. The landmark legislation, the Climate Change Act 2017, brings Pakistan into the small group of countries with specific legislation building on the commitments made in Paris in 2015. The scope of the legislation is impressive and reflects the scale of the challenges: establishment of the high-level Climate Change Council, the full-fledged Climate Change Authority and the Climate Change Fund.

Such institutional arrangements are instrumental in the uphill struggle against climate change in Pakistan, in fulfilling Pakistan's international environmental commitments, but most importantly in building resilience and the national capacity to adapt to climate change.

According to recent estimates, over the next 40-50 years it will cost Pakistan \$10.7 billion each year to adapt to climate change. The Climate Change Act is a step in the right direction to start addressing the issue and implement the action plans for mitigating the enormous risks of climate change and meeting the SDGs.

Twenty-five years ago, the world and Pakistan recognised that progress in human development was indivisible from sustainable development. In 2015, world leaders recognised that again both at the SDG summit and the Climate Change Conference. Support by all in Pakistan and internationally for the implementation of Pakistan's climate change act is a necessity. If that happens, 25 years from now on June 5, 2042, Pakistan is much more likely to be a country where the effects of climate change will have been mitigated and one where the SDGs were met long ago.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1337456/environment-day>

'ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS REMAIN UNIMPLEMENTED DUE TO LACK OF POLITICAL WILL, BUREAUCRATIC HURDLES'

Dawn, June 6th, 2017

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: Admitting the government's failure in implementing environmental laws, Secretary Environment, Climate Change and Coastal Development Baqaullah Unnar said that the situation was alarming in Sindh as contamination of food and environmental pollution was on the rise.

He was the chief guest at a seminar held on Monday, organised by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa), to mark World Environment Day.

This year's theme is 'Connecting people to nature'.

"The Sindh environmental protection laws passed in 2014 have remained ineffective so far. These laws couldn't be implemented due to lack of political will and bureaucratic hurdles. These are ground realities," said Mr Unnar, expressing hope that the media and civil society could guide the government in improving environmental conditions.

Highlighting the environmental and health challenges, Mr Unnar said that malpractices in the agriculture, food and water sectors had exposed people to toxic chemicals and created serious public health issues.

“(Unregulated) use of pesticides in agriculture is common while we also see farmers growing vegetables with sewage. In urban areas, air pollution has increased dramatically, harming life of common citizens,” he said.

Earlier, other speakers underscored the need for bringing human lifestyle closer to nature.

“It’s time to value our natural resources; we should visit our wetlands and forests and create awareness in this regard,” said Sepa official Waqar Husain Phulpoto in his brief speech.

His remarks on forests led someone in the audience to quip, “Have you left any forests in Sindh?”

Prof Mohammad Ahsan Siddiqui, a senior environmental consultant and water technologist, focused on how humans had destroyed nature’s balance and created problems for themselves. In this context, he gave the example of the Indus delta which, he pointed out, had been greatly impacted due to reduced flow of freshwater.

“Hundreds of acres of highly fertile agricultural land in Badin have been destroyed and the delta, which was once home to the best shrimps in the world, is no longer rich in these species,” he told the audience.

Sharing research findings, Prof Siddiqui said that chicken meat being sold in the market these days contained high concentration of toxic metals and shouldn’t be consumed. According to him, the feed and the unnatural methods used to increase the chicken’s weight made the meat unsafe for human consumption.

“People should think of ways of raising chickens in their homes. Efforts should also be made to grind spices at home instead of buying them from the market in powdered form as they are filled with food products containing high concentration of toxic metals,” he said.

Dr Moazzam Ali Khan of Karachi University’s Institute of Environmental Studies said that small steps in the right direction mattered a lot when it came to protecting nature and the environment.

“Being eco-friendly is all about changing the way we live and making the choices that don’t result in harming nature,” he said. He concluded that it’s one earth, one world and one life and, hence, it must not be wasted.

Ali Dehalvi of World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan and Prof M.A.K. Lodhi from the Texas Tech University, USA also spoke.

The programme concluded with distribution of shields among speakers.

Meanwhile, the International Union for Conservation of Nature-Pakistan (IUCN) in a message called upon both federal and provincial governments to respond to global opportunities and link up with them.

“This includes primarily the Bonn Challenge, which is a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of the world’s deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030,” a press release states.

It also urged the government to integrate environmental concerns in development projects. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), it said, was emerging as a great economic opportunity for the country and IUCN Pakistan and IUCN China were working closely together to assist both the governments to incorporate environmental safeguards into CPEC.

On this year’s theme of World Environment Day, the IUCN stated: “There are numerous studies that confirm the significance of the important link between humans and nature — that people closely connected to nature possess more positivity and vitality compared to those away from nature’s serenity.

“Nature not only serves to provide nourishment to souls but also fulfils our countless basic needs, by way of its ecosystems and rich biodiversity. Thus, protection and conservation of biodiversity requires serious thought and consideration.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1337610>

VILLAGERS CATCH INDUS DOLPHIN IN LARKANA VILLAGE

Dawn, June 9th, 2017

LARKANA: A group of villagers bathing in the Wassand Shakh (branch), an offshoot of Warah Canal, on Thursday captured a three-foot-long dolphin weighing around 30kg that had gone astray into shallow water from the Indus.

They informed the wildlife department that they and some farmers working in the nearby fields spotted the dolphin in the irrigation channel near Sobh Ji Wandh village, some 20km from Larkana city. The dolphin was taken into custody by Gada Hussain Junejo, who later released it into a deep fish pond and told local reporters that wildlife officials must arrange its release into the Indus to ensure survival of the rare fish species.

Indus dolphin is regarded as amongst the rarest animals in the world. The species is found in the Sukkur region and is often captured, alive or dead, by fishermen, who would release the alive ones into Indus.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1338297>

SHC summons govt's reply on SSWMB dissolution case

The Express Tribune, June 9, 2017

The Sindh High Court (SHC) sought on Thursday a reply from the provincial government regarding implementation of the Supreme Court's order to dissolve the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) for failing to perform its functions of lifting and disposing of garbage across the province. A two-judge bench, headed by Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, asked the provincial advocate-general to file the reply by June 18. The bench was hearing a petition filed by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement – Pakistan through its leader and Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar.

They had sought direction for the provincial government to dissolve the SSWMB and hand its functions over to the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC). They referred to a Supreme Court order in which the court stated that the ‘non-functional board [SSWMB] has never performed and should be dissolved to local bodies as provided under the rules of business’, the apex court had ordered in its judgment dated March 8, issued after lengthy hearings on a petition seeking judicial inquiry into the provincial authorities failure to supply clean drinking water and improve sanitation conditions in the province.

During the hearing, Barrister Farogh Naseem, who represented the petitioners, said due to failure of the provincial authorities under the guise of the solid waste management board to lift and dispose of garbage, an outbreak of various diseases like chikungunya had spread across the city.

He argued the Supreme Court had in its order of March 8 had clearly ordered that the ‘non-functional board [SSWMB] had never performed and should be dissolved to local bodies as provided under the rules of business’.

He alleged that despite the directives of the Supreme Court, the provincial authorities had not taken any steps to solve the board and transfer its functions to the elected local representative bodies. He maintained that the petition had been filed to seek implementation of the apex court's order under Article 187(2).

Advocate-General Barrister Zamir Ghumro contended that the apex court had not passed any order for devolution of the SSWMB. He argued the apex court had instead given its observations.

He informed the court that a judicial commission appointed by the Supreme Court was already looking into matters regarding sanitation in the province, including lifting of garbage.

The judges observed that the whole province had turned into a garbage dumping site. They directed AG Ghumro to file a reply regarding the Supreme Court's order passed in this regard. He sought time, which was granted till June 18.

In the plea, the mayor informed the court that the SSWMB was established under the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board Act, 2014 with functions to cater to the needs of the people and was being run by the Sindh government since its establishment.

Akhtar had pleaded to the court to direct the concerned authorities to transfer all assets falling under the umbrella of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board Act, 2014 to the local government institutions. He had further requested the SHC to direct the respondents to give complete details of all the funds they had received for the purpose of solid waste management and to appoint a reputable auditor to ascertain the facts.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1430694/shc-summons-govts-reply-sswmb-dissolution-case>

July 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 24TH TO JULY 31ST 2017

TRIBUNAL ACCEPTS BHOOTANI'S PLEA AGAINST COAL POWER PLANT

Dawn, July 25th, 2017

QUETTA: The environment protection tribunal of the Balochistan High Court has accepted for regular hearing a petition filed by former speaker of the Balochistan Assembly Mohammad Aslam Bhootani against a proposed coal-fired power plant in Hub district.

During a hearing on Monday, the tribunal also ordered that notices be issued to all the parties concerned.

Mr Bhootani filed the petition against the coal-based power plant — a joint venture of Hub Power Company Ltd (Hubco) and a Chinese firm — pleading that it could cause serious environmental issues and prove harmful for the human settlements along the coast of Gadani as well as the marine life.

The tribunal, comprising its chairman Zafar Alam Mandokhel and member Saeed Ahmed Baloch, heard the petition. The counsel for Hubco argued that the company was not part of the proposed power plant at Gadani and, therefore, it should be excluded from the petition.

However, Mr Bhootani's lawyer, Khurshid Ahmed Khoso, produced documentary evidence showing that the company had a stake in the plant. Rejecting Hubco's stance, the tribunal made the company party in the case, and ordered that notices be issued to all the parties. The next hearing is scheduled for Aug 15.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1347465>

POWER PLANT CONSTRUCTION: THAR RESIDENTS WANT SHARE OF DEVELOPMENT

Business Recorder, 29 July 2017

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Environment Protection Agency (Sepa) conducted on Thursday an environmental hearing for the construction of a 330 megawatt (MW) coal-fired power plant, a project by Siddiqsons Energy Limited (SEL), in Tharparkar. At the hearing, locals demanded a due share of the opportunities and expressed concerns about the effects on their livelihoods and environment. Bheem Raj, a resident of Thariyo Halepoto village in Islamkot taluka, said that the local people do not oppose development. "We just want our due share in the development. New projects should not adversely affect our livelihoods, which are based on livestock and agriculture," he explained.

Other village residents complained about the vague resettlement policy of the provincial government for the affected people. They asked SEL, a subsidiary of Siddiqsons group of companies, to come clean with its resettlement plan. "The people of Thar are heirs to the coal wealth. Whatever they are given in terms of employment or other opportunities should not be given as charity or alms, rather as a legal right of the locals," said a village resident, Meghwadh.

The plant would be built in Thar Coal Block II, increasing the total generation capacity of Block II to 1,650MW. The Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) is already constructing a 660MW coal-fired power generation project in the same block.

SEL's Iftikhar Aziz, while briefing the hearing, said SEL would procure 1.9 million tons of coal, which would be mined in Thar, annually from SECMC for its power project. The plant would use circulating fluidised bed boiler technology for power generation.

SECMC spokesperson Mohsin Babur told The Express Tribune that the tentative supply of coal for SEL's project will start from February, 2020.

Hidayat Hasan of Hagler Baily Pakistan, a consulting company for the project's environmental impact assessment, identified air quality, ash and waste water disposal, ecology and socioeconomic aspects as the main environmental and social concerns.

According to him, two coal mines and three power plants of the other companies in Block II would become operational prior to the SEL's power plant. He said 125,000 tons of ash would be produced from the power plant and would be stored in an ash yard for two years.

The plant will be supplied water from the Left Bank Outfall Drain. However, SEL claimed that it would minimise disposal of waste water by recycling the used water. The residual waste water would be disposed in an evaporation pond.

The disposal of waste water for Thar coal projects created a big controversy when the local people filed a petition in the Sindh High Court and continued protests for months against the construction of a reservoir in Ghorano by SECMC.

Sepa Additional Director-General SM Yahya presided over the hearing and said that a committee comprising of district administration, local residents and representatives of the company and non-governmental organisations would address the concerns of local people. He said that the concerns and complaints raised during the hearing would be mentioned in Sepa's report about the hearing.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1468839/power-plant-construction-thar-residents-want-share-development/>

DEAD IN THE WATER

Dawn, July 31st, 2017

Hajrah Mumtaz

IN the city by the sea, residents living near the coastline are now and then subjected to a foul stench beyond what are considered the normal levels in this famously trash-infested metropolis. This is because the odour given off by trucks transporting the marine catch does not get blown away by the winds.

This may be non-news in Karachi, but far up north in the Islamabad-Rawalpindi area, a similar phenomenon is near-impossible to imagine. The area is well known for its lushness and the beauty of its hillsides and slopes. Around this time of the year, it is characterised by the full splendour of the monsoons, the happy coming together of climate and environment.

Or at least, that used to be the case. A couple of weeks ago, those living in areas close to the Rawal Lake found that the air had turned foul. It turned out that thousands of fish had died in the waters over the course of just a few days, their carcasses floating to the surface with the heat doing the rest.

Investigations by city authorities and reported by the press concluded that the lake's water had reached an "unprecedented level of contamination following an inflow of rainwater that brought waste into the reservoir from [the adjacent residential locality of] Banigala and other areas." This occurred at a point when the lake's capacity had fallen to alarmingly low levels — a result of the long, hot summer — so that the banks of the dam were dry and one could walk to spots that ought normally to have been under water.

The result, obviously, was stagnation and decay.

But it was not just a case of an unfortunate confluence of events. Over the past couple of decades, the area and the lake have been victim to hugely irresponsible human activities, including the construction of settlements without sufficient planning. The posh locality of Banigala came up in the first place because the surroundings were so heart-stoppingly beautiful. Our nuclear genius, Dr A.Q. Khan, was one of the earlier landholders there and the locality is now often in the news because that it is home to Imran Khan.

The early establishments set up there were sprawling villas and farmhouses. This was bad enough, yet matters were compounded by the issue that must inevitably occur in a population-heavy country: thousands of others followed in the footsteps of the rich — in no small part because the wealthy need catering to — and by now, the area's population has reached unplanned-for proportions.

The latter bit is crucial, because here's the problem: there is no formal sewerage system in the area, so the owners of establishments have to build septic tanks. And septic tanks are 'clean' insofar as they are scattered enough in number for nature to be able to deal with the waste generated by humanity; take the population above a certain level and the ratio becomes untenable. This is what was evident at Rawal Lake this summer.

Add to this the fact that the reservoir is a popular picnic spot as it is easily accessible and affordable. Right on its banks, in fact, is a full-scale amusement park accompanied with the small industries that spring up around such spots — balloon and food vendors, etc. On the southern bank, boats can be rented out for a few hours enjoyment, and there are eateries here as well. Given that Pakistan is not a nation particularly known for its concern for or awareness of the environment, imagine the amount of

trash that goes into the lake's waters. And this is in addition to all the garbage that is washed downstream into the reservoir, which is a catchment area for the surrounding hills.

It can be argued that the ongoing rains will replenish the lake and the piscine population will heal itself. Even if this does happen, that ought not blind city authorities across the country to the fact that this sorry tale is being repeated everywhere, without any sort of check, to proportions that are utterly unsustainable. Be it the coastline of Karachi, where tens of thousands of gallons of raw sewage flow into the sea every day (in addition to solid trash), or holiday spots in the erstwhile pristine north such as Lake Saiful Muluk, where plastic garbage has reached horrible proportions, this country seems to be drowning under the weight of its own waste.

The issue is not 'merely' one of environmental concerns, often dismissed by the foolish as a luxury. It is one of poisoning the very land and water that sustains this citizenry, and of established matters such as the disease burdens and associated healthcare costs. Awash in a culture of consumerism and fecklessness, this is an issue that Pakistan really ought to find the time to pay attention to — once it gets past the more immediate political crises, of course.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1348618/dead-in-the-water>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 17TH TO JULY 23RD 2017

DEODAR TREES IN CHITRAL DRYING UP DUE TO 'MYSTERIOUS DISEASE'

Dawn, July 17th, 2017

Zahiruddin

CHITRAL: A mysterious disease has caused drying up of a large number of deodar trees in Gol National Park here during the last two months, but no measures have been taken as yet by the wildlife department to cure the ailing trees and save the unaffected ones.

A source requesting anonymity told this scribe that a herd of oval shaped medium-size insects had attacked the trees in Gokhshal, the core area of the park. He said that the insects devoured the green parts of the tree as a result of which it dried up within a few days of the onslaught and the herd turned to the next tree.

He claimed that over 5,00 trees had dried up by the disease which was spreading fast in areas containing high density of deodar trees. He added that on the one hand the forest trees were under threat, on the other, the watchers of the park had been assigned the job of plantation in some other part of the park.

An environmentalist working with an NGO said that deforestation in the aftermath of the disease in the core area of the national park might spell a disaster of flash flood due to torrential rain, which could affect the villages of Goldur, Zargarandeh and Muldeh of the city.

He said that destruction in the core area would affect the biodiversity as most of the species made the area their habitat in the winter season.

Chitral Gol National Park Association chairman Alamzeb advocate said that he knew about the disease in the park and they had contacted the high-ups of the department to take measures.

When contacted, divisional forest officer of Gol wildlife division, Abdus Samad, admitted drying up of trees in the park, but put the number of affected trees at 70 to 80. He said that samples had been sent to the Pakistan Forest Institute, Peshawar, for diagnosis.

He said that no spraying could be carried out in the park till the laboratory report was received as there was a rich biodiversity in the area which needed to be protected. Answering a question, he said that the park watchers carried out plantation on the directives of the government as a large tract in the park was without trees.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1345830>

IN COAL-FOCUSED PAKISTAN, A WIND POWER BREEZE IS BLOWING

Dawn, July 18th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is beginning to reap the benefits of Chinese investment in renewable energy infrastructure, with the opening of the first wind power project constructed as part of the huge China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), aimed at overhauling the country's transport and energy systems.

The nearly 50 megawatt wind farm is located on over 680 acres of land in Jhimpir, near the shores of the picturesque Keenjhar Lake, around two hours' drive from Karachi.

Jhimpir is part of the so-called Gharo-Jhimpir wind corridor in Sindh, a 180km stretch of coastal land that, the Pakistan Meteorological Department says, has the potential to produce 11,000MW of electricity through wind power.

The corridor is home to Pakistan's earliest wind project, which began in 2009 with just a few turbines and was upgraded to an installed capacity of 56MW by 2012.

The new wind farm, which opened last month, has been developed by Sachal Energy Development, with financing from the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.

Pakistan and China have signed around \$57 billion of energy and infrastructure projects under CPEC. Most of this investment is going towards coal-fired power plants, fuelled both by imported coal and by coal mines in Thar desert.

The CPEC projects aim at boosting energy production in Pakistan to reduce shortages that lead to regular power outages.

The country can produce as much as 23,000MW of power, but experts say that there is a shortfall of as much as 5,000MW during the periods of peak demand and demand is increasing by the day given the rapidly growing population.

The CPEC energy projects are expected to add around 17,000MW to the national grid in the next few years through what are being called early harvest projects to overcome the energy crisis.

Most of these are coal-powered plants, such as the 1,320MW Sahiwal plant in Punjab, which was inaugurated this month.

But CPEC also includes some renewable energy projects. The Quaid-i-Azam solar park in Bahawalpur, in southern Punjab, is due to generate 1,000MW, while a further 250MW would come from the wind corridor in Sindh.

Zeeshan Ashfaq, a research analyst who works for the World Wind Energy Association, said that Pakistan's grid currently has more wind power capacity than solar power capacity.

"Today we only have 400MW of grid-connected solar energy from Quaid-i-Azam solar park, whereas we have 640MW of grid-connected wind energy already in Jhimpir, including previously installed wind projects," Ashfaq said.

The Gharo-Jhimpir wind corridor, mapped in 2013 by the US National Renewable Energy Laboratory, contains vast stretches of saline land, unsuitable for agriculture and dotted only with a few bushes.

Thirteen projects are already operational here and others are in the pipeline. By the end of this year, an additional 200MW of energy would be added to the grid, Ashfaq said.

In June, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, announced that it would provide \$66 million, and mobilise a further \$172m, to help build three 50MW wind power projects in the Gharo-Jhimpir wind corridor.

Triconboston Consulting Corporation, part of a Pakistani textile group that entered the renewable energy market in 2015, will operate the plants, which the IFC says will collectively form Pakistan's largest wind farm.

The World Bank has now started mapping Pakistan's entire wind potential, looking at wind corridors in Punjab as well.

With global pricing coming down, the market for renewables is kicking off. There is a lot of interest from investors, explained Shabana Khawar, the IFC's principal country officer in Pakistan.

Khawar said the IFC was the largest private-sector investor in power in Pakistan and was focusing on hydro, wind and solar projects. She estimates that there are more than 2,000MW of mid- to large-scale wind and hydro projects in the pipeline.

Amjad Awan, chief executive officer of the government's Alternative Energy Development Board, said that because wind power production depended on the strength of the wind at any time, it was important to create an energy mix, such as of wind and solar power or wind and natural gas.

"We are entertaining hybrid arrangements and will be able to manage intermittence soon," Awan said. "In Pakistan we have more than sufficient solar and wind potential to transform into energy. And with a 20 per cent decrease in prices since 2014 the notion that wind energy is costly is a myth."

Ashfaq of the World Wind Energy Association, said that in some countries solar and wind energy was now cheaper than fossil fuels. “We too can leapfrog and move towards decarbonising our energy sector,” he said.

It took seven years for Pakistan to commission its first big wind project in 2012 after introducing its renewable energy policy back in 2006. Now the market is gaining momentum, he said.

However, Ashfaq is concerned that the government’s focus remains largely on expansion of fossil fuel power, which is helping drive climate change and worsening extreme weather in Pakistan, including more droughts and floods.

“The government’s focus has shifted to coal power and liquefied natural gas (LNG) based generation. The world is moving towards renewables but (Pakistan is) finding solutions in dirty fossil fuel generation,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1345927>

PFA RESTRICTS PUBLIC FROM RE-USING PLASTIC BOTTLES
The Express Tribune, July 18th, 2017.

LAHORE: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has put a ban on re-use of Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) bottles on Monday. The authority has directed hotels, restaurants and public at large to discard plastic water and beverage bottles after making holes in it.

The used plastic bottles can now only be sent to recycling industry as the provincial food watchdog has decided to take strict action against companies and industries involved in refilling of the used bottles.

PFA Director General Noorul Amin Mengal said the plastic bottles have a chemical called Bisphenol A (commonly known as BPA), which could cause cancer and other dangerous diseases. The authority would take strict action against restaurants and shop owners if it found empty plastic bottles with in their premises, he warned.

BPA is an organic synthetic compound that is being used commercially for different industrial purposes since 1957. It is a colourless solid that is soluble in organic solvents, but poorly soluble in water. In various developed countries, the usage of BPA based chemicals has been banned for food products packaging.

In 2012, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) banned the use of BPA in baby bottles.

According to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), BPA posed no health risk to consumers of any age group (including unborn children, infants and adolescents) at current exposure levels. But in 2017, European Chemicals Agency concluded that BPA should be listed as a substance of very high concern due to its properties as endocrine disruptor.

The Endocrine Society said in 2015 that the results of on-going laboratory research gave grounds for concern about the potential hazards of endocrine-disrupting chemicals – including BPA – in the

environment, and that on the basis of the precautionary principle these substances should continue to be assessed and tightly regulated.

According to 2016 review of the literature, the potential harms caused by BPA were a topic of scientific debate and that further investigation was a priority because of the association between BPA exposure and adverse human health effects including reproductive and developmental effects and metabolic disease.

In 2006, the US Government sponsored an assessment of the scientific literature on BPA. Thirty-eight experts in fields involved with bisphenol A gathered in Chapel Hill, North Carolina to review several hundred studies on BPA, many conducted by members of the group.

At the end of the meeting, the group issued the Chapel Hill Consensus Statement, which stated that average BPA levels in people were above those that cause harm to many animals in laboratory experiments.

Over the internet, one can easily find that many online retail stores sell PET water bottles under different brand names with a claim of 'BPA FREE' material as it has become a matter of health and environment around the world.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1460236/pfa-restricts-public-re-using-plastic-bottles/>

CDA FINDS HIGH LEVELS OF 'WASTE CONTAMINATION' IN RAWAL DAM Dawn, July 19th, 2017

Kashif Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority's (CDA) laboratory has found high concentrations of waste contamination in water samples taken from Rawal Lake earlier this week, which may offer a clue to the mystery behind the death of a large number of fish in the reservoir.

Around 14,000 Silver Cod, known locally as Sunehri, turned up dead over the past week.

Following the fish deaths, official machinery swung into action and samples from both the water and dead fish were sent for testing to various laboratories across the province.

But the report from the CDA's Wastewater Quality Laboratory, available with Dawn, reveals that Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) and Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) levels in the water were substantially higher than normal.

BOD refers to the amount of dissolved oxygen needed by biological organisms to break down organic material in the water, while COD refers to the amount of oxidisable pollutants in the water. The latter is a good indicator of pollution levels in a water body.

According to the CDA lab report, COD levels in deep water were found to be over 200mg/L, while the BOD for that corresponding depth was 70mg/L.

Similar tests conducted on surface water found a COD level of 163 mg/L and a BOD level of 54mg/L.

To put this into context, internationally, a COD level of 200mg/L applies to treated industrial effluent, while the BOD levels for treated sewage are around 20mg/L.

The report, which was finalised on Monday, stated: “High concentration of COD indicates that there is organic waste discharges/contamination, which is not bio-degradable.”

It suggested that such an aquatic environment was not tolerable for the fish, which was probably why they perished in such large numbers.

When “the level of dissolved oxygen decrease[s] in [an] aquatic organism, fishes begin to die”, the report said, adding that the optimum BOD levels for fish was around 2.5 mg/L.

“Although the dam is under the administrative control of the Punjab government, we tested the water to help authorities establish the reasons for the death of thousands of fish,” CDA spokesperson Mazhar Hussain told Dawn.

He said the lab test revealed there was a high COD concentration, which indicated that there was organic waste contamination in the reservoir.

ICT Fisheries Director Lubna Said told Dawn that the local administration had disposed of around 14,000 dead fish.

“I don’t about the CDA’s lab report, but ICT is also working to discover the reasons behind the fish deaths,” she said, adding that samples had been sent to the Punjab Forensic Science laboratories in Lahore for this purpose.

However, a recent report from the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) had declared the water fit for human consumption, she said.

Several residential and commercial structures in Banigala, Malpur and Bhara Kahu are said to be polluting the Rawal Dam’s catchment area.

A survey conducted by CDA a couple of months ago revealed there were over 2,206 residential and commercial buildings in the Bani Gala and Malpur area, where construction is prohibited.

According to CDA documents, there are 1,225 residential houses and 165 commercial buildings in Banigala, 209 buildings at the Banigala hilltop and 301 residential and six commercial buildings in Malpur.

The Supreme Court is currently hearing the matter of illegal constructions in the Bani Gala area.

“The current management has been making every effort to stop further unplanned construction in Islamabad. What happened in the past is a closed chapter, now all types of unauthorised construction is banned,” CDA spokesperson Mazhar Hussain claimed.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1346246>

GERMAN CARMAKERS ‘COLLUDED’ ON DIESEL EMISSIONS: REPORT

The Express Tribune, July 22nd, 2017.

German carmakers Volkswagen, Audi, Porsche, BMW and Daimler secretly worked together from the 1990s onwards on issues including polluting emissions from diesel vehicles, news magazine Der Spiegel reported Friday.

Volkswagen, facing tens of billions of dollars in compensation and fines after admitting to cheating on diesel emissions in 2015, had reported the cartel to German competition authorities in a letter seen by the weekly, as did Mercedes-Benz maker Daimler.

“The German car industry agreed in secret working groups about technology in their vehicles, costs, suppliers, markets, strategies and even about the emissions treatment of their diesel vehicles,” the magazine reported.

Such cooperation between all of the country’s large car manufacturers could have included “behaviour infringing antitrust law,” according to the Volkswagen letter.

A spokesman for Volkswagen – which owns Audi and Porsche – told AFP Friday that the group would not comment on “speculation and conjecture”.

BMW and Daimler similarly declined to comment.

A spokesman for Germany’s federal competition authority said he could not comment on the Spiegel report.

But he recalled that the authority raided six companies in June 2016 on suspicion of infringing competition law in steel purchases by car manufacturers and suppliers.

BMW, Volkswagen and Daimler all acknowledged being raided at the time when contacted by AFP.

However, “presumption of innocence applies until the investigation is over,” the spokesman said.

The cartel depicted in the Spiegel article extends far beyond possible secret agreements on steel prices.

More than 200 employees of the carmakers had formed 60 working groups covering “all areas of car development, petrol and diesel engines, brakes, transmissions and gearboxes... as well as choice of suppliers and prices for parts,” an excerpt of the report read.

According to the magazine, carmakers also held “innumerable meetings” from 2006 onwards about diesel exhaust processing designed to reduce emissions of harmful nitrogen oxides (NOx). Carmakers agreed to install only small tanks of a treatment solution, AdBlue, used to convert the gases into harmless water and nitrogen, as larger tanks would have been more expensive.

The size of the AdBlue tanks agreed on was too small to clean exhaust gases by the necessary amount — “laying the foundations for the diesel scandal,” Spiegel reported.

Volkswagen admitted in September 2015 to installing software in 11 million cars worldwide that reduced NOx emissions when it detected cars were undergoing regulatory tests.

In real on-road driving, levels of the harmful gases could be many times higher. More recently, authorities' suspicion fell on Mercedes-Benz and Smart maker Daimler, with investigators raiding sites belonging to the group in late May.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1463603/german-carmakers-colluded-diesel-emissions-report/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 10TH TO JULY 16TH 2017 OVER RS57B BEING PUMPED INTO THE CITY

Imran Adnan

Dawn, July 11, 2017

The Lahore Development Authority (LDA) has approved a budget of Rs57.96 billion of which Rs37.55 billion has been earmarked for various development schemes in the provincial capital during Fiscal Year 2017-18.

The authority's Governing Body has approved the budgets for LDA and its subsidiaries, including Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Lahore and Traffic Engineering and Transport Planning Agency (TEPA), during a meeting on Monday.

The moot was chaired by Punjab Chief Minister's Adviser and Governing Body Member Khawaja Ahmad Hassaan.

Budget documents show the Urban Development Wing of the authority will have over Rs38.60 billion at its disposal. Of the total, Rs28.58 billion are to be spent on development projects and Rs13.51 billion will be generated through the authority's own resources. The LDA has earmarked Rs540 million for development schemes in Sheikhpura, Kasur and Nankana Sahib districts.

It also set aside Rs4.49 billion for roads and sewerage projects in different residential schemes, including Rs1 billion for LDA Avenue 1 and Rs390 million for the Finance and Trade Centre in Muhammad Ali Johar Town.

The authority has reserved Rs2 billion for new residential schemes, including LDA City and Rs1 billion for various other projects such as the construction of Guru Mangat Road Railway Crossing Underpass, Maulana Shaukat Ali Road, Khayaban-e-Firdousi and the remodeling of Khayaban-e-Jinnah, among other initiatives.

In the LDA budget for the current fiscal year, the authority will put Rs1.40 billion into various official buildings, including Rs800 million in LDA offices in Johar Town, Rs100 million in LDA Avenue 1 office and Rs150 million in the park and ride plaza in Moon Market Allama Iqbal Town.

LDA plans to spend Rs350 million on the authority's integrated computerised system and Rs250 million to shift the fruit and vegetable market in Kot Lakhpat. At the same time, Rs100 million has been earmarked for the preparation of the Lahore division master plan, apart from Rs170 million for various overhead pedestrian bridges.

Documents indicate the authority has earmarked Rs6.08 billion to start new development schemes, Rs2 billion for the public-private partnership Twin Towers project on Jail Road and Rs100 million for the Shahkam Chowk-Defence Road Underpass. The authority will also build another tower by investing Rs1.7 billion through its own resources.

With Punjab government funding through the Annual Development Program (ADP) and deposit works, the LDA will start different development projects worth Rs14.63 billion. It has earmarked Rs10 billion for the Lahore Orange Line Metro Train project, Rs100 million for the construction of Barki Road and the approach road for Ashiana Iqbal. Also, Rs50 million will go into the maintenance of Bedian Road, Barki Road and other adjacent roads.

A sum of Rs50 million has been earmarked to connect the Lahore-Multan Motorway with Multan Road, while as much funding will go into the construction of the road from Lahore Expo Center to Ring Road.

The authority had also set aside Rs3 billion to build 12 sport complexes in different constituencies of the National Assembly of Pakistan. For WASA, the authority has earmarked Rs14.93 billion and Rs4.42 billion for TEPA.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1454752/rs57b-pumped-city/>

CITY WITHOUT CLEANLINESS, GARBAGE COLLECTION SYSTEM

The Express Tribune, July 11, 2017

The Sindh High Court (SHC) sought on Monday arguments from the parties on a plea seeking a daily hearing of the Karachi mayor's petition seeking devolution of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) to the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC).

A two-judge bench, headed by Justice Munib Akhtar, will hear arguments from the additional advocate-general and the lawyer representing the Muttahida Qaumi Movement – Pakistan and its mayor on July 28.

During Monday's proceedings, Barrister Farogh Naseem for the petitioners pleaded to the court to conduct an early hearing on the petition, as it was a matter of urgency. He argued that the whole system of cleanliness and garbage collection in the largest city of the country had become ineffective.

He said neither were treatment plants operating nor was clean drinking water available to residents of the city, adding that heaps of garbage had piled up all over the metropolis, resulting in an outbreak of diseases such as chikungunya.

Barrister Naseem argued that the establishment of the solid waste management board by the provincial government was illegal, as was observed by the Supreme Court, which had ordered to dissolve the same.

Meanwhile, AAG Barrister Ghulam Mustafa Mahesar filed a reply on behalf of the managing director of the solid waste management board.

He opposed the plea for an urgent hearing of the petition, arguing that the matter did not involve any urgency. He said the petitioners were pressing the issue for their own political gain.

The bench fixed the matter on July 18 with direction to the lawyers representing the parties to come prepared to argue on the point whether or not the matter involved urgency. The judges will decide whether or not the matter should be heard on a daily basis on the next date of the hearing.

Jointly filing a petition with his party, MQM-Pakistan, Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar had maintained that the SSWMB was established under the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board Act, 2014 with functions to cater to the needs of the people and was being run by the Sindh government since its establishment.

The mayor had referred to a Supreme Court ruling where the apex court had ordered that the ‘non-functional board [SSWMB] has never performed and should be devolved to the local bodies as provided under the rules of business’. He had contended that despite the directives of the Supreme Court, the relevant provincial authorities had not taken any steps to transfer the functions of the board to the elected local bodies.

Akhtar had pleaded to the court to direct the concerned authorities to transfer all the assets falling under the umbrella of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board Act, 2014 to the local government institutions. He had further requested the SHC to direct the respondents to give complete details of all the funds they had received for the purpose of solid waste management and to appoint a reputable auditor to ascertain the facts.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1454824/city-without-cleanliness-garbage-collection-system/>

THARIS VOICE CONCERNS AT PUBLIC HEARING OVER TWO POWER PLANTS Dawn, July 14th, 2017

Hanif Samoon

MITHI: Elected representatives, rights activists, members of civil society and a large number of villagers expressed their fears and hopes at a public hearing over two power generation plants at Ranjho Khan Noon village near Islamkot, 41km from here, on Thursday. The meeting was organised by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa).

Shahrukh Khan, chief executive officer of Oracle Coalfield Company, said while briefing Sepa officials and villagers about the plants that the UK-based firm was all set to install two power plants in Block No. 6 of Thar coalfields to produce 330 megawatts power.

“Work on the plants has already begun with the [consent] of area people and all their fears, apprehensions and objections have already been addressed,” said Mr Khan.

He said that both plants would become functional within scheduled time and claimed the plants would not affect the area's environment. The area people were happy with the firm, which would hold more meetings with them to keep them in the loop, he observed.

Sepa Director General Ashiq Ali Langah said that they organised the public hearing to address people's fears, if any, and requested the villagers to freely express their fears so that the agency could take them up with the Sindh government and the high-ups of the company.

Noshaba Kamran Soomro, an official of the firm, said that the company was committed to produce power and bring change in the lives of Tharis. Routine life would not be disturbed by the construction work of the plants, she said.

Iqbal Noon, a member of district council, expressed the hope that the firm would fulfil its commitments made with the villagers before carrying out work on the power projects.

Rights activist Dr Ashok Bakhtani urged Sepa to ensure that the environment and ecology of the area was not disturbed with the construction of more power plants in Thar coalfield.

He urged all mining firms working in the area to ensure that the livestock, which was the mainstay of local economy, was not affected by their actions.

Dr Bakhtani deplored that no attention had so far been paid to addressing main issues of locals and urged the companies engaged in mining and power generation to provide alternative livelihood to people, who were solely dependent on livestock, before embarking on their projects.

Prof Gobind Meghwar urged the officials concerned to create job opportunities for locals while Ashfaq Ahmed, district game officer, called upon the companies to take measures for the protection of wildlife in the desert region.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1345126/tharis-voice-concerns-at-public-hearing-over-two-power-plants>

WWF-PAKISTAN ORGANISES ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS SUMMIT

Business Recorder, 16 July 2017

KARACHI: WWF-Pakistan, in collaboration with Nestle, Adamjee Insurance and Engro Foundation, organized a Youth Summit at Iqra University (main campus) on Saturday.

The event aimed to raise environmental awareness among students and develop their insight into nature conservation. The summit provided participants a chance to interact with motivational speakers and environmentalists who discussed environmental issues ranging from pollution to habitat destruction, protection of forest to conservation of endangered species among others.

Speaking on the occasion, Ali Dehlavi, Regional Head, WWF-Pakistan, said that Karachi is confronting different issues and the most critical is environmental degradation caused by a number of factors. He said that green spaces are disappearing in city and are being turned into dumping sites.

He was of the view that citizens should plant more trees and learn to properly dispose of industrial as well as household waste so that the city remains green and clean.

He further said it is our responsibility to provide the next generation with a nourishing environment and foster ownership and a sense of responsibility towards environment. ‘Students need to pursue an environment friendly approach which can serve as an inspiration for others,’ he added.

Asad Shahbaz Khan, Regional Manager (South), Corporate Partnership and Fundraising (CPF), WWF-Pakistan, said that the objective of the event was to motivate and involve the youth in valuing the rich natural heritage of Pakistan and supporting conservation initiatives. WWF-Pakistan together with other stakeholders is striving to provide a platform that builds the knowledge of students who can learn about ecologically conscious development and sustainable living.

He also shared that awareness events on the environment are bringing about a visible change in the mind-set of the youth across the county, which is reflected in students’ efforts and interest in conservation work. He urged participants to spread environmental awareness and to come forward to support WWF-Pakistan.

Sheila Hussain, General Manager and Division Head, Adamjee Insurance said that the company is taking concerted efforts for safeguarding the interest of people from possible loss, uncertainty and reduces risk to property and environment as well. She further said that they are supporting such events which are aiming at creating awareness about environment and nature conservation and provide an opportunity to interact with the youth.—PR

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/07/16/2-page/889176-news.html>

SINDH AGENCY SEALS 17 FACTORIES FOR VIOLATING ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

Farhan Zaheer

The Express Tribune, July 16th, 2017

KARACHI: The Sindh Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has sealed 17 factories in Sindh – out of them seven are in Karachi – saying that the units were disregarding environment laws.

“We will continue to go after those who are polluting the environment and damaging Sindh’s economy,” SEPA Director General Baqaullah Unnar told The Express Tribune.

Unnar, who has taken over the charge two-and-a-half months ago, said that the agency will also start serving notices to more factories in a week or two. SEPA DG informed that the agency has also sent 27 fresh cases to Sindh Environmental Tribunal, which was set up under the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act (Pepa) 1997 to hear complaints about pollution, for further investigations.

About a month ago, SEPA revived its laboratory to test water pollution, which was not working for about seven years. The agency is now testing water samples to take action against those factories that are not treating their waste water.

Despite all the recent measures taken by SEPA in the last few months, environment experts say factory owners in Sindh are generally not complying with environment laws and do not care about the environmental degradation they cause.

Environment experts say SEPA only acted when the Supreme Court of Pakistan started taking up environment cases. Otherwise, no government department was ready to take on polluters, especially powerful factory owners, who are playing with human and marine life in Arabian Sea. They also say environment ministry is the least important ministry for the Sindh government. SEPA former director general Naeem Ahmed Mughal sealed dozens of factories and issued over 300 notices in Karachi in January and February before he left his job.

When asked what action is he taking against those factories that were earlier issued notices, Unnar said that the agency will evaluate those units and take action against them if they fail to comply with the laws.

Earlier, when SEPA sealed factories in February on environment concerns, all seven leading industrial associations in Karachi threatened the Sindh government to close down factories in protest.

SEPA asked industries to install separate effluent treatment plants to process their waste water because it is fast becoming a big environmental hazard for Pakistan. Most industries ignored SEPA notices, but a few of them gave an undertaking to install effluent treatment plants within a year.

Karachi industrialists say Sindh government should fulfil its promise of setting up five combined effluent treatment plants in the industrial zones instead of acting against factories.

According to a March 2016 study, which has been submitted for review of the Sindh government, found that the five combined effluent treatment plants would need an investment of Rs11.4 billion.

Until 2006, Pakistan was losing over Rs359 billion annually due to environment degradation. Whereas a recent study shows that only Sindh is losing over \$1 billion annually mainly due to polluting factories and vehicles.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1458954/sindh-agency-seals-17-factories-violating-environmental-laws/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 2ND TO JULY 9TH 2017 PROTEST AGAINST ILLEGAL LOGGING IN CHISHTIAN

Dawn, 3 July 2017

BAHAWALNAGAR: A protest was held in Chishtian on Sunday against illegal logging going on allegedly in connivance with the forest department of officials.

The protesters alleged that the officials had cut down thousands of trees worth Rs40m and sold them out in market.

Talking to Dawn, they said an inquiry was launched into the matter in response to their repeated complaints and it found out that at least 12,190 trees had been cut down in the area. Despite the inquiry findings, they claimed, no action was taken against the forest guards suspected to be involved in the illegal logging.

The protesters said that despite being charged of illegal logging a forest guard had been serving in tehsil Chishtian for the last eight years.

During the period, they alleged, he had been involved in felling thousands of trees in Fateh, Lakha, Old Ghani, New Dhani, Bakhshan Khan, Gujyani, Chak Abdullah, Chishtian, Murad and Shehr Fareed Miners, allegedly with the connivance of the block officer and range officer.

They blamed the forest department high-ups for concealing the facts and sweeping the issue under the carpet. They said these officers had registered fake cases with police over logging and tampered with records to conceal their corruption.

They demanded Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif to look into the matter.

District Officer (Forest) Rana Tariq said 4,000 trees were found cut down according to 2011 records. He said the inquiry into the allegations against the suspected of ficials was in the final phase and they would be punished soon. He said all the trees were being given new numbers to control illegal logging.

GRAVEYARD: Villagers protested against the Chishtian Municipal Committee for ignoring historical graveyard which has been inundated by rainwater and sewage from Chishtian town.

They said the graveyard spread over 750 acres had been turned into a pond of dirty water due to lack of a proper sewerage.

`We staged protests and registered several complaints with the officials concerned but in vain,` the protesters said. They demanded Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif to issue orders for rehabilitation of sewerage to save the graveyard.

Municipal Committee Chairman Chaudhry Abdur Razzaq said the accumulated water was being drained from the cemetery and the issue would be resolved soon.

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=03_07_2017_006_007

GOVT APPROVES COAL SUPPLY DEAL WITH ANY THAR DEVELOPER
The Express Tribune, July 4th, 2017.

ISLAMABAD: As the coal-based power plant planned by Lucky Cement suffers a delay following reluctance of Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) to sign a supply agreement, the government has allowed all power companies interested in setting up coal-based power plants to enter into a supply deal with any developer of coal mines in Thar Sindh.

Sources said that Lucky Electric Power Company was first asked to convert to local coal as against their original proposal of imported coal as fuel. The project has completed all documentation for financial close except for the coal sales agreement with SECMC.

Officials said that Lucky Electric Power Company had made a lot of efforts to sign the coal supply agreement with SECMC but the latter was reluctant to sign the deal. Following this, the management of Lucky Electric Power Company had approached the government to resolve this issue.

The project sponsor had also faced problems including extension of Letter of Support (LoS), execution of coal sales agreement, signing of power purchase agreement (PPA), Implementation Agreement (IA) and grid interconnection.

After keeping in view the problems faced by Lucky Electric Power Company, the government has decided that all power companies working on coal-based power plants be allowed to enter into coal supply agreement with any of the coal mine developers in Thar instead of binding them to a particular mine, ie SECMC.

Lucky Electric Power Company Limited (LEPCL), a wholly owned subsidiary of Lucky Cement Limited, is all set to install a 660-megawatt coal-power plant at Bin Qasim, Karachi, which will be the first plant to use Thar coal as fuel 350km from the mine's mouth.

Lucky Electric's tariff will be marginally lower compared to the mine-mouth project despite the transportation cost because of a lower rate of return, higher plant efficiency and no water cost.

The project would not only set a precedent for the entire power sector by using the coal produced by coal mine developers in Thar Sindh, a hefty distance away from the plant, but will also pave the way for export of Thar coal, as its power plant is located at Port Qasim.

If this coal could be transported to Port Qasim for producing power, it can also be exported from the same port. The project will cost approximately \$850 million. The company is targeting to start commercial operation by December 2019.

It has already obtained all the requisite approvals including the letter of support, upfront tariff from Nepra and has leased 250 acres of land close to Port Qasim.

This will facilitate foreign exchange savings besides bringing the electricity cost lower, thus making it affordable for the consumers and help make exports more competitive.

Moreover, the use of Thar lignite, away from mine-mouth, would also help in expansion of mining in Thar, which is in the interest of the country, the province and the people of Thar.

The company was initially intended to run on imported coal. However, upon advice of the government, it was converted to local (Thar) coal in line with the national policy of reducing reliance on imported fuel.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1449633/govt-approves-coal-supply-deal-thar-developer/>

SEPA VIOLATING LAW: FOREST DEPT

Faiza Ilyas

Dawn, July 05, 2017

KARACHI: The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) is violating government rules of business by ignoring the forest department in the assessment process of development projects as well as at the stage of granting them approval, said a key official of the forest department on Tuesday.

He was speaking to Dawn against the backdrop of a recent public hearing organised by Sepa to discuss a proposed Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) import terminal project, which entails cutting down of at least 889 mangroves. The coastal forests are protected under the law.

The project proposed by the Pakistan Gas Port Limited is to be built in the Chara Chan Waddio creek and located in the Port Qasim area. Under the project, 4.5 million tonnes of LNG would be imported annually and a 600m long pipeline would pass through mangroves.

“The forest department has not been taken on board in planning and execution of development activities in the Port Qasim area. Instead, Sepa is allowing environmental impact assessment (EIA) of projects and issuing no-objection certificates without involving the department, which is a violation of rules of business,” said conservator mangroves, Karachi, Agha Tahir.

Replying to a question as to how his department has reacted to these violations, he said: “The forest department has reported incidents of mangrove cutting in the Port Qasim area to the quarters concerned. Worthy members of the provincial assembly were also taken to the relevant sites.”

According to him, the department’s technical expertise should be utilised in the assessment of environmental impacts on mangroves due to development activities.

“Specific areas can be earmarked for development of various infrastructures without jeopardising the health and existence of mangroves. Further, the mitigation measures based on internationally accepted standards may be recommended to compensate the damages expected from the development activities,” he recommended.

It may be recalled here that Sepa had violated its own rules by holding the public hearing on the LNG project as the project’s EIA report lacked a mandatory no-objection certificate from the forest department (as the venture has been planned in a forest area).

Moreover, no forest department official had been invited to the public hearing so that people in attendance could directly communicate their reservations to the department concerned over the destruction of 889 mangroves the proposed project entailed.

“Every Initial Environmental Examination and Environmental Impact Assessment shall be accompanied by no-objection certificates from relevant departments in case of an EIA report,” says Section 9 of the Sepa Regulations 2014.

The entire mangrove cover in the province was declared protected in Dec 2010. Besides, the country is signatory to the Sustainable Development Goals; SDG 14 states that it is required to take measures for marine coastal ecosystems’ conservation and protection.

It also came as a shock to the participants that the environmental watchdog had held the public hearing of a project awaiting final decision on its site.

To concerns over mangrove cutting and the absence of a forest department official at the hearing, Sepa officials argued that the project wouldn’t be approved without the forest department’s consent.

It was also reasoned that mangrove plantation would be carried out on a large scale to compensate for the forest loss.

Mangrove cover, according to experts, is fast reducing in the province. In one instance in 2014, mangrove forests were destroyed on a large area for construction of a coal-fired power plant in the Port Qasim area.

The private company, which removed mangroves without taking approval from the forest department and getting Sepa's nod for the project, was allowed to continue the project by the government.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1343228>

PAKISTAN'S FIRST COAL IMPORT TERMINAL BEGINS OPERATIONS

The Express Tribune, July 5th, 2017.

KARACHI: Pakistan's first coal-dedicated import terminal has started operations on a commercial basis at Port Qasim, ahead of the initiation of several power projects.

"The company has successfully completed its project i.e., a terminal to handle bulk cargo vessels at Port Qasim and has formally commenced commercial operations," Pakistan International Bulk Terminal Limited (PIBT) Company Secretary Arsalan I. Khan said in a notification to the Pakistan Stock Exchange on Tuesday.

PIBT is a public listed company being traded at the Pakistan Stock Exchange. Its stock price hit the upper limit of 5%, closing at Rs23.28 with 2.78 million shares changing hands on Tuesday.

The dirty bulk terminal has also established facilities to provide dedicated export services to cement and clinker manufacturers. The port has a capacity to handle 12 million tons of bulk cargo per year. The facilities have been established at a cost of \$285 million.

"At present, we are only importing coal," an official of the company told The Express Tribune.

An independent expert on ports, Captain Anwar Shah, said the country has been importing 5-7 million ton coal per annum. "Demand for coal is set to go up with several imported coal-fired power plants due to come online. The demand may surge to 12-15 million tons in the near future, depending upon timelines of productions from the power projects," he estimated.

According to the federal government's Private Power and Infrastructure Board, the country is to light up over 2,900-megawatt worth of imported coal-fired power projects till December 2019.

Sahiwal's (Punjab) coal-fired power project of 1,320-megawatts, which is under testing phase these days, had earlier established an understanding to import coal via PIBT. Later, it changed its plan and started importing the commodity via two underdevelopment marginal wharf jetties at Port Qasim, it was learnt.

At present, PIBT has been importing coal mostly for Awan Trading (Private) Limited, which is a huge importer and supplier of the commodity in the country.

Besides, coal is also a basic raw material for cement manufacturing.

The export of cement, however, has remained subdued since South Africa imposed anti-dumping duty on several Pakistan-based cement exporters in mid of 2015.

Besides, exports to India also remained sluggish since regional competitors Iran and China become active in recent years.

The company official added PIBT is an automated terminal, which has reduced loading and unloading time significantly when compared to the manual loading and unloading system.

According to a recent statement from PIBT, “a coal cargo ship with similar tonnage currently takes around seven days (at the other port) while the same cargo can be handled within two days at PIBT due to the modern and mechanised handling system.”

The official added that China Harbour Engineering Company has set up the automated system called ‘Scada’ which is operated by a single man sitting in a chair and loading and unloading vessels with the help of real-time visual on a big screen. “The system is capable of unloading 1,800 tons coal per hour and loading 3,600 tons of cement and clinker per hour,” he said.

Most firms in the country import crushed coal from Australia and Indonesia instead of broken coal.

Captain Shah said powered coal was a big health risk to the people living in the surrounding and in the city of seaports. The import of crushed coal at Karachi Port has caused different diseases to the people living in Kemari and nearby areas. “The coal dust, after mixing into the air, hits Clifton localities from Karachi Port in the monsoon season,” he said

PIBT is believed to put in place measures to control environmental risks including through water sprinklers. This would also save coal from catching fire in hot days, he said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1450376/pakistans-first-coal-import-terminal-begins-operations/>

A WEEK AFTER RAIN: SC ORDERS CLEANLINESS IN KARACHI

KARACHI: The Supreme Court (SC) took on Tuesday notice of the failure of the provincial and local authorities concerned to maintain cleanliness in the city after the first spell of the pre-monsoon rain wreaked havoc to the civic infrastructure.

The apex court verbally directed the provincial chief secretary to ensure the city was cleaned of the filth as well as stagnant rainwater, which had submerged various thoroughfares and localities.

A three-judge bench of the apex court, headed by Justice Gulzar Ahmed, gave these directions during the hearing of a case regarding encroachments over the bank of a canal in Sukkur, at the SC’s Karachi Registry Branch.

Heavy rains had lashed the metropolis starting last Thursday, as the pre-monsoon system entered the region, resulting in heavy rains across the country.

The rains exposed the efficiency of the civic agencies in the city, where the tug-of-war between the Pakistan Peoples Party-led provincial government and Muttahida Qaumi Movement-led Karachi Metropolitan Corporation had created hurdles in proper lifting and disposal of the garbage as well as cleaning of the major sewerage and rainwater drains.

The maladministration, on part of the provincial and local authorities, had led to poor pre-monsoon arrangements to cope with the rainy monsoon season.

Several residential localities as well as the commercial district in downtown had submerged under several feet of rainwater mixed with sewerage.

The apex court's bench, which also included Justices Maqbool Baqar and Sajjad Ali Shah, found that the poor sanitation conditions had not improved even after the lapse of a whole week.

Therefore, they took notice of the poor drainage system that had led to the inundation of the main road in front of the apex court's registry branch.

The judges inquired from the chief secretary, Rizwan Memon, who was appearing in court in connection with other cases, on why the administration had failed to effectively cope with the situation that arose post-rains in the city.

Justice Gulzar Ahmed told the top provincial bureaucrat that there were several localities, which had almost submerged during the rain.

The judge further told the officer that according to media reports, the residents in Korangi and other parts of the city were even unable to get out of their houses.

He inquired from the chief secretary why he had not paid a visit to such localities, where citizens were facing great difficulty after the rain. "You will have to visit such areas in a boat," the judge remarked.

"Alright," Memon replied, adding that the city will soon be cleaned.

"Nothing is alright," the apex court bench's head told the officer.

"The city is in a bad condition," Justice Ahmed said, drawing attention of the top provincial government officer, who is supposed to supervise and look after civil works in the entire province.

The bench members expressed their extreme displeasure over the poor state of administration, which had not fulfilled its duties to remove the filth as well as ensure smooth flow of the sewerage water in the drains, which were overflowing and inundating various roads, streets, main arteries as well as commercial and residential areas across the city.

The bench directed Memon to get the city cleaned of the mess created during last week's rains.

The bench also gave two weeks time to the Sindh Building Control Authority and other officials to file comments regarding the ownership of 4.7 acres of land along the canal in Sukkur which was allegedly encroached by private persons.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1450278/week-rain-sc-orders-cleanliness-karachi/>

August 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 28TH TO AUGUST 31ST 2017

BILLION-RUPEE LANDFILL DOWN IN THE DUMPS FOR OVER A DECADE

Dawn, August 28, 2017

Kashif Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: The latest report from the auditor general of Pakistan reveals how Capital Development Authority (CDA) officials have kept the city deprived of its first-ever and much-needed landfill site, pointing out protracted delays in the execution of the Rs1 billion Kuri landfill project.

“Audit noted the Planning Wing CDA failed to start the construction of Scientific Sanitary Landfill project in Kuri for improvement of environment as approved by the [Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne)] in 2004, despite the lapse of 12 years,” the audit report said.

Sources said that following approval from the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA), an international consultant’s report had selected the Kuri site for the capital’s first landfill. But in 2012, the CDA board suddenly decided to switch the location from Kuri to H-10, and the temporary site has been moving from one place to another since then.

Former official accuses CDA of repeatedly changing project site due to ‘mala fide intent’

According to the audit, CDA’s Planning Wing allocated 100 acres for a project for the ‘Improvement of Environment by Solid Waste Management in Islamabad’, and the PC-1 for the Rs1bn project was approved by Ecne in 2004 on the condition that CDA would finance the project from its own resources.

Pak-EPA approved the environmental impact assessment (EIA) in Feb 2008 for the construction of a ‘Scientific Sanitary Landfill Village in Kuri, Zone IV of Islamabad’.

“Audit observed that construction of landfill project was not implemented due to issues of possession of acquired site in Kuri. Subsequently, it was decided by CDA board to re-locate the landfill site from Kuri to H-10 to I-12 and later on shifted to I-14 and I-15 Islamabad,” the report said.

At the moment, the report noted, around 800 tonnes of garbage was transported daily to an open dumping site in Sector I-12.

“The open dumping of solid waste near residential sectors and educational institutions is a serious hazard for human health and the environment,” the report pointed out, adding that the irregularity occurred due to weak internal controls.

The report also mentioned that while this irregularity was pointed out in March 2016, CDA did not reply to audit objections.

But while the report attributes the non-implementation of the project due to hurdles in taking possession of the acquired site, former CDA member MustafainKazmi – who played a leading role in this project – told Dawn the site was changed due to “mala fide intentions”.

“I worked for this project for years... we had Pak-EPA approval and Ecneec approval. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) supported CDA in this project and after a two-year study, a Japanese consultant finalised [the Kuri] site, which was an ideal place for developing a landfill,” MrKazmi said.

However, he accused CDA of changing the site to benefit vested interests and said the civic agency’s board had approved the change of location; first from Kuri to H-10, and now to I-12.

CDA officials Dawn spoke to said a road to the landfill site was also constructed by the agency, but that too was systematically ceded to nearby housing schemes.

Jica has also trained CDA officials to manage the proposed landfill site and a number of CDA officers also visited Japan for capacity-building on how to manage the scientific landfill site.

CDA officials told Dawn that city managers are currently considering shifting the landfill site to yet another sector, H-16.

Here, it is proposed that a ‘waste-to-energy’ should be installed by a private firm on build operate and transfer (BOT) basis in order to produce electricity from garbage.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1354395>

GOVTS IN ASIA-PACIFIC REGION FAIL TO CHECK RIVER POLLUTION

Dawn, August 28, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The Asia-Pacific region has failed to control pollution of its rivers, more than 80 per cent of which are considered to be in ‘poor health’, a new United Nations report reveals.

The report, prepared by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) for the second forum of ministers and environment authorities of Asia-Pacific region opening in Bangkok on Sept 5, says that common pollutants in the region are organics, nutrients, dissolved salts, heavy metals, pesticides and chemicals from industrial activities.

The sources of the pollution are untreated or partially treated sewage, agricultural runoff, industrial wastewater and landfill leachate, and nutrient and sediments washed from degraded land by heavy rainfall.

Several river basins, including the Indus, have high organic pollution. This can be further aggravated by other pollution such as increased salinity as seen in the Ganges and Indus river basins.

About 1.8 million people die annually due to water-related diseases, says UN report

A major cause of water pollution is poor sanitation, including defecation in the open, leading to contamination of surface and groundwater sources by organics, nutrients and bacterial coliform. In

Asia and the Pacific, 1.7 billion people lack access to basic sanitation, and almost 80pc of wastewater being discharged in water bodies with little or no primary treatment.

An estimated 1.8 million deaths occur annually in Asia and the Pacific due to water-related diseases, including diarrhoea and cholera. Salt intrusion and higher turbidity from stronger, frequent storms and erosion from deforestation provide favourable growth conditions in tropical estuaries for bacteria such as *Vibrio* that causes cholera.

Other diseases related to water, sanitation and hygiene include intestinal nematode infections, protein-energy malnutrition, trachoma, schistosomiasis, lymphatic filariasis, malaria and dengue. Disability-adjusted life years lost due to unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene in the region totals 24.78m per year.

Another factor affecting human health from water pollution is the accumulation of heavy metal in plants that are then consumed as food. Many studies have looked at accumulations of arsenic, cadmium, copper, lead and mercury in vegetables, rice and other edible plants. The extent of bioaccumulation depends on irrigation methods, much less arsenic accumulation has been observed in rice grown by sprinkler irrigation compared to that grown using continuous flooding irrigation.

The report says that nearly 12pc of the population lives in degraded areas of Asia and the Pacific, and this proportion may increase in years to come with significant social impacts. Direct impacts of large-scale land-use changes include displacement of indigenous people, loss of biodiversity and a reduction in important forest products. Land degradation has had severe impacts on human development in the region.

The Asia-Pacific region produces more chemicals and waste than any other regions in the world. Over the period of 2012-20, the regional chemical production is expected to grow by 46pc. Major industrial incidents can happen during the processing, storage or transport of potentially hazardous chemicals.

Waste generation in Asia and the Pacific is rising and new and complex waste streams are emerging. Total global waste is around 7 to 10 billion tonnes per year, of which total municipal solid waste is around 2bn tonnes. With an average generation rate of 1.4kg per person per day, the annual total municipal solid waste for Asia and the Pacific was estimated at around 870m tonnes in 2014, accounting for 43pc of the world's total.

Alongside the increase in municipal solid waste generation, Asia and the Pacific is now facing complex waste streams, including e-waste, food waste, construction and demolition waste, disaster waste and marine litter. Open burning is a common treatment of e-waste in many countries, practiced mainly by informal recyclers when they segregate organic and inorganic compounds, with adverse acute and chronic effects on human health and the environment.

Urban areas in the region generate about 1.21m tonnes of municipal solid waste a day. By 2025, this amount will be more than double, to 2.65m tonnes daily. Inadequate treatment of waste can cause pollution and environmental and ecosystem degradation. If not properly collected, waste can decay and cause air pollution, unpleasant odours and degradation of soil, surface and groundwater, and ecosystems.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1354442>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 21ST TO AUGUST 27TH 2017
KMC, PROPERTY FIRM INK MOU ON REMOVING PILES OF GARBAGE IN CITY
Dawn, August, 24, 2017

Hasan Mansoor

KARACHI: Mayor Wasim Akhtar on Wednesday signed a memorandum of understanding with real estate tycoon Malik Riaz to launch a joint initiative to clean the city of garbage.

The mayor and the Bahria Town chief signed the agreement at the KMC building for removal of garbage from the city. They exchanged documents and the mayor gave away a shield to the latter.

He appreciated the real estate mogul for taking part in bringing improvement in the existing conditions of the city and offering Rs10 billion support to the municipality for public welfare works.

Under the agreement, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation will take the lead role with the mayor in the driving seat to remove the piles of garbage within its territorial jurisdiction with the assistance of M/s Bahria Town.

Officials said the total generation of garbage in the city was approximately 13,000 tonnes per day while the capacity of the district municipal corporations (DMCs) to remove the garbage was a mere 40 per cent, thus leaving a heavy backlog in the city on a daily basis.

The estimated backlog across Karachi is around 1.1 million tonnes, according to officials.

The KMC and DMCs will participate in the initiative through their available resources and manpower. Both parties agreed to coordinate and cooperate with each other to make the lives of citizens better.

Mayor Akhtar said the KMC and Bahria Town would begin the drive after EidulAzha from Karachi's Central district. Other districts would witness similar activity once district Central was cleaned.

He said the chairmen and elected representatives of all the districts would equally take part in the whole scheme.

Deputy Mayor Arshad Vohra, chairmen of DMCs Central, East and Korangi, City Council's parliamentary leader Aslam Shah Afridi, chairpersons of the City Council committees and KMC officers were also present.

Mayor Akhtar said the KMC would not pay anything to Bahria Town for its contribution to the removal of garbage backlog from the city as it was a voluntary effort on part of the property firm.

He said the initiative would not encroach upon the mandate of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board or violate its rules as "we are just removing garbage which causes immense trouble to the citizens of Karachi".

He said the agreement was just for removal of garbage, piles of which were accumulating in the city, and to make such efforts sustainable in the longer term, the Sindh government should come up with financial support and administrative measures, for which he offered all sorts of cooperation and guidance to them.

Speaking on the occasion, Malik Riaz said he was ready to provide any support and cooperation to the mayor in his endeavours to make Karachi a better, liveable city.

He said former president Asif Zardari too had advised him to work with the mayor for betterment of Karachi.

He said his organisation would manage or run in a better way if any school or hospital was handed to it by the mayor. The same offer stood for the KMC if it desired to construct or repair roads, he added.

About a recent controversy involving Bagh Ibne Qasim, Mr Riaz said it was due to “some misunderstanding”.

“The fact was that we were not going to take control of the park and were only playing our role in improving it.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1353527/kmc-property-firm-ink-mou-on-removing-piles-of-garbage-in-city>

‘THE OCEAN HAS FALLEN ILL’

The Express Tribune, 26 August 2017

KARACHI: Civil society activists, fishermen and environmental experts decried on Friday over converting the sea into a ‘garbage dump’.

If this situation continues unabated, the ocean will be dead by 2048, they said.

During the launching ceremony of ‘Ocean Atlas, 2017’, an educational tool that provides facts and figures on the importance of marine ecosystems and the urgency of sustainable development goal 14, they demanded a comprehensive and integrated approach to sustainable development and a sustainable approach to the ocean.

“The ocean has fallen ill. There is dire need for its treatment,” said Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) Chairperson Muhammad Ali Shah, who was organiser of the event.

The ocean covers more than two-thirds of the planet’s surface, but it has been polluted because of manmade efforts, he said.

He was of the view that the state of many fisheries is drastic and commercialisation in fisheries has depleted fishing resources.

The excessive use of artificial fertilizer and manure in industrial farming has caused accelerated algae growth, he said

“Around 50% oxygen comes from the sea, which also absorbs 30% of the carbon dioxide we omit. The sea has a capacity to regulate these things and the situation will be out of control if we don’t stop polluting it,” he remarked.

“Due to marine pollution, the oceans are acidifying faster than ever,” he feared.

The twelve brief lessons about the ocean were discussed in Ocean Atlas which has been published by Heinrich Bell Foundation, a German-based organization. It revolves around concepts such as, who owns the ocean, where does the future lie, living with the ocean and more.

Mome Saleem, programme officer of Heinrich Bell Foundation, not only focused on garbage dump and industrial waste being thrown in the sea and its impact on the ecosystem, but said that bits of plastic floating in the ocean are only a visible sign of a much larger problem.

“The world produces 300 million tonnes of plastic each year. Around 2% of its (around eight million) metric tonnes ends up in the ocean,” she said, adding that only 0.5% of plastic waste actually winds up in the garbage patches.

“The lion’s share of the plastic that ends up in the ocean lies hidden on the seafloor,” she said.

Oil and other kinds of pollution have not only distributed the fish stock, but also depleted mangroves forests, which play a role as hatcheries for fishing.

The ocean gives us so much and our lives and livelihood depend on it, therefore we want to benefit from its gifts in future, she said.

“We must change our behaviour and this is the only reason to act,” she said. “Due to excessive commercialisation in fishing, many species including the turtle and dolphins are going extinct and it will take years to recover them,” she said.

The participants expressed dismay over industrial effluent being disposed of in the sea without treatment and demanded the government to install treatment plants.

PPP Senator Kareem Khawaja referred to the Senate Standing Committee meeting and said that a committee has been formed to visit Malir and Lyari River wherefrom the untreated water is disposed off in the sea.

“We have come to a consensus to install a treatment plant on the mouth of both the rivers so that treated water can be released in the sea,” he said adding that the committee will visit Karachi soon in order to consult with various stakeholders on this issue.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1491074/ocean-fallen-ill/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 14TH TO AUGUST 20TH 2017

WORLD BANK GIVES \$3.8M TO SAVE FORESTS

The Express Tribune, August 17, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank has provided funds amounting to \$3.8 million to Pakistan under the REDD+ programme to help protect forests and control their shrinkage.

“We cannot protect the country from devastating impacts of global warming-induced climate change as long as our forests continue getting chopped down,” an official of the Ministry of Climate Change said on Wednesday.

“Forests are the best resource for achieving enhanced climate resilience against the fallout of adverse climate change,” the official added.

He listed lack of access to energy for cooking and heating in households, illegal tree-cutting, population growth and associated surge in wood demand, changes in land cover for non-forestry uses, land erosion and degradation as the major causes of deforestation in the country.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1483351/world-bank-gives-3-8m-save-forests/>

TREE FELLING RESUMES FOR ANOTHER PROJECT

Dawn, August 18, 2017

LAHORE: Another tree-cutting spree in the city touches a raw nerve of the Lahorites and reactivates the Lahore Bachao Tehreek (save the city movement).

“It is downright a seditious act for the city dwellers as it irreversibly changes the character of their abode,” laments Imrana Tiwana of the movement.

For the last few days, the Traffic Engineering and Transport Planning Agency (Tepa) has started the widening of a service road in Gulberg area facing Jail Road. The road used to have a thick layer of green strip right up to the Main Boulevard, which now stands denuded.

For the Tepa, it is [an] inescapable problem: “All the surrounding roads (MM Alam, Main Boulevard and Jail Road) have been developed. It was a missing link as this road widening project – starting from Mini Market to College Road to the Main Boulevard – links all three of them. So, this widening was inevitable. Another pressure point is an upcoming twin tower project of the LDA – comprising one 26-storey and two 19-storey buildings. It would create additional traffic pressure on these roads. Thus, the road has to be widened to avoid future mess. The Green Concern of the Lahorites is valid, and is catered for in the project. The Tepa has cut 36 grown-up trees in the entire project and has the provision (both fiscal and space) of planting over 800 in the Rs232 million project,” explains Mazhar Hussain Khan of the agency.

Mrs Tiwana, however, has bigger concerns. “This twin tower project is new for the civil society and no one knows where it has come from. When and where was public hearing held for it or an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) made for this massive infrastructure in already overcrowded area? Where would this concretisation of the city stop? The new development preference for cities written by the Unesco calls for improving traffic management systems and leave spaces for greenery, not endless widening of roads.”

The Tapa official, on his part, thinks that the area from where trees have been uprooted was part of the already executed Jail Road widening project, in which the EIA was carried out. So, there was no need for fresh assessment.

“The history is not on the side of officials when they claim that 800 trees would be planted in place of 36 chopped down,” says Nawaz Khan, who commutes daily on the road on his way to office. The same kinds of promises were made when Jail Road widening project was launched and so was the Ferozepur Road project and not to forget the Metro Bus project. All those words were not kept and the city has been stripped off most of its green belts.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1352255>

QUICK THINKING: FISHERMEN RESCUE BABY WHALE SHARK

The Express Tribune, August 19, 2017

Mudasar Kazi

KARACHI : Quick thinking by fishermen, trained by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Pakistan, helped them to rescue a 7.5-foot-long juvenile whale shark trapped in a gillnet and release it back into the ocean.

The fishermen, led by Captain Ali Akbar, came across the pup while they were fishing for tunas about 2 kilometres north of Churna Island in Balochistan on Thursday.

According to Akbar, the baby whale shark was entangled in the net they had placed for catching fish. At first, the crew tried to disentangle the pup while the net was in the water, but when it did not show any body movement they heaved the net on board assuming that the pup had died.

However as the pup was freed from the net, while it was on board, it started to show some movement. After seeing the pup move, the captain quickly realised that the animal may survive and immediately instructed the crew to safely release it back in the waters.

To the utter surprise and jubilation of the fishermen, the whale shark did come to life and according to them encircled the boat which they believe was the pup thanking the fishermen, before it disappeared in the deep sea.

This is not the first time that a whale shark has been rescued by fishermen – however in most cases the pups seldom survive after they are entangled.

Interestingly, since the start of the WWF-Pakistan’s Observer Programme, in October 2012, a total of 61 cases of whale sharks have been documented.

According to WWF-Pakistan Technical Adviser (Marine Fisheries) Muhammad Moazzam Khan, “A healthy population of whale sharks has been reported from the Pakistan coast.”

The adviser said that this year’s fishing season for tuna, starting from August 1, had also brought the good news of the safe release of Indo-Pacific finless porpoise earlier this month, apart from the rescue of juvenile whale shark.

Moazzam said aimed fisheries for whale sharks used to exist there since ages and were first documented by Buist in 1850, however, they started to decrease in 1970s.

He blamed a lack of awareness for decrease in their population saying, “Some fishermen used to kill the whale sharks that were entangled in their nets for liver oil.”

According to the adviser, now hardly any whale shark dies, due to entanglement in fishing gears, because of WWF-Pakistan’s ‘awareness and training programme’ which started five years back.

Moazzam also said that the population of whale shark in Pakistan seemed stable, but extremely prone to entanglement in fishing gears, habitat degradation and marine pollution.

Meanwhile, WWF-Pakistan’s Senior Director Programmes Rab Nawaz lauded the role of Sindh and Balochistan Fisheries Departments that proactively legislated for the protection of whale sharks in 2016.

“This established a basis for taking action against the fishermen who deliberately caught the whale shark for commercial use,” said Rab, adding that in 2012 and 2013 when two whale sharks were deliberately killed by fishermen, the incidences received extensive media coverage which led to other fishermen targeting the species.

However, now with legislation in place whale shark fishing had stopped altogether in both provinces, he said.

Rab also said that since 2012, fishermen had safely released a large number of endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species which included 61 whale sharks, 45 mobulids, 25 sunfish, 6 dolphins, 5 whales, 25 sea snakes, 5 masked boobies (seabirds) and thousands of marine turtles.

“The release of the juvenile whale shark will send a good message to the world as the International Whale Shark Day will be observed on August 30,” he said.

Currently, the Balochistan government is deliberating to declare Churna Island as a marine protected area (MPA) which will make it an important basking, feeding and breeding area for the species.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1484936/whale-shark-pup-rescued-released-back-ocean-off-balochistan-coast/>

‘PLANTATION DRIVES MUST INVOLVE LOCALS FOR SUSTAINABILITY’

Dawn, August 22, 2017

THERE is no denying the fact that Karachi’s green cover has reduced dramatically over the past few years with massive infrastructural development. Experts describe this situation as serious given the city’s vulnerabilities to the threat posed by climate change.

Faiza Ilyas spoke to Dr Zafar Iqbal Shams, a senior teacher at the Karachi University's Institute of Environmental Studies, on how the recently launched tree plantation campaigns in the public and private sectors could be made successful.

With specialisation in ecology, Dr Shams was awarded the first doctorate degree in environmental studies in Pakistan. He is the author of a number of studies on the city's flora.

Q: What species are best suited for Karachi?

A: No particular set of species is best suited to the entire city, because there is a variation in its topography that constitutes of terrain and soil profile. Some areas, specifically the coastal part of the city, are saline and waterlogged, for which coconut (*Cocos nucifera*) is the best tree. Cheekoo (*Manilkara zapota*), though exotic, does not generally disturb the ecosystem and is suitable for the coastal area. Moreover, mangrove species including *Conocarpus erectus* thrive there since they are found naturally in the coastal belts of the world.

These species could also be planted in the city's arid areas that receive continuous water due to leakages or seepage. They help improve the soil by reducing salinity and waterlogging.

However, the best species to plant in arid areas is date palm (*khajoor*), which does not generally disturb the groundwater table since its water requirement is rather low compared to species like neem, mango and cheekoo.

Last but not least, trees should be categorised on the basis of their size and must not be planted in areas where their shoots and roots can interrupt civic services such as overhead power lines, water and sewage lines.

Q: Are there any species which can help tackle rising temperatures and falling water table in the city?

A: The impact of rising temperatures could be reduced by covering concrete structures such as buildings, paved [paths], particularly black-top bitumen roads by a canopy of trees. Concrete structures, particularly of dark colour, such as black roads absorb heat and contribute to making weather hotter. Trees, however, work as a barrier between the sun and buildings.

Q: Do you think exotic species should be completely rejected?

A: Exotic species should not be absolutely rejected since they enrich the flora. But extreme care is required for planting exotic species since they are dangerous once they become invasive and start replacing local flora. For instance, *Prosopis juliflora* (keekar) and *Leucaena leucocephala* (ipil ipil) must not be planted since they replace the local flora and develop their own community.

Nonetheless, *Guaiacum officinale* (lignum) does not generally disturb the local ecosystem despite being an exotic species. Many other exotic fruit trees such as cheekoo and shareefa (sugar apple) are widely grown in Pakistan and India.

Australian eucalyptus can be planted in areas with a very high groundwater table since its water consumption is high. But its plantation in areas with low water table is harmful as the tree can affect the ecosystem of the area.

Q: How can the government ensure that saplings planted during campaigns are properly taken care of?

A: Generally, saplings of trees are secured by protective structures around them for a year or so. After that, there should be no need for their protection. The parks and horticulture department should be made responsible for taking care of trees.

Q: What are the species that the city has lost over time and are they still important?

A: The city has lost many native as well as exotic species. It needs diversity in flora and I would suggest plantation of *Cordia gharaf* (gondhni), *Cordia myxa* (lasura), *Cordia macheodii* (dhagan), *Dalbergia sissoo* (sheesham), *Cassia fistula* (amaltas), *Crateva adansonii* (barna), *Erythrina suberosa* (flame tree), *Terminalia catappa* (jangli badam), *Delonix regia* (large gulmohar), *Ceiba pentandra* (safed semal), *Thespesia populnea* (Indian tulip tree), *Moringa oleifera* (sohajna ki phali) and *Aegle marmelos* (bael).

Q: How can plantation campaigns be prioritised or can saplings be planted anywhere randomly?

A: Species like the conocarpus, neem, lignum, eucalyptus should be avoided since they are overrepresented in many areas of Karachi. Nonetheless, they must not be removed from the city's landscape as they are currently providing ecosystem services to the inhabitants of the city.

The planting of saplings could be stratified, not random. Each of the 178 union councils of Karachi could be taken as a block for planting 20 to 25 different species of trees. The soil ecology of each town should be studied first for selecting 20 to 25 different species of trees since there is a variation in their soil type and soil profile. Different union councils may have different sets of species.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1353030>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 7TH TO AUGUST 13TH 2017

URBAN FORESTRY VITAL FOR TACKLING WARMING

The Express Tribune, August 7th, 2017.

ISLAMABAD: Planting trees in urban centres will prevent the recurrence of heatwaves in cities, the climate change minister said on Sunday.

While trees were chopped by hundreds in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi to make way for metro bus and similar projects, the PML-N Senator Mushahidullah urged the federal and provincial forest officials to boost urban forestry at national scale to protect urban areas from heatwaves.

The newly appointed Federal Climate Change Minister Mushahidullah stated that planting trees in urban centres must be made an integral part of the spring and monsoon plantation campaigns to boost the Green Pakistan Programme (GPP).

The minister highlighted that urban forestry was the most viable and cheapest way to protect cities from becoming urban heat islands.

“Our cities and towns have now become hotter than their nearby rural areas,” Mushahid noted.

An urban heat island (UHI) effect was described as an urban or metropolitan area that was significantly warmer than its surrounding rural areas due to human activities.

The minister noted that these natural waterways that snake through these urban centres provide natural cooling effect when wind passed across them during sweltering summer months. “But it is a matter of concern that most of the urban waterways have been encroached upon by land mafia in connivance with civil and municipal authorities,” he remarked.

Talking about numerous benefits of urban forestry, he says large urban trees are wonderful filters for urban pollutants and fine particulates.

“Large trees with widely spread thick canopy, when placed strategically, can help improve urban air quality by filtering it, remove heat-trapping carbon dioxide from urban atmosphere and increase amount of the oxygen in it for improved public health,” he emphasised.

“Trees properly placed around buildings play a vital role in reducing air conditioning needs by 30% and save energy used for heating by 20–50%.”

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1475488/urban-forestry-vital-tackling-warming/>

DESPITE REVISION, THAR COAL TARIFF STILL HIGH

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) announced the new Thar coal tariff on July 27, 2017. It will be valid for two years or until the production of 5,000 megawatts, whichever occurs earlier.

The earlier tariff remained applicable for 2,640MW comprising Engro Power (660MW – two units of 330MW each), Thal Nova (330MW), Thar Energy (330MW) and Thar coal block-I (1,320MW). We keep hearing about the first two projects and not much about the latter two.

The new thing is that Nepra has introduced two tariff systems – one based on wet (water) cooling and the other on dry (air) cooling. Normally, wet cooling is used and all coal power plants are based on water cooling.

Most of us are sceptical about the dry technology on account of its lower efficiency, higher capital expenditure (Capex) and higher operating expenditure (Opex). I was also among the sceptics.

However, data provided by the Chinese (Shanghai Electric), who have the right experience, shows something different. They have argued that, in fact, there is not such a formidable difference in case of dry cooling so as to be totally excluded from consideration.

This, in fact, was proved in results of the tariff determination released by Nepra. There is a 2% difference in efficiency and a difference of 0.11 cent in the cost of generation. This is a good news for Thar coal as it was being thought that there would be an upper limit on electricity production from this source. The resource is large, but water availability is a major constraint.

The upper limit was calculated by some experts at 10,000MW. Now, with the air cooling technology and it not being uneconomic as well, one could look forward to much higher production levels.

It is a separate matter that due to worldwide opposition to coal and some of the local policies, Thar coal production and financing may be discouraged.

A major issue in the Thar coal tariff was the allowed internal rate of return (IRR) of 20% on equity which translated into 35.4% return on equity (ROE) in operational years. Nepra has reduced the IRR to 18% and has dropped the term ROE, which had created a lot of confusion.

The Sindh government kept insisting on an IRR of 20% thinking that it would be good for Thar coal. But many, including this writer, thought that the opposite was true. The argument of the latter group is that Thar coal has to compete with other sources of energy, even within Sindh, including wind and solar energy. There has been a tremendous drop in international and regional prices of wind and solar power, which have reached 4 to 5 cents.

Nepra has rightly decided on competitive bidding, which will help resolve the controversy spread by vested interests in favour of higher tariff. The 20% IRR was really high, but it was justified for the risk of first few projects and when local interest rates were high at 14%, giving a margin of 6%.

Interest rates today are around 6% and with addition of 6% margin, the IRR comes out to be 12%. Zorlu has submitted a tariff application for a solar power project based on 12% IRR.

Investments are driven by political considerations. Some investors of the western countries will not be attracted by even 20% as proved already in most of the power projects including Thar. Chinese would have considered 12-14% as good enough and would have been attracted.

There is not much market to sell coal power plants any way. It is a mistake to award an IRR of 18% under pressure from the Sindh government, which has not given much thought to the issues explained above.

The real beneficiaries and vested interests that appear to be behind the higher IRR are local parties. But they will see, it would hurt them and hurt us all.

Another good thing introduced by Nepra in the new Thar power tariff is the reduction in interest rate margin from 4.5% in the case of Sinasure fee application to 4% in case where the company's insurance rates are not applicable. This was long overdue.

When hard times come to pay in future, one may make a case for downward reduction in other cases retrospectively. It was, in fact, unreasonable to charge a heavy Sinasure insurance of 7% on debt and charge normal commercial rates as well.

Under the non-competitive bidding cases as most of the Chinese CPEC projects are, there is a case of negotiated lower rates of financing under government-to-government arrangements. The logic being that there is higher Capex in such situations. Let us be honest, the upfront tariffs are not that independent. In India, lignite coal tariff is Rs6.6, which in levelled terms may still be lower.

The higher Thar energy tariff is also due to apparently higher coal prices dictated by Thar Coal Energy Board (TCEB). I suppose they are still using the 20% IRR. There has not been any public hearing. The board does not believe in public consultations and prefers working out rates within itself.

Is provincial autonomy such a bad thing so as to preclude transparency and public consultation and oversight? Some reform is required in this respect? If unilateralism prevails, then tomorrow, K-P may ask for an exclusive role in pricing its electricity.

In the first year, the Thar coal cost/price, as expressed in Nepra determination, is \$14.75 per ton variable with an unduly high fixed component of \$56.43 to give a total of \$71.18 per ton.

In later years, the variable component goes down to \$10.64 per ton and fixed cost to \$19.41 per ton to give a total of \$30.05. Accordingly, the levellised cost is \$46.50 per ton.

Engro keeps saying that once optimum production level is reached at its mine, the production cost will come down. On the other hand, one keeps hearing of new coalmine investments, all of them submitting similar cost schedules.

If all such new proposals keep coming and are approved, how will that purported optimum level be reached.

Under similar conditions in central Europe, lignite is being sold at \$20 per tonne or even lower. In the US, it is as low as \$10 per tonne. In India, it is INR 1,500 (\$24) per ton.

Reportedly, international consultants had been hired by the TCEB based on which such pricing policy has been prepared. One wouldn't mind some good royalty payments going to the Sindh government, which it would hopefully spend on the social sector, especially in Thar.

One should look into the possibility of some kind of competition among coal mining companies in order to bring down the cost.

Why are Thar coal prices so high as compared to elsewhere? Firstly, regulated tariffs are almost always high. If competitive bidding is adopted, it is hoped that the prices would come down.

We have provided a comparative table of the three coal tariffs that have been issued by TCEB from which it can be easily seen the rising cost trend, while the opposite ought to have been the case.

What is the logic of entertaining other coal tariff applications, when optimum levels of existing tariff commitments have not been achieved yet, as indicated by Engro figures?

Tying up, coal mining projects with power appears to be the reason, which should have been delinked by now. Old technology such as shovel and trucks might also be the reason for higher costs. One cannot move millions of tons with shovels and trucks. It takes more time and energy. In India and Europe, where most of the lignite mining is being done, bucket wheel excavators have been used. Admittedly, these are expensive and heavy on upfront cash, the unit product cost is lower than that in the case of shovels and trucks.

In Engro's tariff determination, \$161 million of diesel consumption has been shown as Capex.

The cash flow-based tariff calculation model as applicable to electricity tariff has been applied to coal/lignite mining as well. It is unprecedented and not found almost anywhere in the world.

Not only that, very high cost of coal production has resulted due to this and even more importantly, lignite costs as high as \$71.18 per ton in the first year results, pushing the first year tariff very high and making it almost unaffordable.

Let us take the oil and gas model applied in this country. Does any oil or gas producer require the buyer to pay for his debt repayment and ROE. There is an oil or gas pricing formula according to which the buyer is supposed to pay.

The same applies to coal. It depends on the oil/gas/coal producer to finance his Capex and Opex as he deems fit. The integrated model of Engro being the first project is being pushed too far. This is causing fragmentation preventing economies of scale.

Power generation has to be separated from coal production. Let there be coal mining companies producing and selling coal to the IPPs. There would be operational and transparency issues when the integrated companies would be selling coal to other IPPs.

One of the solutions could be to establish Sindh Coal ala Coal India or Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation. Sindh Coal may invite coal mining companies to develop coal mines, independent of the IPPs, buy coal from coal mining companies and sell coal at a composite price or may designate an IPP to buy coal, as is being done in the case of gas.

In a typical mining contract, following is usually done. A minimum off-take is guaranteed, some advance payment is made, there is some pricing formula or a price agreed to with an escalation clause providing for inflation.

This avoids unduly high payment/cash liabilities as are being incurred in the current system adopted by TCEB/NEPRA.

A competitive bidding can be easily organised along these lines. Chinese government may also be requested to cooperate and support such bidding among its own companies, after all its image is also at stake during all this. All stakeholders would benefit if the submissions are considered.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1475543/despite-revision-thar-coal-tariff-still-high>

SEPA TAKES ACTION AGAINST POLLUTING INDUSTRIES

Dawn, August 8th, 2017

KARACHI: Sindh Environmental Protection Agency has imposed a fine on four industries while environmental protection orders have been issued to 28 others for polluting the environment on Monday, it is learnt here reliably.

According to highly placed sources the four industries that have been fined are located in the Sindh Industrial Trading Estate in the city while the 28 industries that have been issued EPOs are located in different industrial areas/zones of the metropolis. The legal action has been taken against those industries releasing their effluent/emissions without passing them through treatment plants; they carried a pollution load that was far more than the allowed environment quality standards notified by the government and were harmful for the environment.

Responding to Dawn, Sepa spokesperson Mujtaba Baig said that the industries that have been fined as they were violating Sections 11, 20 and 21 of the Sindh Environmental Protection Act 2014. He said that three industries — Alucan (Pvt) Ltd; Al-Khair Dying; and Schneider Electric — have been fined

Rs200,000 each; while a fine of Rs100,000 has been imposed on the fourth one — Adamjee Textiles. He said that polluting industries were located in SITE.

He said that 28 other industries — belonging to textiles, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, manufacturing etc — had also been issued EPOs and they have been ordered not to release their effluent without passing them through their treatment plants outside their premises as these were harmful for the environment.

These industries have been ordered to bring their operations in accordance with the environmental protection laws so that these did not harm the environment, or stern action would be taken against them.

The sources said that thousands of factories and industries were operating in the metropolis and many of these were releasing their pollution-infested effluent/emissions outside their premises without any treatment and were harming the environment. Under the Sepa Act 2014 these factories had to first treat their effluent and emissions and bring them within the parameters prescribed in the environment quality standards and then release these outside their industries so that the environment was not harmed.

However, owing to the additional cost involved in the treatment process very few industries followed the law and continued to pollute the environment with impunity. But sometimes Sepa did take action against a few polluters, they added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1350221>

SINDH ENVIRONMENT DEPT ‘HARASSING’ INDUSTRIALISTS, SAYS FPCCI HEAD
Dawn, August 13th, 2017

HYDERABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) president Zubair Tufail has said the Sindh environment department is “harassing” industrialists while it is government’s responsibility to resolve problems of industrialists.

He said while speaking at the inauguration ceremony of ‘Industrial Carnival 2017’ late on Friday evening that notices should be issued to industrialists before taking any action against industrial units. The exhibition was organised by the Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI).

Mr Tufail said the government was trying to increase energy production and in this regard a 1,320 megawatts plant was going to start production in Karachi soon. Hyderabad traders and businessmen would be included in trade exhibitions to be organised by the Trade Development Authority in different countries and their names could be included in a China-bound delegation as well, he said.

He said he had talked to the prime minister to bring prices of petroleum products under control before the prices suddenly dropped. Rates of gas tariff would also drop shortly and cost of industrial production would improve, which would ultimately benefit consumers, he said.

FPCCI former senior vice president Khalid Tawwab praised holding the industrial exhibition amid present conditions and said that since Sindh produced gas, industrialists of the province must have first right to use it.

He claimed that energy shortfall would come to an end by 2018 and said chairman of Federal Board of Revenue had assured the FPCCI that directives had been issued to stop raids on shops and offices.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1351210>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 1ST TO AUGUST 6TH 2017

FOOTPRINTS: A HEARTBREAKING SIGHT

Dawn, August 1st, 2017

Syed Ali Shah

QUETTA: Nestled deep in the midst of towering mountains, Quetta's historic tourist point Hanna Lake has completely dried up. Cracks have started to appear in the lakebed as there has been no rainfall here for months. "The natural cycle of rainfall has been severely affected as a result of deforestation," Niaz Khan Kakar, a well-known environmentalist, tells Dawn.

Tourists flocking to enjoy the scenic beauty of this fabled lake are instead treated to the sight of small dead fish ringing the edges of the dried lake. "It is heartbreaking to see these dead fish," says Tayyaba, a teenager from Jacobabad, Sindh.

And yet, the area around Hanna Lake reverberates with the sound of lilting Pashto music and the tinkling laughter of young tourists, including a large number of women and children. It is a mellow Friday and a crowd of youngsters have gathered at the centre of the lake dancing to the beat of the Darya (a hand-held drum).

Hanna Lake was built by the British in 1894 with the objective of maintaining the water table, to recharge the Karezes (an ancient irrigation system), surrounding springs and to provide water for agricultural purposes. At that time, there was no concept of tube wells and wells were being dug in and around Quetta to pump water for drinking and agricultural purposes.

Every summer, tourists from across the country and various parts of Balochistan throng Hanna Lake for respite from the scorching heat. "We have come to enjoy the fresh air of Quetta," says Ehsanaullah Khosa, a tourist from Jacobabad.

There was a time when tourists could take boats into the lake and enjoy the idyllic atmosphere. That is not the case anymore. A group of tourists stands at the edge of the lake staring down morosely at three abandoned boats. "Last year, we took a boat to the centre," Muhammad Ajmal, who lives in Quetta, says. "We are frustrated...the government must do something to bring back the beauty of Hanna Lake."

The lake had provided nesting grounds for migratory birds from Siberia till the 1980s. But unchecked hunting and water scarcity drove them off with the passage of time.

Gone are the days when migratory birds used to beautify Hanna Lake, says Amjad Rasheed, who heads the Taraqee Foundation (TF), a non-governmental organisation. The mountains ringing the lake were once the stomping grounds for livestock and other animals, but as the lake dried up, so did the grass and vegetation.

It is ironic that Hanna Lake, built by the British, would one day dry up for want of attention from local governments.

It can help maintain the depleting water table of the area if it is full of water, recharge the dried springs and karezes and provide water for farming, Mr Rasheed says.

The water table in Quetta and parts of northern and central Balochistan is getting depleted at a rate that is alarming. Experts believe that mandatory plantation could offset the lack of rainfall and the drought-like conditions. "Maximum plantation can mitigate the dangers of drought," Mr Kakar points out.

Local communities need to be made aware about the benefits of plantation and forestation, he adds.

Environmentalists warn that Balochistan is prone to natural disasters and a rapid climate change could have devastating consequences.

They predict an apocalyptic scenario for Quetta in which the looming threat of drought would stoke migration on a massive scale. "By 2030, people will not be migrating from Quetta due to terrorism but will be driven by scarcity of water," says Mr Kakar, who heads the Quetta section of the Forest Department.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1348807>

September 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 25 TH TO SEPTEMBER 30 Th 2017

MINISTER FOR GLOBAL ACTION PLAN TO PROTECT OCEANS

Dawn, September 25th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Mushahidullah Khan on Sunday urged the global community to work on an action plan to protect oceans and its resources from the devastating fallout of growing contamination, climate change-caused warming and unsustainable mining of its fisheries resources.

"Oceans worldwide provide the livelihood directly for three billion people but are under immense human and global warming-caused pressures such as sea pollution, acidification, rising sea levels, over-exploitation of ocean resources, coastal degradation and global warming. These challenges can be tackled only through a global action," he said at a press briefing here.

The minister put the responsibility on rich nations which have been blamed for global warming and unsustainable use of ocean resources to lead a global ocean rescue and rehabilitation action.

He said ocean-related climate change impacts, including ocean warming, acidification and sea-level rise threatened the world's food security, biodiversity of the oceans, integrity of coastal areas, livelihoods of millions of people, tourism and recreation.

He said an estimated 80pc of marine pollution originated on land – pollutants that posed risks to wildlife and the health and safety of humans.

“Nutrients, flowing down into our oceans from sources such as agricultural runoff, sewage and waste water discharges, create dead zones where fish and other marine life cannot thrive. The world is home to an estimated 500 such dead zones. Given the dismal scenario, the very sustainability of marine fisheries is now at risk,” he added.

“Various international research reports show that catches of many fish species in the oceans are declining while demand keeps increasing.”

He minister is set to attend a two-day ocean conference in Malta next month where he would join a global call for new vision and strong and action-oriented commitments for addressing challenges to oceans.

The invitation from the European Union (EU) to the conference was conveyed last week to the minister by EU Ambassador to Pakistan Jean François Cautain, the briefing was informed.

To be hosted by the EU and attended by hundreds of delegations from across the world, the ‘Our ocean, an ocean for life’ conference will focus on the key ocean issues – marine protected areas, sustainable fisheries, marine pollution and climate-related impacts on the ocean.

The event aims at inspiring the next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs, scientists, civil society and media to identify solutions and commit to actions to protect and conserve oceans and its resources.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1359862>

SEA OF SEWAGE

Dawn, September 25th, 2017

IN recent weeks, the residents of Karachi have been noticing that the waters of the Indian Ocean have been especially filthy. At Seaview, the beach most easily accessible to citizens, the waters have taken on a dark, oily tinge, a viscosity that is not that of normal seawater even by the standards of this metropolis with its glaringly insufficient trash disposal infrastructure. The speculation was that it must be an oil slick. On Thursday, matters were clarified.

At a seminar on ‘Awareness on sea pollution and sea litter’ organised by the National Institute of Oceanography in Karachi, researchers said that what residents were actually seeing was sewage, directly flushed out into the sea from a major drain in the city that had been clogged but was now unblocked because of the recent rains in the city. Scientist Dr Nuzhat Khan told participants that a 3km area of the coastline had been affected. She pointed out that marine pollution was a serious issue and that from Korangi Fish Harbour to Port Qasim, it was possible to even see cow dung from Cattle Colony floating in the waters.

Paint this nauseating picture into the snapshot we already have and the outlook appears grim indeed. Some two years ago, Sindh administration sources concluded that at least 8,000 tonnes of solid waste is either dumped or ends up in just the Karachi harbour every day. This includes waste from chemical,

textile, plastics and the thousands of other industrial units in the city that operate pretty much independently of regulation and monitoring. In addition, there is the waste generated by a vast city of over 20m people; given that Karachi's infrastructure is tattered to say the very least, by some accounts about 350 gallons of raw sewage and untreated industrial waste flow into the sea each day. Are the relevant government agencies concerned? Perhaps they need to spend a day at the beach.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1359814/sea-of-sewage>

BEACH CLEANING DRIVE: POLLUTION POSING SERIOUS THREAT TO MARINE LIFE: SPEAKERS

Business Recorder, 25 September, 2017

KARACHI: Pollution is a serious threat to marine life in Pakistani waters. It is adversely affecting marine turtles, sea birds and other diverse marine life. This was stated by speakers during a briefing session at a beach cleaning drive organized by WWF-Pakistan and other partners to mark International Coastal Cleanup Week at Sandspit Beach, Karachi. More than 400 students from government as well as private schools participated in the event and was also attended by representatives of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and other civil society organizations, as well as a large number of media representatives. A total of 300 bags of garbage were collected by the participants and disposed off at a dumpsite at Jam Chakro by the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board.

Speaking on the occasion, Muhammad Moazzam Khan, Technical Adviser, WWF-Pakistan informed that Sandspit Beach can be a potentially rich habitat for green turtles if the site remains undisturbed and safe for these amazing reptiles. According to an estimate, more than three thousand turtles nest on this important beach. He said that the area has become more vulnerable due to beach developmental activities, encroachments and other anthropogenic threats. The major threat to the marine turtles at the beach includes pollution particularly plastic, rubber, glass and leather that interfere with their nesting cycle. He pointed out that about 12,000 m. tons of solid waste is generated in Karachi on a daily basis; of which about 40 per cent is collected and disposed off at Jam Chakro and Goand Pass whereas the remaining is either burnt or find its way into sea through runoff 'Nallahs' and rivers. Beach visitors also contribute to the solid waste littered on the beach and usually do not care while disposing of their waste especially plastic bottles and wrappers.

Engineer Zahoor Ahmad, Assistant Director Sindh Solid Waste Management Board said that his organization is endeavoring to remove solid waste from the city, however, because of limited resources all solid waste from the city is not collected and taken to a dumpsite. He pointed out that very soon all solid waste from the city will be properly lifted and recycled or taken to a dumpsite. He appreciated the efforts of WWF-Pakistan in arranging the cleanup event which will help create awareness among students and other stakeholders.

Dr. Muhammad Khursheed, Director General South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) Sri Lanka also took part in the drive and helped collect garbage to clean the beach.

Dr. Babar Khan, Regional Head Sindh and Balochistan WWF-Pakistan shared that turtles maintain the health of the sea and poaching of turtle babies and their eggs is punishable under federal and provincial laws.

Removing them from the waters negatively impacts the marine ecosystem. He also said that the dead spinner dolphin found at the beach today seems to be caused by pollution as it is increasing in the coastal waters of Sindh. He called for adequate disposal at dumpsites and controlling unauthorized dumping of garbage at beaches in the city. He also stressed the need to create awareness among the general public about rational use of plastic and promote the use of recyclable materials.

For the contribution towards nature conservation, certificates of participation were distributed among students. They also pledged not only to protect the ecologically important sites but also to spread this message among other people. The participants appreciated the initiative of WWF-Pakistan which although a symbolic act, is part of the International Coastal Cleanup activity. WWF-Pakistan in the past has also arranged similar cleanup activities on turtle beaches and other areas along the coast of Pakistan.—PR

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/09/25/17-page/672862-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 18 TH TO SEPTEMBER 24 Th 2017

VILLAGERS URGE SHC TO ORDER A HALT TO DISPOSAL OF EFFLUENT INTO GORANO RESERVOIR

Dawn, September 20th, 2017

Mohammad Hussain Khan

HYDERABAD: Petitioner villagers belonging to the areas affected by a controversial mine water reservoir in Tharparkar on Tuesday prayed to the Sindh High Court's Hyderabad circuit bench to stay the disposal of effluent into the reservoir by the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) considering the fact that the inquiry committee appointed by court failed to examine the project's environmental impact assessment (EIA), bypassed its terms of reference (ToRs) and framed its own issues to deliberate upon.

The petitioners' counsel, advocate Zubair Abro and advocate Ayatullah Khawaja, completed their arguments on the committee's report.

The bench comprising Justice Salahuddin Panhwar and Justice Fahim Ahmed Siddiqui adjourned the case to Sept 21, when it would hear counsel for the SECMC and Sindh wildlife department.

Aggrieved villagers represented in the case by Mr Lakho and 10 others have challenged effluent disposal in the reservoir built within their village, Gorano, and affecting several other villages. The petitioners believe that the process will cause great harm to public and animal health, ecology and agricultural lands in a vast area around the reservoir thus leading to displacement of population on a large scale.

Advocate Abro submitted in court that the Jan 18, 2017 notification of the Sindh government regarding formation of the committee was illegal given the fact that it was not in line with the Dec 6, 2016 order, whereby formation of committee was agreed upon by petitioners and respondents. He said the notification read it was issued pursuant upon court's interim order ... to ensure that government interest was properly safeguarded and defended.

Justice Panhwar quipped: “it [notification] appears to be illegal as it was not court’s order”. Advocate Abro said the notification in fact negated basic spirit of the court order, which had set a wider scope for the inquiry committee.

He said that every ToR had multiple parts which were to be complied with. But, the inquiry committee didn’t examine the EIA and relied on the data provided by SECMC. He said that committee itself admitted in its “conclusion” that challenging these reports (EIA and other research documents) would require a lot of time, resources and a third-party assessment which was not possible within the given time and resources. Hence, committee had to rely on data and results generated by RWE — a German mining company.

“What committee should have done was to approach court in the first instance to seek directives. But they delayed report and didn’t get back to court,” stated the counsel.

Advocate Abro submitted in court that the committee did not examine record as there was no comment in the report regarding environmental impact of the disposal of saline water as mandated by the order.

“They [committee members] didn’t see EIA. Entire report is in fact prepared by copying content provided by Engro Corporation and Sindh Coal Authority (both respondents) and pasting in report,” he stated.

Justice Panhwar asked advocate Khowaja to read the concluding part of the report. The counsel pointed out that the wildlife department issued its no-objection certificate (NOC) only for the laying of pipeline and not for disposing of effluent. He said that there was a wildlife sanctuary [within the reservoir site] and this was admitted by the department as well.

Advocate Abro stated that the EIA approval was hit by SHC’s Bahria flyover judgement. He said that the SECMC project was approved during the initial environmental examination (IEE) while the EIA was done later on. He said that effluent could not be disposed of in a sanctuary adding that even this NoC was issued by the wildlife department after relying on an amendment to the relevant wildlife law of 1972 in 2011. He stated that the NoC was not meant for building reservoir and disposing of saline water.

Strangely enough, the advocate argued, in one of the observations the inquiry committee put it that at this stage when a 37-km-long pipeline worth billions of rupees had already been laid, it became rather futile to even consider any other option. “Such observation is clearly not in line with the Dec 6, 2016 order. Actually, the whole report is an utter failure,” he said. He claimed that the committee had bypassed court’s ToRs and went on to frame its own issues.

Advocate Abro questioned credibility of water technologist Dr Ahsan Siddiqui’s references, pleading that he supported fish farming in the reservoir water having high ‘total dissolved solids’ (TDS) and fluoride. In fact, the counsel said, references or reports relied on by him were either misquoted, incorrect or had no relevance with the subject. He argued that even water samples collected for analysis were not tested in line with the Sindh Environmental Protection Act, 2014. He said it remained unclear as to which aquifer such samples were collected from.

At this juncture, Justice Fahim Siddiqui looked concerned when he said whether it was a Ramsar site or a sanctuary where effluent was released, and asked the counsel if it was possible that water of three aquifers could be segregated through different pipelines.

Advocate Abro nodded, and said that this was what the petitioners were saying; that the company in fact did not explore other options for some alternative sites for the saline water disposal.

Advocate Khowaja submitted in court that the committee relied on reports of deputy commissioner and mukhtiarkar concerned to determine the size of the population supposed to be affected.

Advocate Abro also referred to the nomination of Shamsul Haq Memon to the committee, saying that his name was suggested by respondents. “As far as Mr Memon’s name is concerned, a conflict of interest is clearly there. He had worked with the consulting firm that was engaged by the Engro Corporation. So, propriety demands that he should have declined to become part of this committee,” he said.

He prayed to court to reject the inquiry committee’s report and order a halt to the disposal of effluent into the Gorano reservoir.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1358742>

OVER 800 MANGROVES TO BE CUT DOWN TO MAKE WAY FOR LNG PROJECT

Faiza Ilyas

Dawn, September 21, 2017

KARACHI: How the law is ignored, often by its own custodians, was evident at a public hearing held on Wednesday at a local hotel, where officials representing the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) and the forest department came up with vague replies when they were repeatedly asked if a no-objection certificate (NOC) was required for cutting down 882 mangroves, a tree species officially declared ‘protected’.

The project under discussion at the programme was the LNG (liquefied natural gas) import terminal two proposed by Pakistan Gasport Limited (PGPL) at Hafeez Island, Chara Chan Waddio Creek at Mazar Point in the Port Qasim area.

The project’s environmental impact assessment (EIA) study has been conducted by Global Environmental Management Services (GEMS).

It was the second time that Sepa was conducting a public hearing on the same project, though once again without a mandatory NOC from the relevant [forest] department on mangroves’ cutting.

This point had emerged as a major concern during the last hearing, which was later declared void by Sepa on grounds of lack of public participation, and similar observations were made during the hearing.

More frustrating this time, perhaps, was to see government officials' inability to refer to law and take clear stance on the matter of an NOC, which is required in case of an EIA/IEE (Initial Environmental Examination).

Clause 2C, Section 9, of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Review of Initial Environmental Examination and Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations, 2014 (available on Sepa's website) under the headline 'Filing of IEE, EIA and environmental checklist' says: "No objection certificates from the relevant departments in case of EIA shall be the part of reports".

Notwithstanding this regulatory requirement, especially in a case which involves destruction of a large number of a protected species, quite a few people, perhaps out of ignorance, insisted that the word 'NOC' was not used in Sepa rules as a mandatory requirement for the EIA report.

"There is no mention of the word 'NOC' [in the Sepa rules]. The forest department should clear its position on mangroves' protected status, though," said Saquib Ejaz Hussain, an air quality expert currently associated with Environmental Management Consultants (EMC).

While his remarks were praised by the project proponent representatives, some others from the audience asked Sepa and forest department officials to break their silence and share what the law said.

"The reason this public hearing got delayed was because we have been writing letters to relevant departments and waiting for their responses. The project proponent has already acquired project approvals from a number of departments, including the defence ministry, and is also in contact with the forest department," said Imran Sabir, a deputy director at Sepa.

He, however, avoided specific mention of the word 'NOC', which in this case should also have been acquired from the forest department and attached with the EIA report for sharing during the public hearing.

On his part, the forest department represented by Arif Khokhar could not explain what the government meant by a "protected status", though he did admit that the entire mangrove cover in Sindh was declared protected in 2010.

When pushed further to take a clear stance whether an NOC from the forest department was required for cutting mangroves, he said: "The forest department should be taken on board."

Earlier, he had told the audience that his department had shared its concerns in writing on the LNG terminal venture with the project proponent.

"The EIA requirements include obtaining NOCs from the relevant departments. To say that so and so department has given an approval for the project is not sufficient, what is important to see are the conditions attached to these approvals," said Zubair Ahmed Abro, an environmental lawyer.

An important concern which consumed a lot of time was Sepa's decision to call a hearing on the same project. Most participants were of the view that the same "flawed EIA report" earlier presented at the past hearing was being shared with the audience, which negated the purpose of holding a second hearing.

The question over director general of Sepa's continued absence from public hearings was also raised. Furthermore, there was strong criticism over the way GEMS' representatives tried to downplay mangroves' large-scale destruction by saying that a "minimum number of trees would be cut down."

These representatives, however, argued that mature trees would be replaced by a ratio of 1:10 and smaller ones with 1:5.

Earlier, two presentations, one on the project's proposed infrastructure, its benefits and operations by Nasir Gill and the other on its EIA report by Jibran Khalid, were shared with the audience.

The LNG import to Pakistan, it was said, was crucial to meet future energy needs, to sustain and support economic growth. The fuel was safer and provided greater efficiency than other fuels.

It was also pointed out that a number of studies by international firms had already been done to ensure safe operation of the project, which posed no environmental threats if mitigation measures suggested in the EIA report were followed.

When asked whether Sepa had studied those reports and what were its observations, the audience did not receive any reply from its representatives.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1358945>

EXPERTS CALL FOR TREATMENT OF INDUSTRIAL WASTE, PRUDENT USE OF WATER
The Express Tribune, 20 September 2017.

Pakistan is a water-stressed country and is nearing the threshold of water scarcity, whereas industrial waste has been polluting the limited water resources in the country.

This was emphasised by speakers during a media briefing session conducted by the Worldwild Fund for Nature – Pakistan (WWF-Pakistan) regarding a project titled 'International Labour and Environmental Standards (ILES), Application in Pakistan's Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)'.

The six-year project, funded by the European Union, is being jointly implemented by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Karachi, Lahore, Sialkot and Faisalabad. The project primarily focuses on reducing the use of water and hazardous chemicals by 15% to 20% in SMEs. The project promotes sustainable production and plans to mobilise and build capacity of more than 500 textile and leather industries in Pakistan.

Speaking at the media briefing, ILES Coordinator at WWF-Pakistan Arjmand Qayyum said the textile and leather sectors represent the largest domain of the industrial base and play a key role in the country's economy. He shared that these industries are resource-intensive where large amounts of water, energy and chemicals of different classes are used, contributing to an overall increase in pollution levels in the country. This has consequential impacts on natural resources, people's health and eventually on overall economic conditions, he said.

Qayyum claimed that due to poor management and imprudent use of water, most of the country's population has been deprived of a basic need. He informed the media that WWF-Pakistan will initiate

a study for the situational analysis of water resources in Karachi to establish a case for a citywide partnership for the responsible use of water.

WWF-Pakistan Technical Adviser Muhammad Moazzam Khan maintained that treatment plants (TP) in the city particularly TP-1, TP-2 and TP-3 located in SITE, Mehmoodabad and Mauripur respectively have not been functional since 2013. Due to this, untreated sewage of both the industrial and domestic sectors is dumped into the sea through nullahs. Khan claimed that the implementation of laws pertaining to industrial effluents generated from the textile and leather industries is very weak. Moreover, the industrial waste from these industries contains toxic compounds of metals such as copper, chromium, and nickel, which are hazardous to human health, he said.

A large segment of the city's population do not have access to safe drinking water as its water resources are being contaminated, said Khan. He was of the view that in order to guarantee supply of safe drinking water to the population, the industries need to ensure the proper disposal of their solid and liquid waste. Industries should also make sure that the labour force working at their facilities are not exposed to harmful chemicals, Khan added.

Senior officer at ILES Komal Naeem said it is imperative to analyse the current situation and revise statistics on water quantity and quality in the city. Responding to a question regarding One Planet City Challenge (OPCC), she said the WWF-Pakistan is working to introduce renewable energy in Karachi and through the OPCC carbon emissions estimates from different sectors in the city will be collected and green initiatives undertaken by the city government reported. All relevant stakeholders in the city, like the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency, Karachi Water and Sewerage Board and civil society organisations, are already on board and will collaborate with the WWF-Pakistan for both the ILES and OPCC. These initiatives will help address issues related to the water and energy in Karachi and project a better image of the city in front of the world, she said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1511788/experts-call-treatment-industrial-waste-prudent-use-water/>

KARACHI'S INDUSTRIAL WATER TREATMENT PLANTS DYSFUNCTIONAL
Business Recorder, 21 September 2017

KARACHI: Technical Advisor WWF-Pakistan, Muhammad Moazzam Khan said on Wednesday that the city's industrial water treatment plants; TP1, TP2, and TP3 have been dysfunctional for the last four years due to which untreated water and sewage is being dumped into the sea.

He stated this during a media briefing session organized by WWF-Pakistan to highlight the project 'International Labour and Environmental Standards (ILES), Application in Pakistan's Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)' here at a hotel.

This six-year project, funded by the European Union, is jointly being implemented with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Karachi, Lahore, Sialkot and Faisalabad. The project primarily focuses on reducing the use of water and hazardous chemicals by 15 to 20 percent in SMEs. It promotes sustainable production and plans to mobilize and build capacity of more than 500 textile and leather industries in Pakistan.

Moazzam Khan said the city treatment plants (TP) particularly TP-1, TP-2 and TP-3 located in SITE, Mahmoodabad and Maripur are not functional since 2013 hence the untreated sewage of both the

industrial and domestic sectors is dumped into the sea through nallahs particularly Lyari, Malir, Frere, Kalri, Railway and Nehr Khayam.

Arjumand Qayyum, Coordinator ILES, WWF-Pakistan said that the textile and leather sectors represent the largest domain of the industrial base and play a key role in the country's economy.

These industries are resource intensive where large amounts of water, energy and chemicals of different classes are used, contributing to an overall increase in pollution levels in the country.

This has consequential impacts on natural resources, the health of the people and eventually on overall economic conditions. He also said that due to poor management and unwise use of water, most of our population is deprived of this basic amenity of life.

He informed that WWF-Pakistan will initiate a study on the situation analysis of water resources in Karachi and will establish a case for a citywide partnership for responsible use of the resource.

He also shared that the implementation of laws pertaining to industrial effluents generated from the textile and leather industries is very weak. Further, the industrial waste from these industries contains heavy metals such as copper, chromium, and nickel.

He also said that a large population of the city does not have access to safe drinking water as its water resources are being contaminated due to multiple reasons. He was of the view that safe drinking water should be made available to the population and industries needs to ensure the proper disposal of their solid and liquid waste. Industries should also ensure that the labour force working in their facilities are not exposed to harmful chemicals.

Komal Naeem, Senior Officer ILES said that it is critical to analyse the current situation and revise statistics on water quantity and quality in the city. Furthermore, responding to a question regarding One Planet City Challenge (OPCC) she said that WWF-Pakistan is working to introduce renewable energy in Karachi and through the OPCC carbon emissions estimates from different sectors in the city will be collected and green initiatives undertaken by the city government reported.

All relevant stakeholders in the city like SEPA, KW&SB, and other civil society organisations are already on board and will collaborate with WWF-Pakistan for both ILES and OPCC. In order to register Karachi city for OPCC, the various industrial sectors in the city must reduce their carbon footprint and to be reported later. These initiatives will help address issues related to water and energy efficiency in Karachi while a better image of Karachi will be projected in front of the world.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/09/21/2-page/671978-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 11 TH TO SEPTEMBER 17 Th 2017
MANCHAR LAKE AN ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ASSET OF SINDH: BIJARANI
Business Recorder, 15 September 2017

HYDERABAD: Senior Sindh Minister for Planning and Development Mir Hazar Khan Bijarani said that Manchar Lake is an economic and cultural asset of Sindh and all the stakeholders must come forward for its rehabilitation. He said that the greed and irresponsible interventions of homo sapiens have altered the environmental scenario of the Manchar Lake. "The disposal of untreated effluents

and other pollutants are being dumped into the lake, which has poisoned the lake water,” he said this while speaking in the Workshop on the Assessment of Environmental Degradation of Manchar Lake, a joint research study conducted by U.S. Pakistan Center for Advanced Studies in Water (USPCAS-W) of Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET) Jamshoro and Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), Government of Pakistan, held at USPCAS-W MUET.

He said that it is an established fact that Manchar Lake, the largest freshwater lake in Asia, is renowned for its rich flora and fauna, as well as sustaining fishing and agricultural communities. In last few decades, he said, water quality deterioration has resulted in the significant reduction in fish supply and lower agricultural yield and the environmental degradation of the Lake compels the fisher folks to look elsewhere for the employment. “Degradation of the ecosystems of the Manchar Lake has been occurring for a long time but the effects have been recently felt,” he added.

He also thanked U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for establishing water research center at MUET. He assured that Sindh Government will initiate the new development schemes for the rehabilitation of the lake, whereas in last 50 years, the government has constructed and enlarged the artificial channel called Danaster Wah and linked it to the mighty river Indus to supply fresh water to the lake.

MUET Vice Chancellor Dr. Mohammad Aslam Uqaili said that role of the universities has been extended as compared to past; once the academic institutes were imparting the formal education and used to award the degrees and diplomas, whereas now the universities provide the platform for the healthy discussion and debates to reach out the community with solutions.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/09/15/5-page/670864-news.html>

‘BENEFITS OF SINDH’S RS11BN INVESTMENT IN COAL SECTOR SET TO TRICKLE DOWN TO MASSES’

Hanif Samoon

Dawn, September 13th, 2017

MITHI: Joining in the celebration of the completion of 50 per cent work of the Thar coal power generation project, Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah attributed the progress to the vision of slain prime minister and chairperson of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Benazir Bhutto while speaking to the audience at a ceremony held at the block-II site of the project in Tharparkar on Tuesday.

“The Sindh government had invested Rs11 billion in the project and now the people of Pakistan, particularly Sindh, are set to reap its fruit,” he said.

He recalled that Ms Bhutto during her second tenure as the prime minister had invited international investors and experts for the mining and coal-powered project in this region of downtrodden people with a view to install 10,000MW plants. He said his father, the late Syed Abdullah Shah, was the chief minister at that time (1994).

The chief minister regretted an inordinate delay in getting the project materialised but blamed Nawaz Sharif, the recently ousted prime minister and president of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz

(PML-N) for it, saying that he had scrapped the project, thus pushing the whole country into darkness and bringing industrial development across the country to a halt on account of the power crisis.

Mr Sharif's act also led to an upward trend in unemployment and poverty, he added.

Mr Shah claimed that due to the policy pursued by the Nawaz-led government not only the Thar coal project was wound up, it also caused annoyance to international investors to the extent that none of them were ready to opt for investment in the coal sector or Thar.

"When the PPP came to power in 2008, its co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari took the initiative of reviving the project and asked the then chief minister, Syed Qaim Ali Shah, and the Sindh government to help materialise the dream of Benazir Bhutto. He said Sindh was left by the federal government with no other option but to make investment in the sector on its own. Eventually, he said, the Sindh government in partnership with the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) invested Rs11bn in the project.

He alleged that the Nawaz-led government continued to resist the execution of the project until 2013. Even Mr Zardari and Mr Sharif were at one stage brought together with a view to convince the latter on federal assistance for the project in the greater interest of the country and its people but all in vain, he said.

CM Shah expressed his gratitude to former PPP prime minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf for extending sovereign guarantee for the coal project during his tenure.

He realised that a large number of villagers were affected by the project, and observed that the same lot, along with millions of other citizens, would soon be reaping the fruits and the benefits would be much more than what they would have lost. He said the Sindh government's only aim was to take the country out of the power crisis and bring about prosperity.

"I realised that the villagers had to surrender their ancestral abodes and religious places but they are going to get an unending compensation," he said, and announced three per cent shares of the project out of the Sindh government's share. He again urged the federal government to extend its assistance to the project in order to overcome the national power crisis.

The chief minister also announced handing over of the management of all government schools situated in Islamkot to the Thar Foundation, being run by the Engro Energy & Mining Company (EEMC). He asked Minister for Education Jam Khan Shoro to evolve a mechanism for the transfer of the managements.

Mr Shah also came across women truck drivers employed by the mining company in its transport section. "It really gives me immense pleasure that the Thari women have willingly accepted the job ... they appear more courageous than their male family members," he observed. The CM also had a ride in a truck driven by a Thari woman. She took a round of different areas of the project site to demonstrate her skills.

Mr Shah noted that as many as 35 women truck drivers were employed and eight of them had already completed the training and were handling the job.

Earlier, the CM held out the assurance that people of Gorano and Dukarcho villages affected by the Gorano saline water reservoir would also get suitable compensation under a package to be stretched over a period of 30 years.

In reply to questions posed by people around him, the chief minister said: “The project will start generating electricity in June 2019”.

He said that around 1,700 affected families were being provided alternative residence with all basic facilities, quality education for their children, standard healthcare services, safe drinking water and sanitation services. A mosque and a temple were being built for them, he added. He said each of the families affected by the project’s block-II would receive at least Rs100,000 shares each year and the amount would keep increasing.

SECMC chief operating officer Shamsuddin Ahmad Shaikh speaking at the ceremony presented a detailed preview of the gigantic power project.

He said a modern and fully equipped 150-bed hospital was being set up by the company in Islamkot while three secondary schools — one each in Islamkot, Mithi and the resettlement area — were also being established. He said three new primary schools had started functioning in the villages of the block-II site.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1357234>

KARACHI: BECOMING A GARBAGE CITY

Business Recorder, 11 September 2017

The sprawling city of Karachi, home to at least 14.9 million people according to the Census 2017—once used to be the city of lights. What was once the face of an urban Pakistan has now become a city of garbage; piles and piles of waste decomposing on street corners, behind the mosques, near schools, and everywhere imaginable.

Urban waste production is not only a Karachi problem—in fact, the World Bank estimates that urban waste is growing faster than the rate of urbanization across the world. By 2025, there will be 1.4 billion more people living in cities producing an average of 1.42kg of municipal solid waste per day—more than double the current average of 0.64 kg per day. As waste grows, so do the need to manage it efficiently with all the cogs of the wheels working in tandem.

According to Punjab government, waste generation per capita in Pakistan is around 0.612 kg per day growing at the rate of 2.4 percent. In 2005, Karachi was producing 9,000 tons per day of waste. Though actual statistics are not available, some estimates suggest Karachi produces over 20,000 tons per day of waste now, majority of which does not reach the landfill sites. As a result, a bulk of residential, industrial and medical waste is burnt on the daily that produces toxic gases which could be contributing to harmful diseases and infections. A rough estimation by this column suggests that per capita production of waste in Karachi is 1.21 kg per day.

At such dangerously high levels, Karachi has become even less prepared than ever before, if that’s possible, to manage it. Sindh Assembly passed the Solid Waste Management Board Act in 2014

which was meant to improve coordination and employ third party contractors to “take over management of solid waste on behalf of the Board”. To be clear, that didn’t happen.

The management control still lies with the Sindh government. The board issues tenders for certain jobs to contractors in order to handle different forms of waste across Karachi districts. Two Chinese contractors were brought on to manage garbage disposal in South and East districts of the city. In the East, the Chinese company under contract was to invest \$7 million and deploy 96 garbage collection vehicles, with more than 4,000 dustbins and containers in the city.

The contractors allege they will be producing electricity from waste as well. Tall claims, and together, the contract has a worth of \$2 billion which is mammoth. The firm was tasked to lift garbage from homes, lanes, streets, localities, link and main roads and take it to landfill sites. But the system remains incredible inefficient and changes, if any, are not visible.

A major problem is that Karachi still comes under the ambit of Sindh and the relevant power has not been devolved to the city. There is a tug of war between Sindh and city government currently fighting the battle in court.

In April, the board awarded a contract costing Rs34 million to private firms to collect data on the volume of industrial, private and public sector hospitals’ waste in Karachi. Another survey to estimate residential waste will be conducted later. These surveys will give a better idea how best to manage waste and is a positive step. But ultimately, Sindh government will have to relinquish control of this to city administration which will have to pass on the authorities to district level management.

Experts also believe that just handing out contracts to private companies will not help. There is a large informal sector that has existed in Karachi for decades that picks, sorts and recycles waste across the city. Incomes of 100,000 labourers are tied to waste management. The system requires efficiency with monitoring parameters set to evaluate performance, assess impact of contractors and regulate; without which all the funds spent will amount to nothing—essentially, waste.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/09/11/2-page/670045-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 1 ST TO SEPTEMBER 7 Th 2017

STENCH ENGULFS KARACHI AS OFFAL LIES UNDISPOSED

The Express Tribune, 5 September 2017

KARACHI: With Karachi not yet recovered from the recent rainfall played havoc in the city due to mismanagement of municipal authorities and Sindh government, the authorities’ failure to remove offal from the streets added to the citizens’ miseries.

The city, which has yet to recover from the effects of the recent rainfall, has now been invaded by a foul stench. Animal waste, including offal, still awaits disposal in most streets of Karachi.

Talking to The Express Tribune, a resident of Federal B area in District Central, Daniyal Ali Khan complained that walking in any street in his neighbourhood is unbearable due to the putrid stench of rotting offal. He said another issue being faced is the presence of rainwater accumulated on the street.

Ali added that despite several complaints, there has been no action by the authorities and in the end all they did was shift the offal to the corner of the street and covering it with plastic. Ali also complained that there are several locations that have been converted into temporary garbage dumps, causing the surrounding areas to reek of rotting refuse.

A resident of Bahadurabad, Mumtaz Siddiqui, shared that they waited for the authorities for one day and then arranged a private contractor to dispose of the offal using his machinery.

Siddiqui said that things in the city are terrible at the moment and recalled a time when offal was disposed of by the municipal authorities in a timely manner. The authorities also used to pour limestone powder to eliminate the bacteria and germs at one time, however, those days are gone, he lamented. Siddiqui questioned where the Chinese company that had been hired to lift garbage in the city was, as they were not seen during the offal-removal operation.

The Express Tribune spoke to Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment Director Raza Gardezi, who questioned the performance of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) and said the government has failed to activate the city-wise municipal system and has instead created a giant provincial-based board for waste management for which they were recently awarded a budget of Rs2.95 billion.

He added that there is a chaos of management due to the power struggle between the Muttahida Qaumi Movement and Pakistan Peoples Party and it is the citizens who are suffering.

Gardezi shared that it is still the mandate of the mayor and Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) to dispose of solid waste, however, they complain about the authority and funds the provincial government is now giving to the SSWMB and unfortunately the board had failed terribly in its operation.

He pointed out that if drains were cleaned by the KMC and waste picked up by the SSWMB, then there would be no chance of urban flooding during the rains. It is not the rain that causes urban flooding, it mismanagement by the authorities, he said, adding that the condition after Eid has become even worse due to the addition of offal lying on the city's streets.

He added that the issue is not that municipal authorities are not working; they lack authority and funds that has disturbed their whole operation.

"How could they make a provincial-level board for waste management? Around the world provincial governments never perform such operations; they lie solely with the municipal authorities," said Gardezi.

A deputy director of SSWMB told The Express Tribune on the basis of anonymity that throughout the offal removal drive, no Chinese machinery is being used. How could the Chinese handle offal disposal when there is no such practice in China? asked the official. However, this year they are observing the process and by next year they will be operating the system, he said.

DMC East Chairman Moeed Anwar shared that they have limited machinery and have also hired a private contractor and dug trenches near the Malir River for disposal purposes. He added that they know there are complaints, however, their teams are working 24/7 to provide relief to the citizens.

Though the city's mayor did not respond to requests for a comment by The Express Tribune, he told the media that he has raised a question over the SSWMB's awarding the offal removal contract on Eidul Azha for only two districts of Karachi. They get the whole budget but are neglecting the rest of the city as well as the province in regards to cleanliness and lifting of offal of sacrificial animals, accused Wasim Akhtar.

Akhtar added that despite lack of funds we are trying our best to serve the city, however, citizens must also support their mayor who has very little power to work for the city.

On the other hand, Assistant Medical Superintendent of Civil Hospital, Karachi Dr Khadim Qureshi has warned that there are high chances of disease being spread if offal is left on the streets alongside accumulated rainwater. He added that along with nasal diseases, there are high chances of gastrointestinal, diarrhoea and typhoid, urging citizens to take precautionary measures to protect themselves from becoming victim to these illnesses.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1498079/stench-engulfs-karachi-offal-lies-undisposed/>

MEASURING KARACHI BY ITS TREETOPS

The Express Tribune, 5 September , 2017

Sheharyar Ali

KARACHI: At a time when stories of trees being chopped down ring in our ears and are plastered across our computer screens, one group is working to save Karachi's environment.

The group, comprising four young individuals, has begun an initiative, Saaya, to map biodiversity trends in urban centres. The project began in July, 2017 and, as of today, the team has mapped over 700 trees in 14 parks in District South, including some in parks of the old city area, Hill Park in District East and trees planted along various thoroughfares including Sharae Iran in Old Clifton area. Their aim is to map all the old trees in the city.

The Public Interest Law Association of Pakistan (Pilap), a society working for the promotion and protection of fundamental rights in Pakistan, is providing logistical support to the team for the pilot project.

The co-founders of the Saaya initiative are Summaiya Zaidi and Noor Naina Zafar, who have studied law, Durreshahwar Alvi, an architect who teaches at Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, and Fahad Zubair, who has studied computer science. The initiative brought together this diverse group of people who were not even friends before.

They believe that the city's decreasing tree cover, which now stands at less than 3%, needs to be addressed and it is this love for trees and the environment that allowed them to work side by side. During the tree-mapping project the team was joined by student volunteers from L'ecole, the Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology, Habib University and Hamdard School of Law.

According to Zaidi, the trees that reside alongside humans are being brutally chopped down and the municipal agencies responsible for their welfare rarely if ever take action against this criminal act.

She explained that after collecting the data of the trees and their GPS locations, there is at least evidence of their existence if they are chopped down. At the moment, there is no documentation proving whether there was a tree at any given location even a day before.

Alvi said the initiative seeks to include all relevant stakeholders so that a research-based ecological solution is devised to ensure that new development moulds itself around the trees.

If the team can identify the tree's species they note it down, otherwise they forward pictures of it to experts for identification.

Saaya is supported by the Horticulture Society of Pakistan, as well as by professors of the University of Karachi's botany department.

The initiative is not only to protect trees, but also to map their biodiversity trends, said Zaidi. She added that once their store of data increases they will be able to classify tree population according to its species and environmentalists will be able to determine the best and most viable tree to plant in Karachi.

Speaking about cornocarpus trees, Zaidi said initially they decided not to include its population in their data, due to its quick and aggressive growth, but then they realised that mapping these trees will help people understand the lack of biodiversity in Karachi, as the real number of this species will also be catalogued for the first time. At the end of the day, these trees also provide shade to residents of the city, she explained.

The team has been contacted by a number of people interested in joining their campaign, which, according to Zafar, is very encouraging for them. They want to expand their work with the involvement of other residents, making it a community-wide effort, she said.

While working we often see couple's names carved into tree trunks and taveez hanging from branches, said Zafar.

She added that people often give them strange looks, as they do not understand why their group has crowded around a tree and is examining it. We are committed to our work and hope to see it help protect the existing trees of the city and spread understanding about the lack of tree diversity, she said.

Zubair handles the technical side of the project along with the mapping. He explained that they have developed an application and website only accessible to them at the moment where they save the data they record.

He shared that they use mobile phone GPS systems as well as professional GPS devices to accurately map the locations of trees. He said that the initiative is still at its pilot level and they are learning as they go. We have a few small technical bugs that will be fixed soon, said Zubair. Then the application and website will be accessible to everyone, free-of-cost, so that we can all work together to protect Pakistan's urban biodiversity framework, he said.

Saaya is being lauded by environmentalists and horticulturists throughout the city. Senior ecologist and horticulturist Rafiul Haq believes this is the first time trees are being mapped in the country. He said people will now become aware of the importance of trees, as the project will be beneficial for the future of the environment and tree cover in the city.

He said what the team is doing is geo-tagging and documenting trees, which will be very useful as evidence.

Haq said that the best thing about the group is the involvement of multidisciplinary individuals, which will come to their aid in the future. He said that they have made a good start but they may face hurdles in the future when they start mapping trees in remote areas. However, he said they should view these issues as challenges rather than hurdles.

Haq also highlighted the importance of biodiversity and said that if the biodiversity of trees is maintained then it will bring about positive change to the ecosystem and we will see the return of several species of birds and insects that are no longer visible in the city due to the monocultural nature of tree plantation in the city.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1498077/measuring-karachi-treetops/>

FISCAL DEFICIT HITS FOUR-YEAR HIGH AT 5.8PC

Dawn, September 6th, 2017

Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's fiscal deficit accumulated to a whopping 5.8 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) and reached Rs1.864 trillion mark in absolute terms, the highest in four years of the PML-N government as well as in the country's 70-year history.

Powered by devolution, the four provincial governments appeared pulling down the country's fiscal resilience as they enter election mode with a spending spree, according to 2016-17 fiscal operations report of the federal government.

This was in sharp contrast to a 3.8pc limit budgeted for fiscal deficit set by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar for the financial year 2016-17 and approved by parliament and showed a loosening of fiscal discipline soon after the departure of International Monetary Fund (IMF) on completion of 3-year stabilisation programme in September 2016.

The 7th National Finance Commission Award in 2009 and 18th constitution amendment in 2010 transferred increased provincial share in the country's total revenue by a big margin and empowered the provinces to administer additional responsibilities including health, education, etc. The PML-N, although part of this devolution, has since been trying to rebalance the arrangement.

The summary of consolidated federal and provincial budgetary operations 2016-17 released by the ministry of finance said the total budget deficit ending June 30, 2017 amounted to Rs1.864trn against a budgeted limit of Rs1.276trn, showing Rs588 billion worth of slippage.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar had pitched fiscal deficit at 8pc of GDP at the end of fiscal year 2013-14 on the conclusion of PPP's five-year term. He had announced a gap between total receipts and expenditures of the PPP's last year at Rs1.834trn after including the power sector circular debt worth Rs480bn.

He had claimed credit the following year for bringing down budget gap to 5.5pc of GDP as Pakistan entered the IMF programme after clearance of circular debt. The fresh accumulation of circular debt has since been estimated close to Rs500bn now.

Major contribution to the country's historic fiscal deficit appeared to have come from the four provinces that were required to provide a cash surplus of about Rs339bn during the last financial year. Instead of surplus, the provinces together offered another deficit of more than Rs163bn – making a net slippage of around Rs502bn.

The highest deficit was booked by PTI-led Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at Rs75bn, followed by PPP-led Sindh with Rs61.5bn. PML-N-led Balochistan government also contributed its bit with overspending of Rs22bn while the Punjab government posted Rs4.95bn deficit.

Provincial expenditure also surged to 5.4pc of GDP in 2016-17 against 4.8pc of GDP four years ago in 2013-14.

The armed forces also exceeded their revised expenditure ceiling by Rs47bn by spending more than Rs888bn during fiscal year 2016-17 against Rs841bn sanctioned by the parliament. The defence expenditure amounted to 2.8pc of GDP during 2016-17 relatively higher than compared to 2.6pc of GDP in 2015-16.

The remaining net deficit – roughly estimated around Rs40bn – was contributed by the federal government. In absolute terms, the federal government posted Rs1.778trn at the end of fiscal year ending on June 30, 2017, against a budgeted limit of Rs1.615trn.

The federal government also missed its targets set for financing of deficit. Against Rs820bn budgeted for external loans, the government was able to materialise Rs541bn and ended up raising Rs1.3trn from domestic borrowing against the Rs1.04trn target.

In overall terms, the total expenditure of the federal and provincial governments was put at Rs6.8trn against budgetary estimates of around Rs6.3trn for 2016-17.

On the positive side, total revenues inched up to 15.5pc of GDP last year compared to 13pc of GDP in 2012-13 and 14.3pc of 2013-14.

Tax revenue also improved to 12.5pc of GDP last year compared to 10.1pc four years ago. Non-tax revenue, on the other hand, slipped to 3pc of GDP last year against 4.2pc four years ago.

Total expenditure also jumped to 21.3pc last year against 19.8pc four years ago. Here, the federal government expenditure was put at 10.9pc of GDP last year against 11.2 pc four years ago.

Development expenditure on the other hand also increased to 5.3pc of GDP or Rs1.69trn in 2016-17 compared to 4.4pc of GDP or Rs1.185trn in 2013-14.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1355820>

‘OIL SLICK AT CLIFTON POSES NO THREAT TO MARINA FLORA, FAUNA

Dawn, September 6th, 2017

KARACHI: An oil slick recently reported at the Clifton beach posed no immediate threat to marine flora and fauna as it's in the advance stage of dilution, the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWF-P) stated on Tuesday.

A WWF-P team, which visited the site, found some fish inhabiting shallow waters dead in the affected area. It also spotted a damaged carcass of a green turtle that seemed a bit old and the organisation said its death couldn't be attributed to the oil slick.

According to the organisation, the spill was initially reported between McDonalds and the Village restaurant and then spread beyond Devil's Point. The oil slick, it said, might have occurred owing to oil discharge from a facility, or it may have leaked from a ship passing by the area and then, pushed by monsoon winds and intense waves, made its way to Clifton beach.

“The oil is now stranded at an intertidal area, mainly accumulating at the high tide watermark, leaving black lines or globs of oil on the beach as the tides recede. The slick is in the advance process of dilution and doesn't seem to pose any immediate threat to the marine fauna and flora.

“However, people visiting the beach should avoid going there until the water becomes completely free from slick,” said technical adviser to the WWF-P Mohammad Moazzam Khan.

He called for tracking the oil slick or spill to prevent its movement towards sensitive marine habitats and biodiversity hotspots.

However, regional head of WWF-P Sindh and Balochistan Dr Babar Khan said there was no immediate threat to the turtle beach as the wind and wave circulation pattern from west to east was presently under the influence of a south-westerly monsoon.

“Yet there is a need to monitor the affected and adjoining areas. The case of the present oil slick as well as the one reported at Sandspit in May this year require vigilance by the authorities concerned and call for mitigating measures.

“The fingerprint method should also be used to trace the source of these oil slicks so that necessary measures are taken in time to avoid future disasters. Containment and removal of oil spills is also required,” he said.

Meanwhile, the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) and Karachi Port Trust (KPT) teams collected samples from the affected area.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1355836>

SINDH'S MANGROVES ARE IN DANGER

The Express Tribune, 7 September, 2017

KARACHI: Due to lack of care, deforestation and a decrease in the flow of freshwater into the sea, the mangroves situated on Sindh's coastal line are in danger, as the number of forests is gradually diminishing.

Mangroves are various species of trees and shrubs that grow in coastal swamps and form dense groves. Although mangroves thrive in saline water, they require inflow of fresh water through rivers for nourishment.

Mangroves provide food for fish and other marine animals and, hence, are a natural habitat for a variety of sea species. Around 90% of seafood caught in Sindh feed on mangroves or creatures that live in mangroves. Therefore, conservation of these forests is necessary for sustainable fisheries. A healthy mangrove forest on one hectare of land can provide up to 100 kilogrammes of fish, 25kg of prawns and 15kg of crab meat ann

For the people residing along coastline, these forests offer fuel and animal feed.

Besides being fodder and a habitat for land and marine animals, mangroves also provide great utility in protecting and preserving the environment. On average, mangroves absorb 18% more carbon dioxide than other plants. Moreover, they help against erosion and save the land from sea torrents and floods. These forests help save millions of funds by maintaining the terrain of the coast and ports.

Pakistan's coastline is approximately 1,000 kilometres long of which Sindh's share is around 350km. The provincial coastline comprises 17 large creeks and swamp areas and numerous small ones where mangrove forests thrive.

Mangroves cover an area around 600,000 hectares in Sindh, of which 280,470 hectares are owned by the provincial forest department. These forests consist of four mangrove species which include *Avicennia marina*, *Rhizophora mucronata*, *Ceriops tagal* and *Aegiceras corniculatum*. The most abundant species is *Avicennia marina* which constitutes up to 90% of the total mangrove population in the province.

In recent years, mangroves have been adversely affected due to sea intrusion, as supply of fresh water to the delta of the Indus River has been decreasing. The area around the delta has become saline and mangroves, which need some freshwater supply, are not prospering due to this.

The decrease in mangroves has also resulted in a decrease in marine life near the delta. Resultantly, fishermen have started migrating from these areas due to lack of resources in the water.

Mangrove forests are also present in some coastal areas of Karachi. However, they are gradually decreasing due to water pollution and deforestation for the construction of buildings near the coast.

Commenting on the issue, Forest Department Mangroves Conservator Agha Tahir Hussain said the department has been working for the conservation of mangroves, adding that currently the department is also engaging people living along the coast for the purpose. Fifty households are being paid for the conservation of mangroves, the officer said.

Hussain said that an endowment fund for the conservation of mangroves will soon be set up. The government is also trying to sign global treaties in this regard, he added.

These measures will help sustain the source of income of fishermen and they will not have to migrate towards cities, the officer maintained. He added that the Guinness Book of World Records has also acknowledged Pakistan's record of planting a total of 847,275 mangrove trees in 2013 which has not been surpassed till date.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1499402/sindh-mangroves-danger/>

October 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 23rd TO OCTOBER 29th 2017

KILL POLLUTION, SAVE LIVES

Ali Tauqeer Sheikh

Dawn, October 28, 2017

The writer is CEO of LEAD Pakistan, an Islamabad-based think tank specialising in environment and development issues.

A NEWLY published report by the Lancet Commission has identified pollution as the biggest environmental cause of disease and premature death in the world. The report claims that almost 22 per cent of premature deaths in Pakistan are attributable to pollution — and this comes to about 300,000 deaths annually. This is more than the deaths caused by road accidents in the country, or three times the combined toll of tuberculosis, malaria and AIDS. These are stunning findings and have caused a global stir.

A 2014 World Bank study, in a similar vein, pointed out that more than 22,600 deaths per year are directly or indirectly attributable to ambient air pollution in Pakistan. “Outdoor air pollution alone causes more than 80,000 hospital admissions per year, nearly 8,000 cases of chronic bronchitis and almost five million cases of lower respiratory” problems among children under five.

The urban air pollution levels in Pakistan are amongst the world's highest, and intensely damaging for human health and quality of life. Pakistan is the most urbanised country in the South Asian region and the direct and indirect costs to our urban, peri-urban and rural standard of life are accelerating. This is degrading our environment, and eroding our economic growth rate. The pollution in low-middle-income countries like Pakistan is estimated to cost 2pc of GDP and almost 7pc of health spending.

To make things worse, most of this cost is borne by the poor. Marginalised groups, particularly women, children and the elderly, get disproportionately affected. Yet, the commission's economic analysis does not include the information about the cost of environmental damage caused by pollution, nor does it fully address the challenges and opportunities offered by climate change to address the root causes of pollution.

Despite adverse effects on human health, the pollution issue has traditionally been ignored by the policymaking community in Pakistan. National and provincial assemblies have not enacted any

significant legislation to curtail pollution. The manifestos and platforms of political parties are silent about air pollution, industrial emissions, use of chemicals, or technology or fuel import standards. The ambient air quality or industrial emissions standards are inadequate, fragmented and poorly enforced. The capacity of environment protection departments in the provinces has evaporated over the years despite the 18th Amendment that devolved greater environmental responsibilities to them. Their budgets are negligible and enforcement capacities questionable.

Pakistan has the highest greenhouse gas emissions intensity in South Asia — more than India. We emit more GHG emissions per unit of GDP than any other country in the South Asian region. This structural inefficiency adds to the cost of doing business as well as to the national health bill.

Worse, Pakistan's overall trends indicate a steady increase in emissions per unit of economic output over the past few decades. This is expected to further accelerate owing to rapid increase in population, the growing number of mega and intermediate cities, inadequate public transportation and the absence of mass transit systems, heavy reliance on fossil fuels and recent investments in coal-fired power plants. According to the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) document that the federal government submitted to UNFCCC Secretariat in 2015, the emissions are projected to more than double during the next decade. If the present trajectory of business as usual (BAU) continues, Pakistan, according to the NDC, will need \$40 billion to offset these increases.

Add to this the institutional complexity and their standard practice of working in silos. The regulatory agencies and research groups that focus on agendas for environmental health and pollution control operate in two distinct domains. Key sources of pollution-health nexus — air, water, soil, industry and chemicals — are regulated by different national and provincial agencies. This often results in competing policies, interests and fragmented understanding of the full scale of pollution and its share in the national burden of disease. The Lancet Commission report has provided a unique opportunity to our national, provincial and city governments to give deeper thought to how best to change this state of affairs.

Going forward, our commitment to Agenda 2030, also known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), provides a window of opportunity to curtail pollution over the next 15 years. Robust and long-term programmes to protect the health and lives of people through national pollution-control programmes are needed at the federal and provincial levels. The prime minister needs to set up an inter-ministerial commission to design and deliver Pakistan's pollution management programme. A series of targeted, well-integrated interventions should reach out to millions of Pakistanis through pollution-monitoring networks in the provinces, a consolidated regulatory framework for pollution control and using command-and-control measures that include ambient air standards, emissions standards and technology standards. For this to happen, the government must:

a) link air quality to health indicators by focusing on reducing pollutants linked to higher morbidity and mortality, particularly fine particulate matter, sulphur dioxide and lead content that are several times higher than WHO air quality guidelines; and b) link with cleaner production by focusing in particular on such industries as cement, fertiliser, sugar, steel and power plants, and on brick kilns, plastic moulding, and other waste-burning industries.

Curtailing pollution is essential for meeting the following SDGs: SDG-1 (poverty alleviation), SDG-3 (improving health), SDG-6 (access to clean water and sanitation), SDG-10 (promoting social justice), SDG-11 (building sustainable cities and communities), SDG-13 (climate change) and SDG-14 and 15 (protecting land and water). Their successful implementation will help curtail pollution that

disproportionately kills the poor and vulnerable. Pollution control can benefit greatly from efforts to decarbonise economic development and mainstream renewable energy to slow the pace of climate change in Pakistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1366669>

PLASTIC FACTORY GUTTED IN KARACHI FIRE

The Express Tribune, October 24 2017

A plastic factory was gutted in fire in the SITE area on Monday. It took firefighters two hours to put out the blaze. However, no loss of life was reported in the incident.

The factory was located near Habib Bank Chowrangi within the limits of SITE A police station. The blaze erupted at around 2pm and quickly engulfed the entire building. Following the fire, employees working inside the building evacuated it.

Initially, two fire tenders were rushed to the site of fire, a fire brigade spokesperson said, adding that later, eight more fire tenders with two bowzers were also sent to the location to extinguish the blaze. According to the spokesperson, the fire tenders took around two hours to douse the fire and millions of rupees worth of plastic kept inside the building was destroyed. No casualty was reported in the blaze.

The fire brigade spokesperson added that the cooling of the building continued till the evening, while the actual cause of the fire has yet to be ascertained.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1539378/1-plastic-factory-gutted-karachi-fire/>

ENVIRONMENT BILL PASSED DESPITE IMPASSIONED PLEAS BY MPAS

Dawn, October 26th, 2017

Imran Gabol

LAHORE: The Punjab Assembly on Wednesday passed eight bills, including the Punjab Environment Protection (Amendment) Bill of 2017.

The house, chaired by Deputy Speaker Sher Ali Gorchani, passed the Dera Ghazi Khan Development Authority (Repeal) Bill of 2017, the Punjab Environment Protection (Amendment) Bill of 2017, the Punjab Criminal Prosecution Service (Constitution functions and powers – amendment) Bill of 2017, the Punjab Maintenance of Public Order (Amendment) Bill of 2017, the Punjab Ehtram-i-Ramazan (Amendment) Bill of 2017, the Parks and Horticulture Authority (Amendment) Bill of 2017, the Punjab Local Government (Amendment) Bill of 2017 and the Punjab Employees Efficiency, Discipline and Accountability (Amendment) Bill of 2017.

Eight amendments put forward by the opposition members were opposed by Law Minister Rana Sanaullah and subsequently were rejected by the house.

The female members of the opposition raised serious concern over the passage of the Environment Protection (Amendment) Bill of 2017.

PML-Q MPA Khadeeja Umar, on a point of order, after the presentation of the Environment Protection (amendment) Bill of 2017 lamented the government for not taking up the environment issue properly.

She said the international environment monitoring bodies had declared Lahore the fifth most polluted city of the world but the government had not addressed the issue in the bill.

In her fiery speech on the environment challenges faced by the city, she attracted huge applause from the opposition as well as treasury benches.

She said that the Environment Protection (Amendment) Bill was tabled not to address the environmental challenges but for clerical changes regarding powers of the director general.

She said that the government had not checked the establishment of new factories in and around Lahore and in Kasur district.

She said that out of more than 300 factories, only three to five, were granted no-objection certificates while others were allowed to work without such certificates.

She said the government was playing with the lives of the people by not adopting precautionary measures to protect the environment and it was only busy felling the trees and building metro buses and train projects.

She said the government had not even tried to equip the department with gadgets to gauge the level of pollution in the country. She said that the government had not provided any fund for the Environment Protection Department from last eight to ten years.

She demanded that the government introduce a comprehensive bill on improving environment so that future generation could breathe in healthy air.

She was supported by Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf MPA Sadia Sohail Rana, who, on a point of order, also criticised the government for not taking measures to improve the environment.

She said that they should take care of the environment irrespective of their political affiliations because a large number of people were becoming lungs and cancer patients due to air pollution.

She said the underground water of Lahore was also contaminated with arsenic.

However, Law Minister Rana Sanaullah called the new bill compressive, saying it would address challenges to the environment. The house passed the bill.

Earlier, the session started after one and a half hour of the schedule with the Question Hour. Most of the questions could not be taken up because the movers were not present in the assembly.

The Punjab Medical Supplies Authority Bill of 2017 was referred to standing committee. The House will meet on Thursday at 10am.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1366329>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 16 Th TO OCTOBER 22nd 2017
AJK LIFTS BAN ON STONE CRUSHING IN 'ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREA'
Dawn, October 16th, 2017

Tariq Naqash

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government has lifted a ban on stone crushing plants in an "environmentally sensitive area" near here in a move that has shocked the region's Environment Protection Agency (EPA).

"The government is pleased to approve revival under rules of crush plants in the light of decision of the Mines Committee dated September 28, 2017 and recommendations/report of the Communication and Works (Highways) Department dated September 29, 2017 by revoking EPA notification of April 23, 2012," stated a notification issued by the trade, industry, labour and mineral resources secretariat.

In April 2015, EPA had declared Kamsar Nullah and its adjoining sites "environmentally sensitive" to attenuate environmental hazards posed by the stone crushing activities by around 22 plants.

Kamsar Nullah is located five kilometres north of here along the Neelum Valley road.

EPA sources said the declaration could not be undone by any administrative order. They recalled that the agency had sent a summary report to the government in 2012 in the wake of "massive and unregulated" excavation of gravel without its environmental approval and mining/excavation licences/leases from the AJK minerals department.

The extraction of stone (dolomite) from the Kamsar Nullah and adjoining sites threatened the environment and health of people in Muzaffarabad and its suburbs as a study conducted by the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco) in 2009-10 had revealed the presence of 'suspended dust particles' beyond the permissible range vis-à-vis environmental standards.

Another study by the National Engineering Services of Pakistan (Nespak) had found the gravel produced from these sites unsuitable for reinforced cement concrete (RCC) construction.

Commuters and motorists had long been complaining that the dust emanating from these plants marred visibility and the gravel strewn on the road risked their lives.

The EPA sources said after the 2012 ban imposed on extraction could not be implemented successfully due to a lack of effective cooperation from the administration and police, the agency was left with no choice but to file cases against the crush plants in the environment tribunal.

The case is still sub judice but in the meanwhile the plants have resumed their operations.

The sources claimed that two months ago a former AJK chief secretary drove past these plants towards Neelum valley and on his return wrote to Chief Secretary Dr Ijaz Munir about the repercussions of extraction of roadside mountains. He recommended stoppage of the practice before it was too late.

Perhaps it was his advice that alerted Mr Munir and subsequently the administration halted the operations of the plants.

The sources said the plant owners had reportedly managed a favourable report from the C&W department on the grounds that the stoppage of their operations had created shortage of gravel in Muzaffarabad and thus affected ongoing construction work of different departments.

According to sources, concerns raised by the EPA director general, Raja Mohammad Razzaque Khan, were not made part of the report by the Mines Committee.

However, when the EPA chief was asked to sign the report he refused and instead sent a detailed dissenting note to the committee.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1364080/ajk-lifts-ban-on-stone-crushing-in-environmentally-sensitive-area>

US FIRM OFFERS 'COAL TO CHEMICALS' TECHNOLOGY Dawn, October 18th, 2017

KARACHI: An American company on Tuesday offered a new technology for production of various chemicals from the emissions of coal-fired plants in Sindh.

In this regard, a delegation led by Chairman Low Emissions Resources Corp (LERC) Fernando Alvarez and Chairman Gorntazy Group Munir Akram met with Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and briefed him.

Under 'coal to chemicals' technology, emissions of coal-fired power plants are stored and out of them different chemicals are produced.

Briefing the chief minister, the delegation leader said the technology used to produce coal-fired power in Thar is latest and environmentally safe.

The emissions of coal-fired plants would go to waste in the atmosphere and must be used to produce ammonia, methanol and water.

Commercially it would give a great benefit to the coal-fired power project.

Mr Shah asked the delegation to visit Thar coal mines area and give the provincial government proof of their concept through an experiment or lab test. "If the experiment goes okay the provincial government would work with them on a pilot project," he said.

The chief minister directed Secretary Energy Agha Wasif to coordinate with the visiting delegation. The visiting delegation comprised CFO LERCDaren Person, Director LERC Russ Gerson, Gorntazy Group (Pakistan) Zeyd Shaeikh, CEO RETech Tanveer Zaidi, and Director RETech Syed Azam Ali.

CM Sindh was assisted by Principal Secretary to CM Sohail Rajput, Mr Khursheed Jamali and Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company CEO Shamsuddin Shaikh.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1364442>

SMOG POLICY IN THE WORKS, LHC TOLD

Dawn, October 21, 2017

LAHORE: The Punjab Environment Protection Department told the Lahore High Court on Friday the chief minister had signed a 'smog policy' which would be notified in the official gazette in a day.

A legal adviser of the department presented the draft of the policy before the court and shared its salient features. He said the air monitoring system would be expanded under the smog policy besides enforcement of the Pollution Charge Rules of 2001 and environmental laws.

He said with the upgrade of the central laboratory a checks and balance system would be introduced in collaboration with the Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industries on industrial units emitting green house gas emissions.

The adviser said that public awareness campaigns on all media regarding protective measures would be launched and also in schools where children were likely to suffer from smog related issues.

Chief Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah adjourned hearing till Nov 8 and directed the law officer to present the notification of the policy before the court.

Advocate Sheraz Zaka had filed a public interest petition last year after a dense smog engulfed the city and affected a large number of citizens. He submitted that in 1952 the smog was faced by London, which thereafter implemented environmental laws and introduced the Clean Air Act of 1956.

He said the coal industry in Britain was shut down by then British prime minister Margaret Thatcher in order to curb air and noise pollution.

The lawyer said that the Punjab government had created a misconception that the smog transpired due to burning of agricultural waste in the Indian province of Punjab. He said the reason behind the smog was the lack of enforcement of environmental laws and dysfunctional central laboratory in Lahore. He argued that the government had not taken any adequate awareness measures amongst the public.

Law officers: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday directed the advocate general of Punjab to apprise the court of the procedure for the appointment of the law officers in the province.

Chief Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah was hearing a petition moved by two lawyers who had challenged the appointment process for government's law officers and sought directions for it to formulate a mechanism for the purpose beyond political considerations.

Advocate Ch Shoaib Saleem argued that the law officers had been appointed on political consideration and they remained loyal to the ruling government instead of the state. He said the government's lawyers drew salaries from the taxpayers' money but defended a specific political government.

Mr Saleem referred to a recent incident wherein an additional advocate general, belonging to lawyers' wing of the PML-N, had slapped a police officer outside a court of Islamabad during hearing of the National Accountability Bureau references against the Sharif family. He said the conduct of the law officer, who was later sacked, had established that the law officers had been appointed merely on political grounds.

The petitioner-lawyer said appointment mechanism of law officers was not regulated by any rules or law and it was totally dependent on the will of the executive head of the government. He pleaded that professionalism could be introduced in the law officers if some procedure was adopted for appointments at the Advocate General's office through proper advertisements, written tests or interviews.

Opposing the petition, Additional Advocate General Anwaar Hussain argued that the chief minister of the province enjoyed discretionary powers under Article 140 of the Constitution to make appointments at the Advocate General's office. He said the Supreme Court had already decided a similar matter and upheld the powers of the executive.

The chief justice deferred further hearing till Nov 13 and directed the AGP to apprise it of the mechanism for the recruitment of the law officers.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1365239>

GOVT DEPTS DIFFER OVER CAUSE OF FISH DEATHS IN RAWAL DAM Dawn, October 21, 2017

Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: Four government departments asked to submit reports on the dead fish in Rawal Dam in July could not agree on how the fish died, with one department claiming the fish were poisoned.

Although the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA), Pakistan Council on Research of Water Resources (PCRWR) and the Pakistan Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR) told a meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Climate Change on Friday that the fish died due to low levels of oxygen, Lubna Said from the Chief Commissioner's Office said the fish were poisoned.

The conflicting reports displeased committee chairman MNA Malik Mohammad Uzair Khan, who said it was disappointing that government departments could not ascertain the real causes of the deaths four months after they occurred.

"We do not know who or what to believe," Mr Khan said.

The committee met on Friday for detailed reports on how scores of fish in Rawal Lake died just as the monsoon began in July.

After the dead fish surfaced, the water supply for Rawal Lake was suspended out of fears that the lake had been poisoned on contaminated.

Ms Said told the committee that samples were sent to the National Institute of Health (NIH) to check for arsenic, pesticide and copper poisoning and to check the quality of water in the dam.

When nothing significant was found, samples of the fish were also sent to the Punjab Forensic Science laboratory in Lahore which confirmed that the fish were poisoned by permethrin.

“The poison damaged the internal organs of the silver cod fish, which have weak immune systems,” Ms Said said. She also claimed the fish were poisoned by locals after authorities banned boat rides for visitors at the dam.

“It was possible that the boatmen poisoned the water that killed the fish. Some locals have been nominated in the police’s FIR,” she added.

MNA Tahira Aurangzeb, however, corrected the government official and informed her of a turf war between local fishermen and a contractor, which she believed was the cause behind the dead fish.

Director General Farzana Altaf Shah from the Pak-EPA countered the officials with the findings of her office.

“The fish died due to extremely low oxygen levels in the lake, and not of poison. Poison should have killed other species of fish in the lake and not just one species,” Ms Shah said.

This was the second time that oxygen levels in Rawal Lake declined sharply due to excessive pollution in the body of water, she said. “This is the second time fish have died in the lake. In 2006, smaller weaker fish died in a similar manner due to low oxygen levels,” she said.

The reports of the PCRWR and PCSIR showed similar results, Ms Shah said, adding that the dead fish were buried before local fishermen could catch and sell them.

“Solid waste flowing into the lake and from surrounding settlements continues to be a major reason for excessive pollution in the lake. It is imperative that the lake is completely fenced and sewerage treatment plants are installed upstream to stop the flow of waste into the lake, which is also a source of drinking water for Rawalpindi,” she said.

MNA Naeema Khan was also displeased with the conflicting reports and suggested action against government officials for tendering false reports.

It was decided that the committee members would visit Rawal Lake for a clearer view of pollution in the water body.

The chairman of the committee also decided to ban bottled mineral water at committee meetings on Friday, in order to encourage the consumption of water from water dispensers and to discourage the use of plastic.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1365255>

Pollution beats arch-rivals wars and violence and even hunger and natural disasters, when it comes to causing death, not only in Pakistan but also the world at large. It brings more deaths than any single disease – way more than AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined.

World-wide pollution claimed the lives of 9 million people in 2015 – one in every six deaths that year with almost half of them in India and China. But proportionate to the numbers, Bangladesh beats them all with 26.6% of all deaths, followed by India (24.5%) and (Pakistan 21.9%).

According to the latest report on the issue, published in prestigious The Lancet Medical Journal on Friday, almost all the deaths world-wide (92%) happened in low- and middle-income countries, with air pollution the main culprit, felling 6.5 million people.

As South Asia has embarked on a rapid industrialisation, the region's top-three most-populated nations account for more than one third (3,117,603) of these deaths. In Pakistan, 311,189 died because of pollution in 2015, according to the report.

“Pollution and related diseases most often affect the world's poor and powerless, and victims are often the vulnerable and the voiceless,” said co-author Karti Sandilya of Pure Earth, an anti-pollution NGO.

“As a result, pollution threatens fundamental human rights, such as the right to life, health, wellbeing, safe work, as well as protections of children and the most vulnerable.”

With global welfare losses of about \$4.6 trillion per year, the economic cost of pollution-related deaths and disease is also concentrated in the developing world. “Proportionally, low-income countries pay 8.3 percent of their gross national income to pollution-related death and disease, while high-income countries pay 4.5 percent,” said the researchers.

Aside from outright poisoning, pollution causes an array of deadly ailments such as heart disease, stroke, lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The deadliest form, responsible for more than two-thirds of deaths, was air pollution, they added.

This includes outdoor pollution from factory and car emissions, and indoor pollution from wood, charcoal, coal, dung or crop waste being burnt for heating and cooking.

After water pollution in second place with 1.8 million deaths, “workplace pollution including exposure to toxins and carcinogens was linked to 0.8 million deaths,” said the report, which is based largely on 2015 data from the Global Burden of Disease.

These included the lung disease pneumoconiosis in coal workers, bladder cancer in dye workers, and asbestosis and lung cancer in workers exposed to asbestos.

“Lead pollution was linked to 0.5 million deaths that resulted from high blood pressure, renal failure and cardiovascular disease,” said the report.

In a separate comment, The Lancet editors Pamela Das and Richard Horton said the report came at a “worrisome time, when the US government’s Environmental Protection Agency, headed by Scott Pruitt, is undermining established environmental regulations.”

The latest findings, they added, should serve as a “call to action”. “Pollution is a winnable battle.... Current and future generations deserve a pollution-free world,” the pair wrote. Pruitt announced this month the US would pull out of former president Barack Obama’s Clean Power Plan.

There was some good news in the report too. Deaths due to water and household air pollution dropped from 5.9 million in 1990 to 4.2 million in 2015, said the report authors, as poor countries became richer.

On the other hand, deaths from pollution associated with industrial development — such as outdoor air pollution, chemical and soil pollution, increased from 4.3 million to 5.5 million over the same period.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1536835/5-pakistan-ranked-third-pollution-beats-violence-causing-death/>

WORK ON DIAMER-BHASHA DAM TO BEGIN IN 2018
The Express Tribune, October 21st, 2017.

LAHORE: Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) Chairman Muzammil Hussain said on Friday that water and energy security were key components of national security.

“For these, we need to make critical development plans in both water and energy sectors and there has to be a strategy that turns words into action,” Hussain said while speaking to participants of the National Security and War Course of National Security College, Islamabad.

The delegation, headed by National Security College Commandant Major General Khalid Zia, visited the Wapda House on Friday. Wapda members for finance, power and water, its secretary and other senior officers were present on the occasion.

Highlighting the condition of water and power sectors, the Wapda chairman said the country had lacked a proper national water policy for the last 70 years despite being confronted with serious water problems.

There had been a lack of focus on the development of water resources, he said, noting that the establishment of the Ministry of Water Resources had improved things due to greater focus.

He said Wapda had reset its priorities in order to increase water storage capacity and increase the share of hydroelectric power in the energy mix.

Wapda was also planning to start construction work on Diamer-Bhasha Dam and Mohmand Dam in 2018, the chairman announced.

Phase-I of the Kachhi Canal, a much-needed project for development of irrigated agriculture in Dera Bugti, Balochistan, had recently been completed, Hussain said, adding Neelum-Jhelum, Tarbela 4th

Extension and Golen Gol projects would be completed in a phased manner from early 2018 to mid-2018.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1537188/2-work-diamer-bhasha-dam-begin-2018/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 9 Th TO OCTOBER 15 Th 2017
LHC SEEKS RECORD OF TREES FELLED FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS
Dawn, October 10, 2017

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court directed on Monday the Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) to submit the record of trees felled in the city for the construction of different development projects, including Orange Line Metro Train, Gulberg signal-free corridor and the widening of Canal Road.

Pleading a public interest petition, advocate Sheraz Zaka argued before the court that the Punjab government had given an undertaking before the Supreme Court that 10 trees would be planted against each tree felled for any construction. However, he said that the government violated its undertaking.

The lawyer said fundamental rights of citizens were at stake and Lahore city had become one of the most polluted cities in the world due to unbridled cutting of trees by the government.

He pointed out that the provincial government in 2015 issued its environmental policy, which envisaged plantation of new trees but neither the policy nor the undertaking given before the apex court had been complied with.

During the hearing, Justice Ayesha Malik expressed displeasure that the PHA had been showing negligence towards the matter of public importance and had not bothered to file a reply for the last 10 months.

The judge directed the PHA's counsel, present in the court, to submit a reply on behalf of the authority without fail by Oct 30.

Summon: The Lahore High Court on Monday summoned director general of Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) on a petition seeking the implementation of a previous order regarding change of investigation in a case involving the petitioner.

Petitioner Ali Haider, sub-engineer at Wasa, argued through counsel Asim Ali Shah that a judge of the high court had on June 1, 2017 directed the ACE director general to decide an application for change of investigation after hearing point of view of the petitioner.

However, the counsel said the respondent had not complied with the order rather told the petitioner that it was a routine matter and that heaven would not fall if the order of the court was not implemented.

He argued that the conduct of the respondent director general amounted to contempt of court and he was liable to be punished under the relevant law. He requested the court to allow the petition and initiate contempt proceedings against Director-General Muzaffar Ali for not implementing the previous decision.

Justice Shahbaz Ali Rizvi heard the arguments and directed the respondent to appear in person on Oct 23 to explain his position in the case.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1362812/lhc-seeks-record-of-trees-felled-for-development-projects>

PIECES OF PLASTIC KILL SHARK, CATFISH

Dawn, October 15, 2017

KARACHI: Fishermen at sea have recently caught fishes entangled in some plastic material that seemed to have caused their death, the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWF-P) reported on Saturday.

In the first incident, Captain Mahar Gul, fishing 160 nautical miles south of Astola Island, Balochistan, found a spot-tail shark entangled in a polythene bag.

“The deep cuts on its skin and associated inflammation indicated that the shark became entangled in the bag, which caused its slow death,” he said.

In the second incident, Captain Noor Mohammad, fishing 135 nautical miles southwest of Karachi, found a giant catfish in his net. Upon taking a closer look, he found a plastic strap around the head of the dead fish,” a WWF-P press release stated.

Mohammad Moazzam Khan, technical adviser on marine fisheries working with the WWF-P, said that these incidents were a grim reminder that the increasing plastic pollution had reached our offshore waters and was killing marine life.

“Plastic pollution along Pakistan’s coast is a major concern and is worsening because we don’t have a proper solid waste disposal system in the city. Most plastic pieces entering the sea become a serious threat to marine life due to their non-degradable nature,” he said.

Studies carried out by the organisation, he said, had revealed that 65 per cent of litter that reached the coast included plastic products, such as mineral water bottles, caps, polythene bags, balloons, wrappers, shoes, broken utensils, styrofoam and discarded fishing nets.

It is estimated that globally about eight million tonnes of plastic is dumped into the sea or finds its way there through wind or flow of rivers and urban runoff. This is about equivalent to dumping a garbage truck into the marine waters every minute.

According to a statement submitted by Sindh Solid Waste Management Board to the Supreme Court’s water commission led by Justice Mohammad Iqbal Kalhoro, about 12,000 tonnes of garbage is generated daily in Karachi, of which only 40pc is collected and taken to the dumping site whereas the remaining garbage mainly reaches different drains or is burnt locally.

“It’s sad to see that Pakistan’s beaches are now littered with all kinds of waste. There is a need to keep them clean, create awareness as well as to have a proper waste disposal system,” said Dr Babar Khan of the WWF-P.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1363812>

REVIVING MANCHHAR LAKE

Nasir Ali Panhwar

Manchhar Lake, once famed for its abundant natural resources and its unique boat houses, is a poor shadow of itself having gradually lowered its freshwater intake at the cost of saline and toxic effluents. The lake’s status as a principal feeding and resting ground for migratory birds from Central Asia has changed as well. The environmental degradation of Manchhar Lake has had a profound impact on the livelihoods of the local communities. The dwindling fish catch is insufficient for the needs of fisherfolk today. Their average monthly household income in the area ranges between Rs1,000 and Rs3,000.

Speakers at a workshop held at Mehran University of Engineering Technology Jamshoro on Manchhar Lake have faulted irresponsible human interventions for the environmental tragedy there. The lake can still be saved if earnest efforts are made to stop the disposal of drainage effluent into the freshwater body, according to the findings of a research study on the environmental degradation of Manchhar Lake. This is possible when the Right Bank Outfall Drain is ready. Nai Gaj or hill torrent is one of the major sources of freshwater of the lake and impacts of Nai Gaj dam on Manchhar Lake would be crucial. It is imperative that the required allocation of water from Nai Gaj dam for Manchhar Lake should be ensured.

Another option could be to treat Manchhar Lake as a small dam and provide it with a spillway above the high flood level of the Indus. A comprehensive management plan for Manchhar Lake should be prepared with the participation of local communities and experts. The plan should recognise the rights of local communities over the lake’s natural resources and should include a long-term conservation and sustainable use plan for the lake and its resources and alternative income-generation options.

In addition, its unprotected status is a contributing factor to the wetland’s unabated exploitation and deterioration. The classification of Manchhar as a protected wetland under the Ramsar Convention and strict enforcement of the Wildlife Act must be ensured. These actions will help in reviving protecting and conserving this natural treasure of Sindh.

Historically, Manchhar Lake’s pollution concerns go back to 1921 when the Main Nara Valley (MNV) drain, which was originally designed as an inundation canal, was remodelled to transport raw sewage from the towns of upper Sindh and parts of Punjab. The remodelled MNV drain became the only source of drainage along the right bank of Sukkur Barrage. During the implementation of the Right Bank Outfall Drain (RBOD) project, the MNV drain was further widened and remodelled to drain the saline water pumped by the tube wells of the Salinity Control and Reclamation Project (SCARP). This development exacerbated the toxic content of the effluents being drained into the lake.

Meanwhile, the construction of dams, for water storage and power generation, and diversions upstream, for agricultural purposes and use by industries, on the River Indus led to water shortages downstream, which in turn reduced the amount of freshwater flowing into Manchhar Lake. At present,

the waters of Manchhar Lake boast high levels of toxicity and salinity, which have had a ruinous effect on the lake's natural habitat and biodiversity. The disposal of untreated effluents and other pollutants have been dumped into the lake, which has poisoned the water. This has severely affected the flora, fauna and aquatic life.

In 1988, wildlife authorities recorded the presence of up to 50,000 birds representing 102 species of migratory and resident birds at Manchhar. The lake was also home to 29 species of aquatic plants, 11 tree species and 17 varieties of crops. But as time passed outward migration intensified and is increasingly transforming into permanent relocation. The main reason for this phenomenon is the deteriorating quantity and quality of fish catch and diminishing opportunities for agriculture and other income-generating activities.

Over the last two decades, the freshwater inflow into the lake has declined significantly relative to the saline and toxic effluents discharged into it.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1531612/reviving-manchhar-lake/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 1ST TO OCTOBER 8 Th 2017 MANGROVE COVER SHOWS NO SIGNIFICANT INCREASE 'DESPITE PLANTATION EFFORTS'

Dawn, October 1st, 2017

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: Once rated the fifth largest mangrove forest in the world with a cover as high as 250,000 hectares a few decades ago, mangroves of the Indus delta now rank lower than 15th on the (global) list and have decreased to 98,014 hectares, indicating two to three per cent annual loss.

No significant success has been achieved to increase its size despite attempts for mass mangrove plantation in the delta.

These observations are part of a paper published in an international journal. Titled The Effect of Global Warming (Climate Change) on Mangroves of Indus Delta with Relevance to other Prevailing Anthropogenic Stresses, A critical review, the paper has been published in July this year in the European Academic Research journal.

It is authored by Dr Syed Mohammed Saifullah, a retired professor of Karachi University's botany department.

The paper begins with the importance of mangroves and states that the total mangrove cover of the world has been estimated to be 137,760,000 hectares with an economic value of \$200,000 to \$900,000 per square kilometre and \$1.6bn annually to ecosystem services.

"Besides, providing many goods and services to mankind, they also sustain about 80pc of global fisheries and serve as a sink of greenhouse gases. They fight back global warming through carbon

sequestration at a higher rate than any other ecosystems on a unit area basis; it is estimated that as much as 25.5bn tons of carbon are sequestered by mangroves annually,” it says.

The mangroves in the Indus delta, it points out, are perhaps the most seriously stressed in the entire subtropical belt. Several anthropogenic stresses account for their drastic decline; the foremost among them is the sharp decline in the Indus river discharge into the delta.

“Some decades ago, 150MAF or more water used to reach the delta but now it is almost negligible except for occasional floods during monsoon. This is due to the construction of several dams and barrages along the Indus river to meet the increasing water demands for agricultural and industrial purposes. Consequently, the alluvial flow of the river, important for mangrove’s growth, has also decreased. These issues have become severe over time,” it says.

These conditions along with massive groundwater extraction, the author says, are contributing to the subsidence of the Indus delta, a phenomenon also affecting mangroves.

“It (the delta) is sinking continuously and has shrunk to about one tenth of its original size and cannot be restored to its original condition,” he says, citing other data.

Eight species of mangroves have been reported from Pakistan but now only four species occur in the delta with *Avicennia marina* the most dominant. The others are *Rhizophora mucronata*, *Ceriops tagal* and *Aegiceras corniculatum*.

The first two had almost disappeared from the delta but were reintroduced into the area by Sindh forest department and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Efforts for massive mangrove plantation, however, couldn’t produce significant results.

An estimated 0.54m saplings were planted in 2009 and more than 0.75m saplings in 2013 in the area of Ketu Bandar. But, the results were not promising and didn’t show significant increase in the mangrove cover.

“A 2015 satellite study showed that the plantations resulted in only 1.6pc increase in the total mangrove cover. The reasons for this setback were mainly two; plantation was done in June in the midst of southwest monsoon characterised by high winds and high wave action, which may not have allowed proper rooting of seedlings.

“Secondly, only one species (*Rhizophora mucronata*) was planted, especially during 2009. The survival rate would have been better if *A.marina* had been planted along with it. Monocultures (the practice of growing a single species) are easily susceptible to environmental vicissitudes. Thirdly, the habitat and environmental conditions of the Indus delta do not favour the growth of *Rhizophora mucronata*,” it says.

On the effect of climatic changes, the author says, the phenomenon of sea level rise resulting from global warming might be contributing to subsidence of the delta. Citing various data, he argues that the inland retreat of mangroves along Karachi’s coastline in the face of sea level rise might not be possible owing to coastal installations. This won’t be the case, however, on the larger southern western part.

“The species’ composition of mangroves will probably remain the same, though their relative proportions of occurrence and zonation may change. Mangroves are resilient to climatic changes and in several areas (other countries) their growth has increased as a result of global warming. (Similarly) The increase in temperature, precipitation and carbon dioxide may increase mangrove growth in the Indus delta,” the author says.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1361040/mangrove-cover-shows-no-significant-increase-despite-plantation-efforts>

‘CLEAN KARACHI’ CAMPAIGN BEGINS IN DISTRICT CENTRAL

Dawn, October 04, 2017

KARACHI: Mayor Wasim Akhtar on Tuesday inaugurated the first phase of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation’s ‘Clean Karachi’ campaign in the Central district of the metropolis.

He said the KMC and Bahria Town launched the joint initiative with the resolve to clean the city by lifting tons of garbage.

Mayor Akhtar inaugurated the first phase of the campaign by driving a dumper during a programme held at the office of the District Municipal Corporation (DMC) Central.

MNA Kanwar Naveed Jameel, MPAs Jamal Ahmed, Azeem Farooqui, Mehfooz Yar Khan, Wasim Qureshi, and DMC Central Chairman Rehan Hashmi were present on the occasion.

The mayor thanked the real estate organisation for assisting the city as, he said, Karachi was neglected for the past eight years.

“The last eight years witnessed endless encroachments along storm-water drains and elsewhere in Karachi,” said Mr Akhtar.

He said local bodies were under the control of the Sindh government, thus, the success of municipal administration was in fact the success of the provincial government. However, he regretted the city authorities could not perform well alone due to meagre resources.

Speaking on the occasion, Bahria Town COO Admiral Ahmed Hayat said the campaign’s purpose was part of his company’s policy of developing a better Pakistan.

DMC Central Chairman Rehan Hashmi said 17 dumping points were designated for the campaign and garbage would be disposed in Jam Chakro site with the help of 100 vehicles.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1361512/clean-karachi-campaign-begins-in-district-central>

DEAL INKED WITH CHINESE COMPANY TO LIFT GARBAGE FROM TWO KARACHI DISTRICTS

Dawn, October 7th, 2017

KARACHI: Two more district municipal corporations (DMCs) of Karachi on Friday inked an agreement with a Chinese sanitation service group to lift piles of garbage in their limits as the Sindh local government minister hoped that the work would begin from next month.

The DMCs of Malir and Karachi West through their chairman and administrator, respectively, signed the agreement with the Hang Zhou Jin Jiang Group Sanitation Service Company Limited at the office of LG Minister Jam Khan Shoro.

Officials said that the agreement was signed after the two DMCs formally agreed to hand over the garbage lifting responsibilities to the Chinese sanitation group. The DMC Malir's council adopted a resolution as per the law, while the DMC West's administrator and the municipal commissioner agreed to the deal as it had not yet got its chairman because of controversy during the election.

The Sindh Solid Waste Management Board would be taking care of the whole process. The managing director of the board was also present during the signing ceremony and signed the document as the parent organisation to oversee the operations.

Another Chinese sanitation company was lifting garbage from the limits of DMCs South and East. However, the remaining two districts — Central and Korangi — could be included in the plan once their councils passed the mandatory resolutions.

According to the agreement, the Chinese firm would charge \$26 per metric ton of the garbage it would lift from the assigned land.

More than 200 vehicles and equipment would be used to dispose of the garbage, including thousands of tons of backlog waste.

The officials maintained that the existing sanitation staff of the two DMCs — as is being practiced in DMCs South and East — would be involved in the operations and they would get substantial increments on the basis of their performance.

Minister Shoro said on the occasion that the Pakistan Peoples Party's provincial government was committed to the promises it had made with the people for improving sanitation conditions in the city.

“Today's agreement signed by the Chinese firm and two more DMCs reflects the same endeavour,” he said, adding that the remaining districts would sign similar agreements with reputed international firms in near future.

He said the relevant authorities' first preference would be to clear out the backlog as well as getting rid of the trash generated on daily basis by shifting the waste to the designated garbage stations.

He said similar work in Karachi's South and East districts was continuing satisfactorily and the new agreement would help the city get cleaner and offer better hygienic conditions to its millions of citizens.

He said the Chinese sanitation group would complete the feasibility work of the two districts in a few days before the latest equipment arrived and formal operations were launched.

“We are trying our best to offer modern ways to turn the city into an attractive place for its citizens.”

He said the people of Karachi would soon witness an improvement in the state of the metropolis, which was the first priority of the government.

“It is just the beginning,” said the minister. “Karachi deserves the best, for which we have great plans. This city is the crown of Sindh and Pakistan,” he added.

He said the Sindh government was making similar plans for other cities of the province. According to him, cleanliness should be the foremost priority of the government of the day, which was what the leadership of the PPP sought to achieve as per its vision.

The minister said the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board was working on ways to expand similar operations to the remaining two districts of the city.

He said the people in Karachi South and East had already noticed a positive change in their areas where the Chinese firm was involved in better sanitation services.

He said time was not far when all citizens of Karachi would observe the city being cleaned through modern methods.

He said the provincial government was keenly seeking the support of all stakeholders in the city to make sure the metropolis was better served.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1362175>

NOTICE ISSUED TO HMC, TWO FACTORIES FINED

Dawn, October 8th, 2017

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) imposed a fine of Rs100,000 each on two industrial units in Kotri SITE area due to violations of environmental laws and issued a notice to Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (HMC) to stop unauthorised dumping of solid waste and its burning within the city.

Speaking to Dawn on Saturday, Sepa Hyderabad regional head and deputy director Muneer Ahmed Abbasi said that after issuance of the notices to two industrial units and personal hearing of their representatives, Sepa had to impose the fine because of their serious violations of the Sindh Environmental Protection Act (Sepa) 2014, rules and regulations.

He said that Gul Paper Mill and Fibertex Mill located at Kotri SITE area were fined total Rs200,000 for want of functional treatment plants, personal protective equipment and discharge of waste water ultimately into the KB Feeder through local drains.

He said the units were asked to act upon instructions, submit undertaking and make their respective treatment plants functional within 15 days.

He said that Sepa also issued a notice to the HMC on Friday to stop the unauthorised dumping of municipal solid waste and its burning within the city area and on bank of Phulleli Canal within its jurisdiction.

He said that the HMC representative, Municipal Commissioner Shahid Ali, appeared in personal hearing held at the office of Sepa director general Karachi on Oct 3 and explained his position regarding the violations.

He said that the municipal commissioner was directed to rectify the non-compliance with the environmental concerns about illegal dumping and burning of municipal solid waste on the bank of Phulleli Canal and its surroundings.

He said that as per directives of one-man judicial commission headed by Justice Mohammad Iqbal Kalhoro formed by the Supreme Court to monitor clean drinking water in Sindh, he (the municipal commissioner) should comply with laws and avoid practice of burning waste immediately.

He said that the HMC was given directions that it must evolve a comprehensive action plan for effective collection and disposal mechanism of waste, avoid disposal of waste into any freshwater body, avoid unauthorised dumping and burning of waste, ensure proper cleanliness and sanitation arrangements and produce the undertaking in this regard.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1362327/notice-issued-to-hmc-two-factories-fined>

November 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 27 Th TO DECEMBER 3rd 2017 TIME FOR ACTION

The Express Tribune, November 28th, 2017.

Enough of deploring Trump on withdrawing from The Paris Agreement. Enough of disseminating oodles of facts on global warming and climate change. Enough of keeping track of rising temperatures and sea levels in different parts of the world. Now is the time to actually do something. Now is the time to put a halt to the irrevocable threat of global warming that, if ignored as it is being, will prove to be a distressing tragedy. Now is the time to realise that green cover and trees are way more important than Orange, Green and Blue Line projects.

The sudden onset of toxic smog that has hit Pakistan's second-largest city consecutively for the second time has put lives of hundreds of people at risk. As proven last year, eyeing it as a trans-border phenomenon will not solve the problem. The crop burning in Indian terrain comprising Amritsar, Jalandhar and Bhatinda might be a very good reason for increased levels of particulate matter in air encapsulating Pakistan's Punjab but is not good enough to rationalise the phenomenon given that this practice is years old and so is the neighbourhood. It is true that the westward moving winds definitely carried straw particles with them, but what about the absence of rain for the past several months that has aggravated the situation to such an extent that heavy breathing and sore eyes has become a norm?

We need to rectify our facts on urgent basis. The Signal Free Project in Lahore bolted down 196 trees all along the route from Liberty roundabout to Fawara Chowk at Shadman. Those consumed by the

Canal Road widening project amounted to 1,300. And the ones grazed on by the all-famous Lahore Metro Train Project totals to 2,300. Are the authorities focusing on replacing these, let alone adding to the green cover of the city? The Lahore Development Authority, back in 2015, pledged to plant 6,200 new saplings in place of the felled ones to maintain the equilibrium. The equilibrium, however, has been long disturbed and commoved. The only counterpoise that can better the situation and disperse the poisonous smog is rain for which we need green trees that are nowhere to be seen.

Are we ready to learn any lesson from this? The answer is no. And the most uncomplicated barometer to gauge the intensity of this ignorance is the ongoing cutting of trees on our land. Karachi too is bearing the brunt of ill-planned civic projects for several years that have resulted in cutting down approximately 47,000 fully grown trees, the devastating results of which have lately surfaced in the form of annual heatwave and other unusual climatic lineaments. The air pollution caused by ever-decreasing precipitation and elevating level of fine particulate matter results in almost 60,000 deaths per annum. Are we even going to address this issue?

The list of projects that require the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency review of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) include those in energy sector, manufacturing and processing, mining and mineral processing, transport (airports, ports, railway works and highways or major roads), dams and irrigation, water supply and treatment, and waste disposal. It is still a mystery as to how these projects were even issued positive EIA reports that allowed for unplanned logging of trees. When such reports are meant to serve the purpose of assessing the environmental consequences that a proposed plan or project will have, how could our environment protection agencies unintentionally overlook or willingly neglect the dire aftermaths of such unnecessary projects, the trade-off of which is the toxic smog we all are breathing.

Putting blame on India and the vehicular exhaust is an easy way out; instead the amount of dust and other particulates in the air in Punjab should be estimated to articulate an efficient strategy. The solution is two-fold: either act now or get ready to become home to a myriad of respiratory and developing diseases.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1570406/6-time-for-action/>

REPORT REVEALS HOW SINDH HAS BEEN ROBBED OF ITS FORESTS

Dawn, November 29th, 2017

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: Giving an insight into how Sindh was robbed of its forests over the decades, a report recently submitted by the forest and wildlife secretary to the Supreme Court and the chief minister says that there has been an 80 per cent decline in the actual forest cover since 1971 and the present forest size of 100,000 acres — less than 0.3pc of the entire surface area — can't even be seen on a province-wide map.

Titled 'Fading forest of Sindh', the report describes "illegal encroachment of forests" as the biggest problem being faced by the department as it estimates that an alarming 145,245 acres of forestland is under illegal possession and "this trend is increasing day by day".

It also points to irregularities on part of the government and states that “the revenue department has also been making illegal allotments of land owned by the forest department and putting it to other institutional uses without any consent from the forest department.

“There are also instances where the forestland has been permanently transferred to private parties, in violation of state policy and neglecting clear-cut instructions of the superior courts issued from time to time. The extent of such land is also quite huge. According to the chief conservator of forests, 64,500 acres of land has been transferred away from the forest department,” it says.

The old records, according to the report, show that the total forest cover in Sindh was around 489,000 acres in the 1970s.

Excluding the present forest cover, the forests either illegally occupied or allotted, the remaining ‘forests’ have no vegetation today.

According to the report, forests in Sindh saw a steady decline over the past 47 years. The reasons leading to this situation, it says, were both internal and external. The department started decaying due to corruption, poor governance, favouritism, politicisation and weak control as well as due to external interventions in the shape of faulty policies and lack of political will to reform the department. All these factors acted as a catalyst for deforestation.

“Tens of thousands of trees were brought down and sold commercially to generate revenue under the so-called utilisation policy. While generating financial gains, the department completely closed its eyes to the environmental loss (that would occur) due to chopping of standing trees. The policy was to cut the trees and sell with utter disregard to regenerating the forests,” it says.

Another gruesome outcome of this policy, the report says, emerged in the shape of illegal encroachment. Since there was no effective regeneration policy, most of the land which had tree cover on it was left vacant and devoid of any plantation, leaving it at the mercy of nearby landowners to gradually take over the land for agriculture purpose.

“The department, due to various reasons known to all, remained indifferent at best. The mode of taking over state land gradually changed from surreptitious to blatant; whereas the use of forestland in most cases remained agriculture barring few instances where forest land is being used for residential and commercial purpose in connivance with local revenue authorities. The extent of such encroachments is massive,” it says.

The report also provides a district-wise breakup of forest land under illegal possession that includes area illegally allotted by the revenue department.

Lease policy

On the lease policy introduced in 2004-05 by the government in an attempt to get back forests through agro-forestry, the report says that it was never implemented in true spirit owing to political interference and incompetence of department’s field staff.

Leases, it says, have so far been granted to around 3,500 lessees, allowing them to use nearly 72,000 acres of forestland (the land granted on lease was often without standing trees) made available for agro-forestry by the cabinet.

There have been at least two issues with leases, according to the report. In many cases leases have been granted to benefit the potential lessee as land with standing green trees was given away for agro-forestry. Second, the more important problem is violation of lease terms and insensitivity of the field staff towards such violations.

“The divisional forest officer has the authority to cancel the lease grant on his own. But, regrettably it is submitted that the department is lagging behind on this aspect as well. In many cases, if a lease has been cancelled, the spirit of authority was often not to secure a forest but to save individual’s interests.”

On illegally encroached land, the report talks of difficulties in recovering the encroached forestland and post-recovery issues as has been indicated by recent efforts.

“The outcome was not more than 7 to 10pc retrieval of the encroached land. Most of which is still devoid of forests due to lack of resources and eventually its environmental value is zero,” the report says.

The report suggests that illegally encroached land should be recovered and put for agro-forestry auction for five years, with stricter and more effective lease terms of growing at least 50pc of forest on the land granted on lease.

“If the department is able to implement this on entire encroached land, it means in five years’ time this will fetch about Rs2 billion to Rs2.5bn (at the existing rate) apart from a forest cover of 72,000 acres. The land, which is not auctioned, will be retrieved from encroachers using state machinery and law enforcement agencies,” the report suggests.

It also recommends GIS mapping of all forests with periodical monitoring, community participation in forest management as well as revision of lease policy.

“No tree shall be allowed to be cut down in any ordinary situation. In case it is extremely expedient due to development activity then the executing department shall be responsible to plant and raise 100 new trees for one tree removed, at a spot identified by the respective district forest officer,” it says.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1373475>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 20 Th TO NOVEMBER 26 Th 2017

THE COAL PROJECT

Dawn, November 21, 2017

THARPARKAR is not like the Sahara Desert. In the valleys between its sand dunes there are millions of trees (that nature has created and sustained over centuries) and rain-fed agriculture. After the rains its rangeland, which is known locally as gowcher, supports a variety of grasses on which its 6.3 million animals graze.

The area of the Tharparkar District is 19,000 square kilometres of which 9,000 has been marked for the coal project. Under the project, different companies will extract coal and turn it into energy. At present the work of Engro is the most advanced.

Land for the project and its various components has to be acquired under the Land Acquisition Act for which only formal land owners can receive compensation and not haris and landless labour. The application of the Land Acquisition Act means that the land owners and local communities lose all future claims to the land.

The extraction of coal is through 'pit mining'. Pits of over one square kilometre are being excavated to a depth of 120 metres, for that is where the coal lies. The excavated earth is being converted into mounds that can be higher than 40m.

During excavation three water aquifers are encountered. One is the rainwater aquifer at a depth of around 50m, which is in most cases potable. Much of the population of Thar has access to it through family or communal dug wells. The second aquifer is saline and is encountered at a depth of around 120m. The third aquifer is the deep aquifer which has been created over millions of years and is normally conserved as an asset.

To access the coal, water from these aquifers has to be drained out. At present, 27 wells are operative, 24 hours of the day, to pump out 30 to 35 million cubic metres of water of the Engro site. Since the water of the potable and saline aquifers is mixed, it is no longer suitable for drinking or agriculture. As a cure, the project proposes the introduction of crops that can be cultivated using saline water. However, this can only benefit the displaced population and its animals if a major land reform granting them land ownership is implemented. Managing this would take decades, and also there is no political will nor wish for it.

Space for the disposal of the pumped water has also to be found. At present, the water from the Engro site alone is being drained to a 1,500-acre depression near the village of Gorono, whose residents have been protesting for the last many months against their land being used as storage for what they consider to be poisoned and, as such, unsafe and unusable water.

It is generally agreed that the pit mining process will create air pollution, destroy all trees in the area of the coal project and will also reduce an already overgrazed govt. substantially. To counter this, the project has an ambitious tree plantation programme. However, to rejuvenate so thoroughly a devastated region and make it available for productive purposes is next to impossible. In the case of the US and China, only 10 to 12 per cent of trees planted under their coal projects have survived and nine million hectares of land have been turned into unproductive deserts.

The loss of potable water means that the population will have to be dependent on other sources. The project proposes that osmosis plants be set up to provide water to a thirsty human and animal population. In February this year, there were over 800 reverse osmosis (RO) plants in Thar of which only around 140 were in working condition. A 10 cubic metre plant maintenance and operation costs about Rs4m per year. Given the subsidies involved, this proposal will not be sustainable.

Engro has helped in creating the Thar Development Foundation which is going to provide schools, healthcare and skills for the population of Thar. This is welcome. However, this cannot overcome the environmental and socioeconomic repercussions that are in the process of taking place in Thar, where

a rapidly increasing and externally controlled real estate and services sector is leading to massive unplanned urbanisation whose main victims are the landless communities, flora and fauna.

What Thar needs today is an integrated vision for the future of both its 9,000 sq km of the coal mines and of the remaining 10,000 sq km. A beginning can be made by working on a mitigation plan that deals with the larger socioeconomic- and environment-related issues. However, such a plan can only be useful if respect and affection for the Thari population and its culture and history are an integral part of it, and if it does not seek to gloss over the negative aspects of the coal project or seek to justify them.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1371801>

CM SEEKS REGIONAL COOPERATION TO TACKLE SMOG ISSUE

Business Recorder, 22 November 2017

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif has sought a regional cooperation agreement to tackle the issue of smog and environment pollution.

Shahbaz has written a letter to his Indian counterpart and invited him to enter a regional cooperation agreement on the issue of smog. "The people of both Pakistani and Indian Punjab have been facing the problem of smog during the months of October and November," he said, adding: "It goes without saying that the smog has an adverse impact on health, especially on the old and the children; on agriculture in the form of delayed sowing of wheat and damage to potato and other crops and causes traffic accidents."

Shahbaz in the letter explained that the problem of smog now affects Lahore, New Delhi and regions beyond the two cities. Shahbaz also said in the letter that it is in the interest of people of both the Punjab that a collective effort should be made towards identifying technologies and business methods that may eliminate the need to burn rice-stubble and help control smog formation.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/11/22/13-page/683601-news.html>

DEFORESTATION OF MARGALLA HILLS: FIA SUMMONS THREE CDA OFFICIALS ON NOV 25

The Express Tribune, November 23rd, 2017.

ISLAMABAD: Following directives from the Supreme Court, the Federal Investigation Agency has formally launched an enquiry into deforestation in the Margalla Hills National Park, summoning three senior officials of the civic body to appear before its investigators.

Three directors general of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) have been told to appear before a Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) investigation officer on November 25.

A source privy to the development told the Express News that a letter, signed by FIA Anti-Corruption Deputy Director Rana Naveed, has been written to CDA's Member Administration which reads that the directors general of land, enforcement and environment are required to appear before an investigating officer of the agency for enquiry into the deforestation on the Margalla Hills.

The officials have been asked to appear together with all relevant records at the FIA Police Station.

The source said 39,000 acres of forest is supposed to be protected from deforestation and construction by the CDA.

The Supreme Court has tasked the FIA to look into the matter and fix responsibility in case deforesting is proved, the source said.

The FIA will look into whether any illegal or unmonitored human activities in the forested area have threatened the forest ecosystem. These activities include the felling of trees for sale or domestic consumption, human-induced fires to cut the land among other actions.

The investigation agency will also thrash out the role of CDA officials regarding illegal construction and deforestation. It will also probe whether CDA officials were involved in allowing crushing units to operate on the hills.

The source added that the park has immense ecological significance and is a protected area. It had been established in April 1980 by the federal government to preserve the natural landscape and natural biodiversity around the capital.

Moreover, people living in and around the park used to depend on its natural resources for subsistence. However, in 1999, CDA acquired the entire park.

While people were barred from altering the forest or from constructing in it, some areas of the park continues to face deforestation along with misuse of other natural resources, creeping human settlement, overgrazing and erosion.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1565886/1-deforestation-margalla-hills-fia-summons-three-cda-officials-nov-25/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 13 Th TO NOVEMBER 19 Th 2017
SMOG CONTINUES TO DISRUPT RAIL, ROAD AND AIR TRAFFIC
November 13, 2017

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: Smog and fog on Sunday assumed alarming proportions in Punjab before they could be washed away by rain expected by the meteorologists and the Punjab environment protection department in the next two days.

There was marked burning of eyes and throat irritation as a pal of thick smog hung over Lahore throughout the day. Social media termed Lahore the dirtiest city in the world on Sunday, creating additional problems for children, the elderly and those suffering from pulmonary diseases.

The EPD officials contested the declaration saying it was not based on any authentic data. But they themselves confirmed the presence of high level of smog-causing pollution in the air in Lahore.

According to the department's readings, the average particulate matter 2.5 in Lahore was 330 milligram per meter cubic as against the yearly average of 35. The level of particulate matter -10 was 370 as against the tolerable 150. Similarly, the oxygen nitrogen (vehicular pollution) was 120 as against the desired 40.

"Yes, it is high. But, the major contributor is vehicular pollution being caused by huge number of vehicles and their adulterated oil," said EPD Director Tauqeer Qureshi.

The level of dust particles was not alarming and contribution from the paddy stubble burning had come almost to zero, he said.

Meanwhile, as smog perturbed people much more than in the last two days, the Met department indicated the incursion of a strong westerly wave during Sunday. Rain and snowfall over the hills would be generated by the wave and with it smog would be over next week, it said.

In the first instance, the system was expected to give scattered rain-thunderstorm with snowfall over the hills is expected in Balochistan, including Quetta, KP, Fata, Islamabad, upper Punjab, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan on Monday. Isolated rain-thunderstorm in Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, Bahawalpur, Karachi, Sukkur and Larkana divisions is also expected where it will remain dense foggy/smoggy over the plains of Punjab during morning hours.

Lahore and other Punjab divisions like Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Faisalabad, Sargodha, Sahiwal are likely to receive the rain on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Earlier, smog and fog continued to affect life in the length and breadth of Punjab and in the plains of KP and Sindh, disrupting rail, road and air traffic.

Motorway that remained closed on Saturday night at various points, was again closed to all types of traffic from Lahore to Kot Momin, Pindi Bhattian to Faisalabad and from here to Gojra at 8pm on Sunday due to extremely poor visibility.

Visibility was also very poor at the national highway from Lahore to Pattoki, Sahiwal and Chichawatni.

Airport authorities reported suspension of the entire flight schedule due to heavy fog at the Lahore airport on Saturday night. The condition at other airports in Punjab too was critical, forcing cancellation or delays of a number of incoming and outgoing flights, it was stated.

A PIA spokesman indicated cancellation of many incoming flights including [from] Paris, Riyadh, Tokyo and Abu Dhabi due to unfavourable aviation conditions.

He reported cancellation of PK 342, PK 343 Karachi-Faisalabad-Karachi, PK 313 Lahore-Karachi, PK 683, PK 684 Lahore-Multan-Lahore, PK 582, PK 583 Karachi-Rahim Yar Khan-Karachi on Monday.

The rerouted flights include PK 588, PK 589 now operating Karachi-Multan-Islamabad-Multan-Karachi (delayed by two hours and 45 minutes), PK 763 operating Karachi-Jeddah instead of

Faisalabad-Jeddah, PK 296 operating Abu Dhabi-Lahore instead of Abu Dhabi-Rahim Yar Khan-Lahore, PK 340, PK 341 now operating Karachi-Lahore-Karachi instead of Faisalabad.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370145>

LAHORE COURT LASHES OUT AT GOVT FOR INACTION ON SMOG ISSUE

Dawn, November 14th, 2017

Wajih Ahmad Sheikh

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court on Monday lashed out at the Punjab government for not responding to the prevailing crisis of smog in an appropriate manner rather being unprepared and ignorant of the environmental challenges.

Chief Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah even reminded an officer of the Environment Protection Department (EPD) that the authorities failed to take emergency actions.

The CJ was hearing a petition moved by Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf leader Walid Iqbal through Advocate Sheraz Zaka questioning the government's inefficiency to control the smog for the second consecutive year.

"Life of citizens is being reduced and you people (authorities) have not awakened from slumber," the chief justice observed with regret when the officer failed to furnish latest figures of Air Quality Index (AQI) in the provincial metropolis.

Justice Shah said the government should have made the ratings of the AQI public but it was unable to present the statistics before the court even.

When asked, the EPD's officer told the court that six machines had been installed in Lahore to measure the AQI. He said it required declaration of health emergency if the AQI crossed the rating of 430.

Barrister Sarah Belal, amicus curie in the case, told the court that the smog had been causing health-related issues among the citizens. She said its effects especially on school-going children were irreversible.

Referring to figures being circulated on social media, the chief justice observed that Pakistan had crossed the minimum international standards of air pollution and the authorities had not been sensitised to the dangers.

In a dialogue with the government's lawyer, the CJ said the court just wanted to know as to what the authorities learned from the last year's spell of smog and the measures adopted since then to control it. It appeared that all working of the government was paper based only, Justice Shah said.

The CJ adjourned further hearing for today (Tuesday) and summoned the secretary (environment) along with complete record of the latest ratings of the air quality index. The judge also sought assistance of Advocate Rafay Alam, an environmentalist.

Earlier, the petitioner's counsel argued that the EPD miserably failed to take measures regarding the implementation of smog policy. He said the lack of performance by the department resulted in increase in pollution levels across the province.

Advocate Zaka pointed out that following massive smog in London during 1952 environmental laws were implemented and Clean Air Act 1956 was also promulgated in addition to blanket closure of coal industry by the then prime minister.

He said the government introduced the smog policy on the direction of the court but was not taking effective steps for its implementation.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370424>

LHC SUMMONS ENVIRONMENT SECY

LAHORE: Since the Punjab government has failed to submit details about the measures it took to deal with the smog issue in the province, Lahore High Court Chief Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah summoned the environment secretary on Tuesday (today), along with the complete record.

The chief justice was hearing a petition moved by Advocate Sheraz Zaka against environmental pollution and smog. He also expressed serious concerns over the Punjab government's negligence in taking the required steps.

"The Punjab government's performance is just limited to the official documents," Shah remarked. "It is simply awful that the environment department has not been able to measure the level of smog in the air."

Barrister Sara Belal, who was appointed as amicus curie, told the court that a health emergency should be enforced in the province and certain departments, such as environment, should be closed.

Earlier, the environment department presented a notified copy of the smog policy. The petitioner said earlier people did not have pure drinking water and now the air is also not safe. He added smog had also been affecting animals.

Zaka requested the court to order the Punjab government to take effective measures to control pollution and enforce the smog policy to protect the environment.

It seems the Punjab government's efforts to deal with the smog have gone in vain as the outpatient departments of all major hospitals are overwhelmed by the number of patients suffering from respiratory diseases.

"It doesn't matter if people wear facemasks or not, they are getting affected by the dense smog.

Since the smog issue started, I always wear a facemask before going out, but I don't think it works," says Faisal Town resident Sheikh Saqib. "I suffered respiratory problems despite adopting all precautionary measures."

In order to pressure the government to take the smog issue seriously, a small group of students protested outside the Lahore Press Club on Monday. They chanted slogans against the government's

failure to address the environmental woes affecting the province. The protesters demanded that government declare a health emergency and take steps to implement strict environmental policies.

National School of Arts student Ali Imran said that the government has failed to enforce environmental regulations. “Moreover, it did not take action against industries, power plants, construction contractors and waste management companies which caused smog in the city.”

A doctor at the Lahore General Hospital (LGH), speaking on the condition of anonymity, told The Express Tribune that not only LGH, but doctors of all major hospitals were dealing with the patients suffering from respiratory problems.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1557544/1-lhc-summons-environment-secy/>

SMOG BADLY AFFECTS BUSINESS ACTIVITIES IN MANY PARTS OF THE COUNTRY

Business Recorder, 11 November 2017

Abdul Rasheed Azad

ISLAMABAD: The continued smog situation in Punjab and other parts of the country has not only created immense problems for the people but is also causing serious financial losses to the national economy, as it has badly hurt business activities and delayed harvesting of many crops.

The smog situation in all the major cities of Punjab has resulted in flight suspension, closure of highways, delayed harvesting and cultivation of crops, health costs, and standstill educational activities.

The smog has also forced Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to postpone Pakistan West Indies T20 International Series which was scheduled in late November 2017 but now it will be held in March 2018.

According to experts, the smog situation is escalating in Pakistan due to various factors including high industrialization of two biggest neighbouring countries China and India as well installation of fossil fuel based power plants in India and Pakistan, huge construction activities in the region, and burning of paddy grass in fields in Indian and Pakistani Punjab to vacate land for Rabbi crop cultivation. According to experts, the change in weather cycle as a result of climate change and no timely rains in the region have intensified the situation.

When contacted, senior official of Pakistan Metrological Department Abdul Rashid said that the winter rains started in parts of the country will bring relief from weeks-long smog persisting in various parts of the country and India.

Rashid said that a three-day spell of rain started in Balochistan on Monday and it will end the smog that has been caused by dust, the burning of crops, industry and brick kilns.

According to health officials, the smog causes respiratory and eye problems, and has led to poor visibility, resulting in highway accidents.

According to the officials of the Punjab government, over 300 first information reports (FIRs) have been filed against violators and 80 people have been arrested due to stubble and solid waste burning. The officials said that in Punjab hundreds of pollution-causing units have been stopped, 15,718 smoke emitting vehicles have been confiscated, and a total of about hundreds of thousands rupees fines have been imposed.

Officials from the provincial government have blamed Indian farmers, saying they have been burning the stubbles of rice crops after the harvest, which caused the smog in Pakistan, but some experts believe that pollution and mismanagement to curb it has caused the smog.

A scientist Imran Jarral associated with Thar Coal Project said that in past years the smog was caused by the burning of loads of shuck remains by Indian and Pakistani farmers, but now inland large scale construction activities to construct various coal-fired power plants have also played a critical part causing air pollution.

Jawad Latif Chughtai, a climate change activist based in Lahore, said that the situation in Lahore has worsened following some courts' stay orders to stop the government of Punjab from completing the construction of Orange Line Train. He said that the people of the Lahore have become the victim of the political differences between ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) and an opposition party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. The project is still incomplete which should have been completed in 2015, he added and said that hundreds of thousands people since 2014 in Lahore have become prey to various breath-related problems.

According to latest weather forecast issued by the PMD, rain-thunderstorm with snowfall over the hills is expected in Balochistan, FATA, Islamabad, Upper Punjab, isolated places in Karachi and Larkana divisions, South Punjab, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan during the next 24 hours.

Dense foggy/smoggy conditions are expected in plain areas of Punjab during night and morning hours.

A Capital Development Authority (CDA) official said that CDA takes strict action against illegal constructions & encroachments in zone III to avoid destruction of greenery & forest and preserve the natural beauty of the federal capital. Talking about ongoing construction of roads and cutting of trees in various parts of the federal capital, he said that the authority plants new trees to replace the fallen trees, adding that new plants will take time to grow but the authority has taken all the precautionary measures in this connection.

According to PMD officials, smog has mainly disturbed the life in southern and central Punjab with hitting Lahore and surrounding districts. They said, "Lahore's air is unsafe and toxic, but just how toxic a few of us know."

Air pollution is a silent, invisible and, until now, an unbeatable killer. India's Delhi is grappling with the same public health emergency, smog – a thick, soupy mixture hanging over the city.

According to monthly outlook for November 2017 of PMD, the El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) are in neutral phase. Westerlies are running on their normal track of mid-latitude.

The PMD has prepared outlook for November based upon regional and global indicators incorporating the climate system dynamics. Rainfall is expected to remain less than normal during the month in the country.

As per monthly outlook, less than normal rainfall is expected in most parts of Pakistan during the month. Due to less than normal expected precipitation, surface and ground water resources may experience further depletion. Due to gradual fall in temperature, snow and glacier melt contribution to Indus will be minimal during the month. Water management authorities and users are advised for judicious use of water stocks to meet the requirements of the Rabi sowing.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/11/14/3-page/681957-news.html>

OVER 170 BOOKED OVER DEFORESTATION IN GB

Dawn, November 15, 2017

GILGIT: The Gilgit police have registered cases against 172 people, booking some of them under the anti-terrorism act, for their alleged involvement in illegal cutting of trees and resisting police action to thwart smuggling of the felled timber out of the area.

The police have started a search operation to arrest the accused.

According to police, illegal deforestation had been taken place recently in Ghasho Pahoot and Chakarkote forests of Sai Juglote in Gilgit district, and that the felled timber was planned to be smuggled to other areas of the region.

Recently, the Gilgit district administration decided to launch an operation against illegal cutting of forest, and dispatched a large number of personnel to the area to take action against the outlaws and confiscate illegally cut wood.

According to the FIRs lodged in the Pardibangla police station, when the police reached the area and started shifting the illegal timber from the area, the outlaws blocked the link road of the area by placing electricity polls and wires on it and diverting a water channel to the road.

The FIR said damage of electricity system, road and water channel caused heavy losses to the exchequer and difficulties for local residents.

The FIRs have been registered against 72 nominated local residents belonging to various tribes and 100 unknown persons allegedly involved in illegal cutting of trees and creating hurdles for police.

An official of Gilgit police on condition of anonymity told Dawn that some of accused had been booked under sections of anti-terrorism act.

It merits a mention here that the forests fall in the constituency of Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman.

Taking notice of massive deforestation in Gilgit-Baltistan, the National Accountability Bureau had recently arrested four GB forest department officials for their alleged involvement in illegal timber cutting in the region and transporting the same to other areas of Pakistan despite a ban thus, causing a loss of Rs225 million to the exchequer.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370664>

UNLOVED VULTURES FIGHT FOR THEIR SURVIVAL IN PAKISTAN

The Express Tribune, November 15, 2017

CHANGA MANGA: Once a common sight in the skies, today the white-backed vulture is facing extinction – its population devastated by the use of industrial drugs to breed the cattle whose carcasses they traditionally feed on.

Bird numbers have plummeted by more than 99 per cent since the 1990s, according to the local branch of the World Wildlife Fund [WWF], which is desperately attempting to ensure the species does not die out.

“Once vultures were found in a very good number in Pakistan,” explains Warda Javed, coordinator for the WWF backed Vulture Restoration Project. But due to several threats – principally the use of the anti-inflammatory drug Diclofenac, which causes kidney failure the birds are dying out.

In a vast screened enclosure in the eastern forest of Changa Manga, about 100 kilo metres from cultural capital Lahore, some 20 Gyps Bengalensis – or the white-backed vultures – wait patiently for their dinner, traditionally made of donkey and goat meat.

With plumage of white and ash grey, their powerful beaks fitted to long pink necks, they watch from their wooden perches, some ten metres above the ground. They boast a wingspan of two metres and weigh up to 7.5 kilo grammes.

Locked up, at least they are safe: The goal is to keep the species alive until outside conditions improve enough for them to be released.

Diclofenac is used as a painkiller by local livestock breeders. Vultures consume the meat off the carcasses of the cattle and so ingest the drugs, which wreak havoc with their systems.

The WWF is lobbying authorities, veterinarians and pharmaceutical companies for the replacement of Diclofenac with an alternative, Meloxicam, which is safer for the birds. Diclofenac was banned in neighbouring India in 2006 after it was also blamed for destroying the vulture population there, which went from millions to just a few thousand in little more than a decade, but it remains in use in Pakistan.

At the Vulture Restoration Project in Changa Manga they are playing the long game. Four vulture babies were born in the last two years through the centre’s breeding programme, but it will be years before they are released into the wild.

“Up till 2020, we don’t have any release plans until we have a controlled environment outside this centre as well,” Javed explains, warning that even if Diclofenac is banned in the country, other drugs used in cattle breeding can cause problems for the birds.

There are eight species of vultures, two of which – the white-backed vulture and the Indian vulture – are critically endangered.

Principally scavengers that feast on carcasses, the birds have long been associated with death. An issue compounded on the Indian subcontinent as they have also been used to dispose of human remains as part of the centuries-old tradition of Dakhma, the funeral process of the Zoroastrian community known as the Parsis.

Bodies were first put on top of mountains and later on placed on top of specially-built structures known as 'Towers of Silence', where the flesh was devoured by the birds. But the Parsi community is dwindling in India and Pakistan, and the custom is fading.

The association with death and misfortune, however, still lingers making it hard to galvanise public sympathy for the creatures' dire plight.

Fatima Arif of WWF-Pakistan concedes that for most people, vultures evoke negative emotions, but is hopeful the charity can help them improve their image. "We are trying to gather the general public to let them know that the myths that are generally associated with this species are not really based on any fact but they are just folklore," she said. "Vultures are very shy birds, they are very caring parents."

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1557729/1-unloved-vultures-fight-survival-pakistan/>

SMOG DISAPPEARS — BUT INDUSTRIAL UNITS STILL CLOSED

The Express Tribune, November 16th, 2017.

The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) has demanded that the Punjab government immediately reopen all those industrial units that were closed on the "baseless" grounds of smog.

Industrial closure in the wake of smog had increased the ranks of unemployed in the province as thousands of workers were working in these units, it said.

"Closure of industries is sheer injustice as it is targeted to hide incompetency of the government departments concerned," said LCCI Acting President Zeshan Khalil in a statement on Wednesday.

Khalil said the LCCI had repeatedly made it clear that industries were not responsible for smog, adding various factors were playing a role and the major one was delay in rains which was a natural process and industries had nothing to do with it.

He pointed out that deforestation, smoke emitted by millions of vehicles and stubble burning were playing havoc with the environment, but instead of controlling these factors, the environment department had shifted the blame on to industries.

The LCCI acting president noted that industrial closure was causing a huge damage to the businesses which were already working in difficult conditions. Apart from this, thousands of daily-wage workers are struggling to make both ends meet while the government is losing revenue.

"Although the smog has almost disappeared after rains in the province, the issue cannot be resolved until and unless true reasons are found and tackled," he remarked.

Khalil offered the Lahore Chamber's assistance, saying it was ready to play its role by holding seminars and workshops in order to create awareness amongst the masses.

He asked Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif to take notice of the issue and direct the environment department to immediately reopen the closed industrial units as their closure and large-scale unemployment was against the provincial government's vision.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1559586/2-smog-disappears-industrial-units-still-closed/>

INTERACTIVE MAP SHOWS AIR QUALITY IN EUROPE

Dawn, November 17th, 2017

PARIS: An interactive map that makes it possible to check air quality in real time across Europe, where air pollution has been linked to hundreds of thousands of premature deaths every year, went live on Thursday.

Dubbed the "European Air Quality Index" and launched by the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the European Commission, the map gathers hourly data from more than 2,000 monitoring stations across Europe.

"Air pollution is an invisible killer, so the air quality index is needed to inform European citizens on the state of the air they breathe," EU Environment Commissioner Karmenu Vella said in a statement.

Stations are marked on the map with coloured lights ranging from light green to dark red, which indicates the level of at least one of these pollutants is "very

bad": ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, PM10 — particles measuring less than 10 microns — and smaller PM2.5 particles, which can enter the lungs and even the bloodstream.

Grey spots appear in several EEA member states such as Italy, Greece, Iceland and Turkey, because they do not transmit their data in real time.

"It's important that citizens are aware that yes, we've done quite a bit in Europe on air pollution, we've seen significant improvement over the last decade... but we're not there yet," EEA executive director Hans Bruyninckx said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370971/interactive-map-shows-air-quality-in-europe>

AMNESTY FOR DISPOSAL OF TIMBER IN DIAMER

Dawn, November 18, 2017

GILGIT: The Gilgit-Baltistan Council has notified last amnesty scheme for the disposal of both the legally and illegally-cut timber in Diamer district within a year.

In this regard, the council's Islamabad secretariat sent a letter to GB chief secretary on Thursday, directing him to ensure disposal of felled timber in Diamer district in 12 months.

The letter a copy of which is available with Dawn informed GB chief secretary that formulation of policies for the disposal of illegally-cut timber of private forests in Diamer district should be discontinued in future, as the timber disposal policies had failed to stop the pace of illegal cutting of forests.

The letter mentioned that this would be the last amnesty scheme and in future all illegally-cut timber would be confiscated by the GB forest department and the timber would be auctioned within three months.

The letter said the GB Council during its 11th session held on Oct 25 in Skardu under the chairmanship of Chairman GB Council, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, had approved the transportation of legally and illegally-cut timber from Diamer to other parts of the country as per mechanism formulated on the payment of all usual taxes and fines on illegal timber.

The letter said the government allowed disposal of the leftover legal timber measuring 0.967 million cubic feet subject to verification on case to case basis within 12 months.

The illegally-cut timber measuring 1.802 million cubic feet is allowed to be released only after imposing fine as per formulated rates and to be disposed of within 12 months, the letter said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1371292>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 6Th TO NOVEMBER 12Th 2017

EIGHT KILLED IN SMOG-RELATED ACCIDENTS

Dawn, November 6th, 2017

LAHORE: Eight people were killed and six were injured in smog-related accidents across Punjab on Sunday.

In Bahawalpur, three motorcycle riders were killed when a speeding bus hit their vehicle on Bahawalpur-Yazman road near Yazman, about 30km from here.

According to Yazman police, a passenger coach was going from Ahmedpur East to Faisalabad via Multan. When it reached near Adda 6/DB, its driver could not see a motorcycle coming from the opposite direction due to smog and the coach collided with it. As a result of the collision, three riders of the motorcycle, Ehtesham, Talha and Shehzad, were killed on the spot. The bus driver managed to flee from the scene. Yazman police sent the bodies for postmortem to the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital (THQ) and registered a case against the driver.

In an accident in Jhang district, two youths died and as many were injured when a truck collided with a trailer on Jhang-Khushab road due to smog early morning.

The truck was going to Jhang from Khushab. When it reached near Adda Mari Shah Sakhira, it collided with trailer due to poor visibility. Resultantly, Shahid (22) died on the spot while three persons, identified as Imran (15), Altaf and Mazhar, all residents of village Wasu Astana of Athara Hazari, were injured. The injured were being shifted to the THQ Hospital Athara Hazari when Imran succumbed to his injuries.

In Lahore, a motorcyclist was killed and his wife injured when a speeding tractor-trolley hit them at Kahna due to dense smog in the evening.

Police said Waris, 40, and his wife, Nadia, were travelling on a road when a speeding tractor-trolley hit them.

The couple fell on the road and suffered critical injuries. They were taken to hospital where Waris succumbed to his injuries and his wife was said to be stable.

In the Gujranwala area, a milkman was killed and three van passengers were injured in an accident involving a truck and a van due to fierce fog and smog near Qila Mustafabad.

According to reports, the van driver was unable to see the truck before it because of the smog. As a result, the van hit the truck from its rear side. The milkman, Muhammad Ashraf, who was sitting on the front seat of the van died on the spot and three passengers received minor injuries. Rescue 1122 reached the spot and gave first aid to the injured.

In Toba Tek Singh, a youth died in an accident caused by smog on the Multan-Faisalabad road near Chak 256 GB Philour.

Rajana police said Ihsanul Haq of Chak 255/GB Madehpur was on his way on motorcycle when he failed to see the bus coming from Multan due to poor visibility near Chak 256 GB Philour. The bus hit his motorcycle and as a result he was critically wounded. He was being shifted to the DHQ hospital when he expired.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1368622/eight-killed-in-smog-related-accidents>

PUNJAB TO DISCUSS SMOG REMEDIAL MEASURES WITH CENTRE ON 15TH

Dawn, November 6th, 2017

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: As the persisting dense smog permeated Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Sunday, authorities in Punjab began preparing for a meeting with the federal government on Nov 15, seeking measures that could reduce air pollution such as a dialogue with India over the crop residue burning by its Punjab farmers.

Fog develops over the plains of Punjab when there is no rain, temperatures start dropping and humidity increases in the beginning of winter. But ever increasing pollutants are turning it into smog to the detriment of public health for the past couple of years.

Smog is a problem particularly in Punjab cities — such as Lahore — close to India. Officials of the departments concerned in Punjab largely blame smoke and particulate matter from burning of rice crop residue in Indian Punjab for the phenomenon. There are local contributions too, but officials claim they are being reduced considerably through regulation.

“We are submitting our suggestions to the Ministry of Climate Change for controlling air pollution and smog...through medium and long-range measures, including asking India to convince its farmers to stop burning the crop stubble. We can talk to India on the issue under the Mali and Saarc Declarations,” Environment Secretary Saif Anjum told Dawn.

As short-term measures, he said, his department had controlled factory emissions and made other departments check vehicular or dust pollution. As a result, local contribution to fog had been reduced, he claimed while showing latest figures of the air quality monitoring units recently set up in Lahore.

The secretary said Punjab would ask the federal government to fix vehicular engine standards and allow only quality oil. “Sulphur content in oil should be 50PPM (particle per million), but ours has 5,000PPM. Sulphur in the air reduces visibility and becomes sulphuric acid together with humidity. Cities having its critical limits in the air receive acid rain,” he said.

Smog or fog continued to affect life in the length and breadth of Punjab, also covering upper Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Sunday. Rail, road and air traffic was disrupted from Peshawar to Sindh. The impure environment burnt eyes and caused throat irritation.

Motorway and National Highway Authority spokesman Imran Shah said GT Road remained fog bound from Peshawar to Lahore on Saturday night, reducing visibility to 20 to 40 metres at many places. The national highway too remained blanketed with fog from Lahore to Sadiqabad. Traffic moved slow and in lines to avoid accidents during the night.

Motorway remained closed from Pindi Bhattian to Faisalabad and from Lahore to Gojra, from Peshawar to Shakai, from Lahore to Kot Momin and from Lahore to Khanewal and Multan due to dense fog that drastically reduced visibility. Traffic was allowed on Sunday early morning.

Mr Shah again reported closure of motorway from Pindi Bhattian to Faisalabad and from Lahore to Gojra at 8pm. Fog had also reduced visibility from 50 to 60 metres from Kot Momin to Sial Morra and from Lahore to Khanqa Dogran.

He advised people to avoid unnecessary travel, especially during night, fix fog lights on their vehicles and drive slowly and in lines.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1368659/punjab-to-discuss-smog-remedial-measures-with-centre-on-15th>

FRACTION OF BUDGET FOR ADDRESSING MALNUTRITION

The Express Tribune, November 6th, 2017.

With over half of the country's population affected by micronutrient deficiencies, it is a surprise that Pakistan is still spending only a fraction of its annual budget on nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions.

This was revealed by the Global Nutrition Report 2017 launched late last week.

The report — which tracks global nutrition targets including national progress against globally agreed targets for maternal, infant and young child nutrition (MIYCN) — showed that Pakistan spends only

around 3.7 per cent of its national budget on nutrition interventions despite having around 52 per cent of the population affected by micronutrient deficiencies.

By contrast regionally, Bangladesh spends 8.2 per cent of its budget, Nepal 13.1 per cent on nutrition interventions.

The report's analysis shows that 88 per cent of countries face a serious burden of either two or three forms of malnutrition – childhood stunting, anaemia in women of reproductive age and or overweight adult women.

Moreover, it notes that no country in the world is on track to meet targets to reduce anaemia among women of reproductive age, with the number of women with anaemia actually increasing since 2012.

Pakistan, it said, also shows no progress in reducing anaemia as the statistics remain static, the report shows. It says there is no progress against global nutrition targets such as controlling under-five stunting, wasting, and obesity.

Well-nourished children, it said, are 33 per cent more likely to escape poverty as adults, and each added centimetre of adult height can lead to an almost five per cent increase in wage rate, it says.

The report noted that nutritious and healthy diets are associated with improved performance at school. Children who are less affected by stunting early in their life have higher test scores on cognitive assessments and activity level.

In the 140 countries studied, the report found 'significant burdens' of three important forms of malnutrition used as a indicator of broader trends including childhood stunting — children too short for their age due to lack of nutrients, suffering irreversible damage to brain capacity; anaemia in women of reproductive age — a serious condition that can have long-term health impacts for mother and child; and overweight adult women — a rising concern as women are disproportionately affected by the global obesity epidemic.

Through five areas including sustainable food production, strong systems of infrastructure, health systems, equity and inclusion, peace and stability, the report finds that improving nutrition can have a powerful multiplier effect across the SDGs. Indeed, it indicates that it will be a challenge to achieve any SDG without addressing nutrition.

“If we want to end malnutrition in Pakistan we have to address the direct and underlying causes that include early and frequent childbearing, inadequate feeding practices for infants and young children, inappropriate care-seeking behavior and prevalence of diarrhea,” stated Dr Irshad Danish, Programme Manager of SUN Civil Society Alliance and SUN Academia and Research Network.

The root causes are socio-cultural barriers, lack of education especially for women, insufficient health care and limited awareness of proper nutrition, he added.

“When the prevalence of these indicators is widespread, individual risks and deficits can aggregate into a substantial drag on national economic growth,” Dr Danish said.

He urged the government to take steps towards improving the situation of nutrition and food security in the country, particularly by implementing the multi-sectoral nutrition strategies, implement the protection of breastfeeding and child nutrition laws and enactment of mandatory food fortification laws at all levels of government.

“Federal and provincial governments are also requested to implement food security and agriculture policies and promote rural development to reduce in-country migration.

In order to safeguard the country’s future development and prosperity, Pakistan also needs to increase domestic financing for nutrition and food security.

“Pakistan has to priorities children and places them at the centre of the shift towards healthy and nutritious diets for sustainable food systems will be crucial to achieving the SDGs”.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1550804/1-fraction-budget-addressing-malnutrition/>

SMOG POLICY FOR PUNJAB NOTIFIED, LHC TOLD Dawn, November 7th, 2017

LAHORE: The Punjab environment secretary on Monday told the Lahore High Court that a smog policy had been notified in the province and six air-monitoring stations made functional to determine how much India was contributing to smog in Pakistan.

Earlier, Secretary Saif Anjum appeared before the court on a short notice during hearing of a petition which demands the government take effective measures to curb smog.

The secretary submitted that action had been initiated against industrial owners who were contributing towards greenhouse gas emissions and awareness campaigns initiated in the media and schools to overcome smog effects.

Chief Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah directed the secretary to submit an action plan regarding tree plantation campaigns, as in the past few years due to urban development thousands of trees had been felled in Lahore alone, which contributed to rising pollution levels. The hearing was adjourned till Nov 13.

Waleed Iqbal of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf had filed the petition through Advocate Sheraz Zaka pleading that the environment department had failed to take measures to implement a smog policy. He argued that lack of performance by the department had resulted in an increase in pollution levels across the province.

The smog policy envisaged enforcement of Pollution Charge Rules 2001 along with environmental laws and greater check and balance with upgrading central laboratory of the Environment Protection Agency.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1368913/smog-policy-for-punjab-notified-lhc-told>

ILLEGAL TRADE OF TURTLES DESTABLISING PAKISTAN’S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM The Express Tribune, 7 November 2017

The illegal trade of endangered turtles might be a lucrative industry but it is upsetting the natural order of Pakistan's wildlife environment.

These turtles are a natural filter and key components of eradicating water pollution as well as various bacteria which is harmful for human health. But, due to the illegal trafficking, they are disappearing from Pakistan fast.

The turtles are being illegally exported to China, Taiwan, Vietnam and other Asian countries, as they are eaten or used for medicinal purposes and in the preparation of artificial jewellery.

A turtle bought for a mere Rs200 is being sold after being smuggled to the aforementioned countries for a whopping Rs150,000, which amounts to \$1,500. The wildlife department's poor performance can be gauged by the low number of cases registered in the last 10 years against the smugglers, which stands at 69.

These turtles can be found in wetlands, such as lakes, rivers and ponds, and are crucial in maintaining a balance in the ecosystem as they prey on plants that grow underwater, small insects, snails, worms, and dead marine animals and fish, clearing water bodies of germs and harmful bacteria.

The Chinese are reportedly associated with the turtle trafficking business in Pakistan. Influential Chinese at the helm of some Pakistan-China projects are alleged to be directly involved in the bootlegging of turtles.

On August 18, 2014, a consignment of 229 black-spotted turtles was seized at the Pakistan-China border. A month later, on September 20, 2014, a shipment of 218 black-spotted turtles was seized at the Karachi airport. On the same day, 230 Pakistani black pond turtles were caught at a hospital in Karachi.

A couple of years later, on April 7, 2016, 62 turtles, tightly wrapped in a curtain, were seized in Shanti Nagar by the Karachi police. Of these turtles, 49 died. On April 28, 2016, 170 black-spotted turtles were seized from the Super Highway. On September 10, 2016, a shipment of 780 black-spotted turtles was recovered from Defence Housing Authority in Karachi.

In 2003, the Sindh wildlife department, in coordination with the zoological survey department of Pakistan, conducted a survey to collect data on turtles in the Indus River. The survey concentrated on the waters linking Sukkur Barrage, Guddu Barrage and Jamal Din, as well as the waters around Kandhkot. Another survey was conducted just two years later, in 2005, and two species, Pangshura Smithii and Chitra Indica, which were included in the previous survey results, were missing from the results of the second survey.

In 2009, reports showed the Indus River was home to eight species of turtles. However, by 2012, there were just three types of species left, which included two hard-shelled spotted pond and Indian roofed turtles and one soft shelled peacock turtle.

Data collected in 2014 found that the soft shelled Indian flap shell turtles were the highest in number among other species of turtles, but sadly, a 2015 survey reported that this species had gone missing. In 2016, some surveys argued that all sweet water turtles' existence was endangered.

From 2006 to 2008, the wildlife department registered 22 cases of illegal smuggling of turtles from various cities such as Sukkur, Rohri, Ghotki, Pannu Aqil, Abro, Guddu, Kashmore and Kandhkot. Between 2009 and 2014, 37 smugglers were arrested in Sukkur, Khairpur, Dokri, Kashmore, Kamber-Shahdadkot, Guddu and Larkana for the illegal trade of turtles. Likewise, from 2014 to 2017, nine cases were registered in connection with the illegal smuggling of black spotted turtles.

Before 2007, sweet water turtles in Pakistan were not included in the endangered species list, but now, they are considered an endangered species in all provinces of the country. In 2014, the Sindh government added eight species of turtles in 'Sindh's Most Endangered Wildlife Species' list. The turtles located in the waters on either side of the Indus River (till the Kotri Barrage) are the prime targets and prey of the smuggling mafia.

Initially, the process of fishing out these turtles was done by amateurs, but it is now being done by expert fishermen and locals who specialise in this type of fishing. Turtles weighing between two grammes and two kilogrammes are caught and sold to a middleman for Rs200 to Rs500.

The clearing and forwarding expenses at the airport have seen a significant rise in their price and these turtles can cost up to Rs4,000.

Therefore, each shipment's cost may vary between Rs1.2 million and Rs1.5 million and includes 200 to 250 units. The demand for these turtles in the international market is great, with each unit costing around \$1,500. Hence, a smuggler gets a hefty return on his 'investment' per shipment. Barely one in five smugglers is caught by the authorities and even if they are caught, they get out of it by paying a minimal fine.

The demand for black spotted turtles in China is very high as they are considered a symbol of good luck by people who keep the turtles in their homes. Chinese and Taiwanese pharmaceutical companies also use the turtles for medicinal purposes. These turtles are also used for making jewellery and leather as well as trinkets for tourists.

The chief controller of the Sindh wildlife department, Saeed Baloch, said that officials of the department recently recovered 68 soft-shelled Chitra Indica turtles from the Karachi airport. Their insides were dried up and ready for smuggling. An FIR was registered against the smugglers and they were fined Rs5.44 million, according to the Sindh Turtles and Tortoise Protection, Conservation Act, 2015. The Sindh government also seized two bags worth of smuggled turtles in 2015. Each bag carried 218 turtles.

Baloch also said that people in interior Sindh catch turtles due to poverty, lack of education and unemployment, as it is a lucrative business. A joint operation of the federal and provincial governments, along with law enforcement agencies will soon be launched against the smuggling mafia.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1551425/1-illegal-trade-turtles-destablising-pakistans-ecological-system/>

'SAY NO TO PLASTIC POLLUTION' CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED
Business Recorder, Nov 7th, 2017

LAHORE: The College of Earth and Environmental Sciences (CEES), University of Punjab, in collaboration with d2W-Pakistan have launched a massive awareness campaign 'say no to plastic pollution' here on Monday as a plastic pollution and subsequent environmental damage is a major threat to Pakistan. Plastic can persist in the environment for several hundred years leading to serious environmental hazards and health problems in humans as well as in animals. The objective is to create awareness in community against plastic pollution and eco-friendly solutions.

The launching ceremony was attended by Punjab Environment protection Minister Begum Zakia Shah Nawaz, students, researchers and representatives of corporate oxo-biodegradable users who have taken the step to make environment clean and green by using d2w oxo-biodegradable technology. The d2w oxo-biodegradable additive is added to conventional plastics during manufacturing and converts non-degradable plastics into eco-friendly biodegradable plastics. d2w, a leading brand of oxo-biodegradable plastic technology recognized in more than 98 countries, has led efforts to create awareness among public and private sectors about health and environmental issues posed by conventional plastics.

Addressing the seminar, the speakers said the campaign was aimed at creating awareness about the plastic pollution among the students and community and addressing the problems and solutions of the issue. They said plastic pollution and subsequent environmental damages were major challenges to Pakistan. They said that plastic could persist in the environment for several hundred years. Later, an awareness walk was organized in which participants were carrying anti-plastic pollution slogans.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2017/11/20171107232920/>

'POLLUTED WATER BEING SOLD AS MINERAL WATER'

The Express Tribune, 8 November, 2017

The opposition benches demanded action against people who were involved in selling polluted water filled in mineral water bottles.

The demand was made by deputy opposition leader Muhammad Sibtain Khan of PTI in his resolutions he submitted in Punjab Assembly. He contended that according to an investigative report, there were 104 contaminated samples of mineral water which were found from different areas of the metropolis.

He said the 'poison' was being sold in the name of mineral water. "It tantamount to deceiving people who are using the water believing it to be the product they paid for," he added.

"People involved in this business were fleecing people and earing billions of rupees. However, no one is ready to take action against the responsible persons," he remarked.

Earlier in January it had been reported by the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) that since 2002 the quality of bottled water had been tested. They said it has been established that 10%-15% of this water is contaminated and contains chemical and microbiological contamination.

Sharing results of the monitoring report for the October-December 2016 quarter, the PCRWR spokesperson said 78 samples of bottled water brands revealed that 11 brands were unsafe.

“These brands include Well Care, Lite Aqua, New Premier, Royal Blue, Aqua Safe, Aqua Drink Water, Rahat, Oslo, NG Fresh Water, Nurturmil Water and Aab-e-Khoob among others,” the spokesperson said.

The official said for the purpose of its research, samples of bottled water were taken from many cities like Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Quetta, Peshawar, Muzaffarabad Faisalabad, Sargodha, Multan, Lahore and Tando Jam.

“Some brands contained excessive level of arsenic which causes skin diseases, diabetes, kidney diseases, hypertension, heart diseases birth defects, black foot diseases and multiple types of cancers. Others contained higher levels of sodium which may cause Cholera, Diarrhea, Dysentery, Hepatitis, Typhoid.”

The spokesperson said the reason why people consume bottled water is to avoid tap water which is 80%-90% contaminated as was revealed in research last year.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1552450/1-polluted-water-sold-mineral-water/>

SMOG MAY GRADUALLY LESSEN NEXT WEEK

Dawn, November 8th, 2017

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: Dense smog continued to affect life and disrupt air, rail and road traffic in the plains of Punjab on Tuesday amidst reports that it will gradually lessen due to rain and low temperatures in the upper parts of the country next week.

Rain would nevertheless enhance fog that is persisting over upper Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and south Punjab, said the Pakistan Meteorological Department in its weather forecast.

Environment Secretary Saif Anjum said reduction in the incidence of crop residue burning in Indian Punjab and slight change in the wind's direction further reduced the intensity of smog in Lahore and its adjoining cities.

He said this after the Punjab chief secretary conducted a meeting on the issue, asking secretaries of all departments concerned to continue taking strict measures to minimise local contribution to smog caused by air pollution.

Chief Meteorologist Ajmal Shad said a weak westerly system was expected to give rain over the upper parts of the country and at the most in Rawalpindi division next week. But the accompanying wind and expected low temperatures would gradually reduce smog in Punjab, further thickening fog nevertheless.

Thick smog or fog had developed over Lahore and other cities in Punjab, KP and Sindh's Sukkur areas early Monday night, immediately disrupting rail, road and air traffic.

Lahore airport was closed down immediately after thick fog reduced visibility to zero at around 9pm. It was opened in the morning, cancelling all incoming and outgoing flights in the meantime. PIA officials said smog or fog affected flight schedule at all airports in Punjab.

They said because of the weather conditions, flights had either to be diverted to other airports or rescheduled.

A flight from Sialkot and another from Faisalabad left for their foreign destinations from Lahore airport on Tuesday. The passengers had to travel to Lahore by road.

Motorway remained close to all traffic from Pindi Bhattian to Faisalabad, Khanewal to Multan and Lahore to Kot Momin due to extremely poor visibility.

Similarly, the G T Road from Peshawar to Lahore and the National Highway from Lahore to Sadiqabad too remained fog-bound, making travel extremely difficult and risky, Motorway and National Highways Authority Spokesman Imran Shah said.

He said the authority staff had been advising motorists to drive slow and in queues to avoid accidents.

Meanwhile, Mr Shah again reported closure of the Motorway from Pindi Bhattian to Faisalabad at 8pm on Tuesday. It was also closed from Faisalabad to Gojra and from Lahore to Kot Momin due to thick fog.

Pakistan railways authorities said the speed of almost all trains operating in Punjab had to be kept considerably slow to avoid accidents, causing a lot of problems to the passengers.

PIA spokesman said fog was expected to prevail during the next few days and the airline had to adjust the timings of its flights which could not be operated in the unsafe aviation conditions.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1369153>

SMOG RECEDING DUE TO CHECK ON LOCAL POLLUTANTS: GOVT
Dawn, November 10th, 2017

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: Fog thickened and smog began to slowly recede over the plains of Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Thursday due to control over local pollutants and marked reduction in the burning of crop residue in Indian Punjab, says the environment secretary.

“Farmers in Indian Punjab have almost burnt their paddy stubble. And we are continuously controlling local air pollution contributions. That is why smog has started receding. It will be over after expected rain next week,” said the Secretary, Saif Anjum.

In the meantime, dense fog and smog disrupted air, road and rail traffic in the entire Punjab, upper Sindh (Sukkur divisions) and the plains of KP Wednesday night and on Thursday morning.

PIA spokesman said Lahore airport was closed during the wee hours of Thursday because of poor visibility caused by a thick blanket of fog and smog over the city, delaying at least 10 flights. The flight operation resumed at 11 am and it took several hours to clear the backlog.

The situation on other airports in Punjab, including Multan, Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Rahim Yar Khan and Sialkot, was also not good because of thick fog.

The fog reduced the visibility from nil to a few meters on the National Highway from Lahore to Sahiwal and Chichawatni to Bahawalpur.

Motorway was closed to all types of traffic from Lahore to Kot Momin, Swabi to Peshawar. Traffic on the G T Road from Lahore to Gujranwala and beyond was also disrupted.

Motorway and National Highway Police Spokesman Imran Shah once again asked people to avoid traveling during the night, install fog lights on their vehicles, drive slow and in queues to avoid accidents.

Traffic in Lahore too was disrupted in the morning, forcing delays in offices and educational institutions.

Earlier, EPD Director Tauqeer Qureshi told journalists the five air quality monitoring units in Lahore were indicating reduction in air pollution in the city. To support his claim he gave data from one such unit installed in the Gulberg office of the department, showing reduction in the particulate matter, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and other air pollutants.

He said the pollutants, including those from the Indian Punjab, were decreasing after touching their peak on November 5.

Replying to questions, he said steel mills were causing immense air pollution by using junk as raw material and burning rubber, cheap oil and PVC as fuel. But the government, he said, was taking action against them under the law.

So far the EPD had sealed 265 such factories in Punjab and including 161 only in Lahore, registering cases against 97 owners. As many as 1,341 vehicles had been challaned and were imposed total fine of seven million rupees. Around 175 under-construction sites were also checked and 87 of these issued notices for not maintaining environment protection standards.

He said the EPD had started rethinking its environmental governance strategy and its recommendations would be reflected in the next budget. A strategic planning unit was being established for research and analysis of pollutants and finding a solution to them.

Mr Saif Anjum said smog was also present over Sindh and KP but Punjab was the only province that could monitor air quality. "We are better prepared and are improving," he claimed.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1369551/smog-receding-due-to-check-on-local-pollutants-govt>

DID GOVT KNOW BRT PROJECT WOULD UPROOT NEWLY PLANTED TREES?
The Express Tribune, November 10th, 2017.

Peshawar: Two years after they had been planted to add to some greenery to the otherwise dour urban outlook of the provincial capital, the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government has started removing thousands of plants and trees planted along several thoroughfares to make way for the new bus corridor.

The move, officials say, will cost the government millions — not to mention the lost foliage.

The government had planted saplings on various locations in the city including the centre, median and along the sides of the main GT Road, University Road and along various roads in Hayatabad.

However, since construction on the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) started, the government has started removing these plants, costing the exchequer over Rs80 million.

Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) Horticulture Director Mian Shakeel told The Express Tribune that around 60 per cent of the plants planted, have now grown up. Despite that, these will now be removed to make way for the BRT.

He explained that the plants had been planted under the Peshawar Beatification Programme on the directives of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Pervez Khattak at a cost of over Rs1 billion — distributed amongst various departments for the beautification of the city.

The PDA, Shakeel said, had received Rs400 million to plant trees in areas which fall under its jurisdiction.

“Total of Rs80 million was spent on the plantation on main thoroughfares of the city while the rest of the money was spent on other beautification projects,” he explained.

However, he clarified that around 60 per cent of these plants would be relocated to other places rather than being cut.

When asked why did the government not keep the possibility of projects such as BRT in mind before spending millions on the plantation, he said that the government had first planned to lay a railway track but that project was later cancelled.

However, the BRT documents, a copy of which is available with The Express Tribune, stated that a pre-feasibility of the project was conducted in 2014 — before the trees were planted. The feasibility report had proposed a route from Chamkani to Karkhano market which was ultimately adopted as the final route for BRT.

Despite knowing that the project may be built over areas where the trees were being planted, the government went ahead with planting saplings. Two years on, the government is now uprooting these trees following feasibilities for the project.

The owner of a nursery, who wished not to be named for fear of government retribution, told The Express Tribune that the plants which the government wishes to uproot and replant in other places are not fully growing yet and could be damaged during the relocation since the current season is unfeasible for plantation.

Shakeel endorsed the views of the nursery owner, noting that the plants were not fully grown up. However, he assured that the PDA was removing the plants along with the soil and root without exposing them.

“Only 10-12 per cent of the plants which will be removed will be damaged while we expect 85-90 per cent of the plants to continue their growth after relocation,” the PDA official said, adding, that 60 per cent of the plants will be removed from the sides of BRT corridor while the center median will be completely removed.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1554445/1-govt-know-brt-project-uproot-newly-planted-trees/>

SMOG HAS GONE TILL NEXT YEAR, CLAIMS ENVIRONMENT DEPT
The Express Tribune, November 10th, 2017.

LAHORE: As skies clear after roughly two weeks of the smoke infested fog, the Punjab Environment Protection Department claims the smog has finally dissipated over most of the province.

However, several districts of the province were reportedly still enveloped by smog. At the same time, independent sources have refused to verify the claims made by the EPD.

Director Monitoring Lab and Implementation (ML&I) Tauqeer Ahmad Qureshi said that the smog has dissipated for this year. The Punjab government took aggressive measures to bring down the level of pollution in the entire province.

Sharing details of the measures, he said that 175 pollution causing units have been sealed and 22 FIRs registered. A ban was also imposed on burning of rice stubble. About 151 FIRs were registered against violators and 43 people were arrested. Similarly, around 15,718 vehicles causing pollution challaned and 1,170 vehicles impounded. For controlling fugitive dust, 13 sites were issued notices and eight were closed for none compliance.

Qureshi said other than these measures, they have been monitoring air from six air quality monitoring units. “With the support of the provincial government, we will try and import more of these air quality monitoring systems.”

He said currently six units were installed in Lahore. The above-mentioned measures improved the air quality in the city, he added. “This clearing of smog from Punjab was a natural phenomenon. We will continue taking these aggressive measures to prevent smog next year.” Qureshi said that November 5 was the worst day of the last smog spell.

Some officials of the EPD complained of the shortage of funds and staff, claiming the department was the most neglected official body in the province. They said new regulations for strict and proper enforcement were required for the active working of the department. The officials said the department had hired a consultant to review the existing laws and propose new regulations. They said that multiple departments needed to be onboard for the effective working of EPD.

Tauqeer Ahmad Qureshi further claimed that several measures had been being taken to reduce pollution in the province. He said that they were introducing a new style of brick kilns which emitted less smoke and were more efficient.

He said that they would also be getting these air quality monitoring systems installed in industries of the province to get a real time data of their emissions. He said that with all the data they will compile from their own monitoring units and monitoring units installed at industrial units in Punjab; they will be able to determine the actual factors contributing to a polluted environment. He said that they were also into the later stages of a steel foundry shifting project. He said that under this project, roughly 400 foundries would be moved out of Lahore, Sheikhpura and Gujrainwala.

It is also important to mention here that similar to leading car manufacturer of Pakistan, EPD also believes that oil refineries were supplying substandard fuel in the market. They said that both diesel and petrol of low quality and greatly contributed to the smog.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1554266/1-smog-gone-till-next-year-claims-environment-dept/>

SMOG FORCES LOCALS ONTO THE STREETS

The Express Tribune, November 11th, 2017.

LAHORE: Dozens of protesters held a demonstration against the prevailing smog and the government's failure to address the environmental woes affecting the province. Those who were part of the demonstration urged the government to declare a health emergency.

The protest, called Lahore Can't Breathe, was held outside the Lahore Press Club on Friday. Dozens of citizens participated, wearing masks while holding banners and posters inscribed with different slogans.

The protesters chanted slogans against the government for its inability to enforce environmental regulations and its failure to take action against industries, power plants, construction contractors and waste management companies, which they claimed were responsible for pollution in Lahore.

Speaking at the gathering, protesters said the Punjab government was constitutionally mandated to serve people residing in the province and its responsibilities included protection of health and welfare.

They said that over the last two weeks, poisonous smog blanketed Lahore, the largest metropolis of the province, causing various health problems for the citizens of the city.

They urged the provincial government to declare a health emergency. The protesters also suggested steps to cope with the health hazard. They put forward seven demands to the government to deal with the prevailing smog. The demands included an immediate moratorium on coal power plants in Punjab, subsidy for renewable energy to help move away from polluting sources and an immediate ban on waste burning.

Other demands included incentives to small farmers to use agro-ecological methods for composting crop stubble, immediate and indiscriminate enforcement of environmental regulations on industries and immediate enforcement of dust control measures at all construction sites. The protesters also urged the government to finalise and implement an ecologically sustainable urban transport plan,

which should involve both removing vehicles from roads and provide clean and affordable transportation to the public with adequate connections across the city. The last demand of the protesters was that the government curb tree cutting in the city and engage the public in mass tree plantation projects using local and low-water consuming species.

On Thursday, the Punjab Environment Protection Department claimed the smog had all but left most of the province.

However, several districts of the province were reportedly still enveloped by smog. At the same time, independent sources have refused to verify the claims made by the EPD.

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<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1554997/1-smog-forces-locals-onto-streets/>

December 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 25th TO DECEMBER 31st 2017 COAL PROJECTS TO TURN THAR INTO DEVELOPED REGION: DR ISHRAT

Business Recorder, 25 December 2017

HYDERABAD: Former Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and eminent economist Dr Ishrat Husain has said that Thar Coal projects will turn the underdeveloped district of Tharparkar into a developed region.

“The Pakistan government and other corporate sector organizations should adopt the social development model devised and implemented by the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) in Thar to help the uplift other areas lagging behind in development of the country,” he said while speaking at a ceremony in Tharparkar on Sunday.

Accompanied by Ameena Saiyid, head of the Oxford University Press, he inaugurated a Thar Foundation-established school in village Abban jo Tarr and a handicrafts centre in Thar Coal Block II.

The centre has been established by Thar Foundation to empower the Thari women economically by removing the middleman factor.

Dr Husain lauded Thar Foundation’s social development model. “We could do away with illiteracy, poverty, and hunger if Pakistan’s private sector adopted the development model in place in Thar,” he said.

He said that mining and power projects were comparatively an easy job when compared with the area’s social and economic uplift.

He acknowledged that social and economic uplift were very well handled by the SECMC in Tharparkar.

“It was quite a satisfying factor in the entire project,” he observed.

Ameena Saiyid said that the cultural handicrafts made by the Thari women were commendable and that they ought to be promoted them at all the potential platforms.

“SECMC’s bid to empower women of the area, socially and economically, in the form of women dump truck driving program is innovative and exemplary,” Saiyid said after engaging with the trainees of the program on the field.

Speaking at the occasion SECMC chief Shamsuddin Ahmed Shaikh reiterated that The social and economic uplift of Tharparkar was part of their duty which they did not consider a favour. “Provision of free quality education for children, safe drinking water for communities and modern-day health facilities for constituting our commitment,” Shaikh asserted.

Prior to the inauguration sessions, Shaikh gave the delegates a comprehensive briefing on the mining and power projects as well as the community development program carried out through the Thar Foundation’s platform.

The delegates visited the SECMC’s mining project, Engro Powergen Thar Limited’s under-construction 660MW power plant and model house for the resettlement village before witnessing the school inauguration at village Abbas jo Tarr.

The community welcomed the guests by presenting traditional Ajrak and Loees.

The delegation visiting the Thar Block II also comprised prominent analyst Dr. Huma Baqai, President Meezan Bank, Irfan Siddiqui, Chief Executive Officer Habib University Parvez Ghias,

senior journalist Murtaza Solangi, columnist Zofeen T. Ebrahim, Masood Akhtar, former diplomat Alam Brohi, Aijaz Nizamani and among others.—APP

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/12/25/5-page/689832-news.html>

SUNKEN PIPELINES INUNDATE KARACHI'S STREETS WITH SEWAGE WATER

The Express Tribune, 28 December, 2017

The city's sewerage system has collapsed, as a number of areas are flooded with sewage. Residents have been facing difficulties in commuting and have also had to bear with the stench of the stagnant water.

Gutter water has been overflowing in numerous areas such as Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Nazimabad, Saddar, Korangi, Shah Faisal Colony, Gulistan-e-Jauhar, Tipu Sultan Road and Sharae Faisal. Worsening the situation is the fact that the contaminated water has entered houses and hospitals in some areas.

The Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) claims that the water will be cleaned soon and that work in this regard is currently under way.

Sewage has overflowed on main thoroughfares such as Sharae Faisal, Sakhi Hassan, Rashid Minhas Road, Orangi Road, KDA Chowrangi and streets in Saddar. Despite its claims, the KWSB has not undertaken any measures to clear the water from the sites of the burst pipelines, which has led to the situation deteriorating. In the heart of the city, Saddar, the sewerage system on the central streets has been severely affected and sewage water has accumulated, creating a traffic jam.

Sewage water has also accumulated in front of Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre and the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases, which has hindered the movement of patients.

The issue is not simply of a burst pipeline – it goes back for years as the water board has failed to maintain or replace its pipelines, due to which the sewerage system is slowly collapsing. Compounding problems, in many areas sewage is mixing with drinking water. Contaminated water is being supplied to houses in North Karachi, New Karachi, Gulistan-e-Jauhar, Malir, Landhi and Korangi, but the water board has stayed silent on this issue.

According to sources, millions of rupees have been allocated for repair work and replacement of lines, yet there is no improvement in the system.

Main streets in Lines Area have been inundated for months yet repair work has still not commenced.

The flow of traffic in areas like Saddar, which are congested even when the roads are not filled with sewage water, has been severely affected, with motorists stuck in traffic jams for extended periods of time.

Sewage water has also accumulated on roads of the area starting from Paposh Nagar to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital and the situation is no different than the one in Saddar. In various blocks of Gulshan-e-Iqbal, water is overflowing out of gutters. The situation has worsened to the extent that sewage water has accumulated in various apartment compounds. Every second street of Landhi,

Korangi, Orangi Town, North Karachi, New Karachi, Liaquatabad, PIB Colony, Jamshed Colony, Soldier Bazaar, Garden, Lyari, Keamari and Baldia town have pools of sewage water.

Sources in the KWSB said that millions of rupees have allocated for the repair of sewerage lines and the replacement of pipes but no work is being carried out due to which the sewerage system has collapsed in Karachi.

Technical Deputy Managing Director Asadullah Khan told The Express Tribune that repair work on the main sewerage trunk line near Metropole Hotel will be completed by Wednesday. He explained that a 56-inch diameter line sank a few days ago. According to him, a 60-year-old pipeline had completed its life and resultantly sank, affecting the area from Fatimah Jinnah Road to Cantt Station.

The repair work on the line was started on Sunday and the effect of the broken line was being seen in the electronic market of Saddar, he said. KWSB's managing director could not be reached for his version.

Tipu Sultan Road has been in a state of disrepair for the past two weeks, with potable water in the area severely affected by the overflowing sewage water.

The residents have warned of a protest if the issue is not resolved by the local government minister.

The gross negligence of the KSWB management also affected the sewerage system in Shabbirabad Block A, Syedna Yousuf Road and Syedna Zueb Road. Roads in the areas are inundated while polluted water on lanes and street remains stagnant, posing issues for the passers-by and residents.

Khan attributed the situation to a lack of funds, adding that the issue could not be resolved. Labeling water supplied by water board unfit for human consumption, he recommended the consumption of mineral water. "The purchase and consumption of mineral water is a normal practice across the city, so you should adopt it too," he said. However, he granted permission to the residents to change the water pipelines at their own expense.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1594438/1-sunken-pipelines-inundate-karachis-streets-sewage-water/>

SPECIAL PERMITS ISSUED TO ELITE OF DUBAI FOR HOUBARA HUNTING

Dawn, December 30th, 2017

Bhagwandas

KARACHI: The federal government has issued special permits to the ruler of Dubai (United Arab Emirates) Shaikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum and five members of his entourage for hunting of houbara bustard in the specified areas of Sindh and Balochistan during the season 2017-18.

Houbara hunting is prohibited under various international nature conservation conventions and local wildlife protection laws owing to its declining population.

The federal government issues special permits every year to the ruling elite of the Gulf states, prominent among them being members of the highly restricted houbara hunting club like crown princes and top military, police and security officials.

The special permit has been issued to Sheikh Mohammad Al-Maktoum by deputy chief of protocol (P&I) in the foreign ministry Naeem Iqbal Cheema.

The permit, DCB (P&I) – 19/6/2017-18 (Allocations/UAE), has been sent to the UAE embassy in Islamabad and is supposed to be dispatched to whom it may concern in Dubai.

The content of the permit states: “The ministry of foreign affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan presents its compliments to the Embassy of United Arab Emirates in Islamabad and has the honour to state that the government of Pakistan has conveyed its recommendations to the authorities in the concerned province for the allocation of following areas to the Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, vice president and prime minister of United Arab Emirates for hunting of houbara bustard for the season 2017-18.

The areas allocated are Khuzdar and Lasbella districts and the area in the northwest corner of Balochistan located in Chagai district (Nok Kundi).

The respective provincial government has also been requested to issue the necessary permit in this regard. The code of conduct for the hunting season 2017-18 is also attached”.

The Crown Prince of Dubai (UAE) Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum has been allocated Hyderabad and Matyari districts; Dubai’s Deputy Chief of Police and General Security Major General Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Umerkot and Tharparkar districts (excluding protected areas); Major General Sheikh Ali Mur bin Maktoum Al-Maktoum tehsil Samungli and Tehsil Panjpai in Quetta district; a royal family member Sheikh Rahid bin Khalifa Al-Maktoum Badin district, Jungshahi (Thatta district) and Dhabeji (Malir district, Karachi); and a Dubai-based businessman, Nasir Abdullah Lootah, has been allocated Thatta district (excluding Shah Bander and Jungshahi tehsils).

According to the relevant code of conduct, only 100 houbara bustards can be hunted and falcons only for 10 days during the hunting season i.e Nov 1, 2017 to Jan 31, 2018. Guns cannot be used for hunting. Poaching and trans-boundary transportation of eggs and chicks is also prohibited.

Hanif Samoon at Mithi adds: Thar district game officer (DGO) Ashfaq Ahmed Memon on Friday evening confirmed arrival of royal guests Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Maktoum and his entourage for a hunting expedition in Tharparkar.

He said the guests arrived at Chanri Airport of Badin district and then proceeded to Tharparkar. Rangers personnel provided protocol to them, he said, adding that the guests set up their camp in Jat Tarai village near Diplo town.

Mr Memon stated that if provincial government’s prescribed procedures with regard to the permission were not followed to ensure observance of the code of conduct, the Sindh wildlife department would have to issue a warning on Saturday to the hunters.

He told Dawn that his department was in touch with the area police and other authorities to remove the camp if the need be.

He said that only permit-holder of the royal family had been visiting the area over the past five years.

Mr Memon recalled that recently a Qatari team of hunters led by Sheikh Fahd Abdullah Abdul Rehman al Thani, was denied hunting in this area and its camp was removed as mandatory procedures were not followed.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1379586/special-permits-issued-to-elite-of-dubai-for-houbara-hunting>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 11th TO DECEMBER 17th 2017
'ACTION AGAINST ENCROACHMENTS ON AMENITY PLOTS TO CONTINUE'
Dawn, December 13th, 2017

KARACHI: The Karachi Development Authority (KDA), the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) and the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) on Tuesday decided to continue with the joint operation being carried out in line with the Supreme Court orders. The apex court had asked the government to remove encroachments from around 35,000 amenity plots in the city within two months, said a statement issued here.

At a meeting held at the Civic Centre chaired by DG of the KDA Samiuddin Siddiqi and attended by senior officials of the three institutions, it was decided that the authorities would go to the last extent to implement the Supreme Court orders with the assistance of the law enforcement agencies.

"The repute of the KDA was damaged in the past due to illegal allotment and china-cutting but it's high time to remove all such stains through removal of encroachments from the government land and eliminate those structures which have been raised on amenity plots," said the statement.

"The meeting participants decided to compile a list of amenity plots which were illegally converted for commercial and residential purposes. It was decided to activate the KDA's estate and enforcement department for streamlining all data and identifying the encroachments."

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376210/action-against-encroachments-on-amenity-plots-to-continue>

BIRDS OF PREY: PAKISTAN'S VULTURES ARE DYING OUT
The Express Tribune, 13 December 2017

KARACHI: Vultures that are supposed to clean the environment by eating the carcasses of dead animals have almost vanished from Pakistan.

The steep decline in their numbers – more than 95% of the vulture population has been wiped out since the mid-1990s- is a result of the use of industrial drugs to breed cattle whose carcasses the birds traditionally feed on.

The critically endangered oriental white-backed vulture and long-billed vulture have compelled the international community to take steps to ensure that the species does not die out completely. Pakistan is home to eight species of vultures.

The Nagarparkar area of Tharparkar district serves an important nesting and breeding ground for white-backed and long-billed vultures. Long-billed vultures have only been sighted in the Karoonjhar

Mountains. “Historically, [Karoanjhar Mountains] are their only breeding ground in Pakistan and has also been recently declared a reserve,” said wildlife manager at the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) – Pakistan, Hamera Aisha.

The primary cause of the decline and ongoing threat faced by vultures is consumption of livestock carcasses containing residue of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), principally diclofenac, she told The Express Tribune.

Through necropsy and toxicological studies, it was found that the reason behind the death of vultures and a disease called visceralglout was due to renal failure as they had white marks around their kidneys.

In 2006 this initiative was able to achieve a ban on diclofenac, its manufacturing and use in Pakistan as an outcome to successful lobbying with the federal government but diclofenic is still used along with aceclofenac, ketoprofen and flunixin, which is also unsafe for vultures, remarked Aisha. She added lobbyists are suggesting the use of a safer alternative drug called maloxicon.

She reiterated that apart from this overall threat, other threats include the cutting of nesting trees of white-backed vultures for livestock fodder and fuel wood.

As part of this initiative, WWF-Pakistan established a Vulture Safe Zone (VSZ) in 2012 covering an area of 100 kilometres in diameter in Nagarparkar, which hosts the remaining breeding population of endangered white-backed and long-billed vultures.

Vulture population monitoring and assessment studies together with livestock availability studies have also been conducted to determine population trends and identification of important nesting sites, critical to streamline conservation actions in Nagarparkar.

The vultures’ on-site conservation work in Nagarparkar was conceived using a holistic approach, integrating conservation research, advocacy, community empowerment and awareness to ensure a sustainable wild population of remaining vultures and long-billed vultures for whom the Karoonjhar Mountains is the only breeding and nesting ground. The white-backed vultures make their nests on trees, whereas long-billed make them on hills.

WWF-Pakistan has been working towards off-site conservation of critically endangered white-backed vultures for more than a decade.

The Gyps Vulture Conservation Centre in the Changa Manga Forest Reserve near Lahore is the only off-site conservation initiative in Pakistan which is dedicated to protecting the current population along with a captive breeding programme to increase the birds’ population since 2005 after India launched a campaign to protect the population of vultures in the region.

The facility currently houses 15 white-backed vultures, of which four pairs bred successfully during the past two years. The total number of vultures, including four chicks, is 19.

According to Aisha, vultures have a cultural association with the funeral rites of Zoroastrians, who place the bodies of their deceased on Towers of Silence, where their flesh is consumed by vultures.

She said that vultures have an important environmental role to play as they perform large amounts of work for free, since the carcasses of animals take time to be disposed of and create environmental hazards. “When the vultures are no more in the ecosystem then their role or service ends and they is taken by other scavenger animals and birds, hence the population of dogs, kites and crows flourishes while disrupting the balance of the ecosystem,” Aisha added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1582412/1-birds-prey-pakistans-vultures-dying/>

GOVT SEEMS GROPING IN THE SMOG

Dawn, December 14th, 2017

Xari Jalil

LAHORE: The Consortium for Development Policy Research (CDPR) held a discussion on Wednesday on ‘Lahore’s Smog Crisis: A Regional Approach’ where a panel of speakers identified what the actual environmental concerns were and what must be done about them.

Environmental lawyer Ahmed Rafay Alam moderated the discussion and began saying the governments in both India and Pakistan had tried to evade the problem of smog until they began to get more pressure. He said there was a distinct difference between the air pollution which happens the whole year through and smog which takes place specifically in winter months.

“At the same time the informal air quality monitors have showed how bad the air pollution levels have been lately, especially of PM2.5. In fact one of the highest he himself had measured was 315 micrograms (PM2.5),” he said.

Ali Habib, Managing Partner at Hima Verte and former director general of the WWF-Pakistan, explained the specific issues about particulate matter especially PM2.5. “This is so minuscule (one fortieth of the cross section of human hair) that at times it enters lungs and lodges deep inside resulting in a congested cough,” he said.

He said there was no formal monitoring in Punjab, especially in parts other than Lahore, but the WHO monitors have shown that Lahore’s PM2.5 levels have been up to 6.8 times higher than specified levels. The WHO gives its limits of PM2.5 for up to 10 micrograms (maximum 15).

“The biggest sources of PM2.5 are rural kitchens which contribute to about 50pc of the levels, followed by vehicular emissions, crop residue burning, industrial smoke, open waste burning and diesel generation,” he said.

He said the ‘Smog Health Emergency Action Plan’ was not being fully followed by the EPD.

The government was represented by retired Capt Saif Anjum, Environment Protection Department secretary, who said there were no set lines about what was hazardous and what was not. “The Action Plan given by court has taken into account other countries and the fact of the matter remains that the level of pollutants in their air and ours is very different,” he said.

“We do not have tools, finances or staff, so we manage to work on one thing, that is, raise public awareness.”

He said they also sought the agriculture department help in stopping crop burning this year.

Dr Sanval Nasim, assistant professor of economics from LUMS, spoke about some policies being adopted the world over and which had worked for other countries and could be applied in Pakistan too. He said measures like tax on vehicles creating pollution, mandatory smog checks in cars, and an emphasis on public transportation could help improve the situation.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376544/govt-seems-groping-in-the-smog>

EPD 'EVADES' IMPLEMENTING SMOG POLICY

Dawn, December 17th, 2017

Xari Jalil

LAHORE: The Punjab Environment Protection Department (EPD) has not been implementing court orders regarding smog policy despite the passage of a month since the court directives.

On Nov 14, 2017, Chief Justice Mansoor Ali Shah had directed the EPD to follow a temporary smog policy till a new and revised plan was made. The temporary policy itself was drafted on the court order by those who were representing the government in the case.

According to this policy, if PM2.5 indicators rise above the level of 300 micrograms, smog levels are labelled 'severe' and a medical emergency should be imposed, suspending the outdoor activities and evacuation of people to safe places. Other actions proposed included restricting air pollution generating industrial units, and construction activities in the affected area; restrictions on motor vehicles, and shutting down primary schools and public parks if levels rise.

The EPD's own data shows PM2.5 levels crossing 140 ug/m3 on more than one day (Nov 17 to 22). The department did not upload any updates since Nov 30. It has also failed to provide data from four of the locations, including UET, Jail Road, Thokar and Lakhodair, after Nov 23.

EPD Director Labs Tauqeer Qureshi confirms that they had procured six machines in 2016 for measuring the air quality and they are stationed at Lahore Fort, UET, Gulberg (EPD office), Meteorological Station, and one mobile unit has been sent to the Kalar Kahar area.

When asked why they did not upload the data in real time, Mr Qureshi says they are facing issue of manpower shortage and they have no staff to analyse and decipher the data they receive.

The effects of smog are obvious, with allergies and ENT infections spread around, but till now, no schools are shut down by the government.

"If we close down schools, they will remain shut eight months a year," said EPD Secretary retired Capt Saif Anjum, at a recent meeting, saying pollution occurred year round.

Qureshi also concurs with this point of view, saying: "The smog policy directed for us to follow is impractical. Industries cannot be closed for so long and the same goes for schools but we have cracked down on the cars."

Experts have objected to the EPA's indifference to the smog problem.

"Currently the EPA is recording the ambient air quality through air pointers," says Aleem Butt, chief environmentalist at Seal Labs. "But none of these stations have measured all parametres. PM10 and PM2.5 are missing from all the readings."

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1377083>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 4th TO DECEMBER 10th 2017

'HAPPY SEEDERS' TO HELP TACKLE SMOG

Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, December 4th, 2017

IN 2014, a multicrop zero tillage planter for rice and several zero tillage 'Happy Seeder' machines were imported from India under the Agricultural Innovation Programme (AIP).

These machines were tested on farmers' fields in five districts of the province by experts from the Punjab Agriculture Research and Extension Department, Engro Fertilisers and machinery manufacturers.

It was found that the seeders helped farmers to plant wheat and apply fertiliser in one operation in combine-harvested, unploughed fields, without burning rice residue. The technology also helped farmers manage standing as well as loose rice residue without burning.

Moreover, farmers attained an additional 200kg wheat on a hectare and reduced 70 per cent cost of cultivation in comparison to traditional practice.

So, after successful tests, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) worked with private machinery makers the following year to help them manufacture the first locally-modified versions of both seeding implements.

A zero tillage seed drill manufacturer of Faisalabad modified the Happy Seeder to help farmers sow wheat directly into heavy rice residue fields and thus avoid burning the residues and decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

Under the AIP project — led by the CIMMYT and supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) — the seeders were manufactured and sold to farmers in 2016-17 on a cost-sharing basis.

The widespread residue burning in Pakistan and India during October and November is one of the factors that aggravate the smog issue in Punjab. Other major contributing factors of smog or air pollution in the region include dust, smoke emission from bricks kilns, factories and vehicles.

Farmers and research partners are satisfied with the locally manufactured seeders that support conservation agriculture, cut costs and avoid rice residue burning in rice-wheat farming rotation that cover more than 1.7m hectares in Punjab.

In the rice-wheat area of Punjab, more than 80pc rice fields are combine-harvested that leaves large amounts of residues on the field.

After rice harvest, farmers typically burn residues, generating large noxious clouds, and drive tractor-drawn ploughs over fields repeatedly to prepare seedbed. They then sow wheat through broadcast seeding, a method that involves scattering seed, either by hand or through machines, over a large area.

Burning rice residues not only results in loss of nutrients but also increases greenhouse gas emissions. According to a study, burning a tonne of straw releases 3kg particulate matter, 60kg carbon monoxide, 1460kg carbon dioxide, 199kg ash and 2kg sulphur dioxide in the air.

Since the 1990s, public research programmes in South Asia have been working with the CIMMYT and advanced research institutes to test and promote a slew of innovative practices, including reduced or zero tillage, which allow rice-wheat farmers to save money, better steward soil and water resources, cut greenhouse gas emissions and stop the burning of crop residues.

Meanwhile, wheat sowing campaign in the country briskly is progressing. Conditions at the beginning of the Rabi season were not encouraging for wheat crop. Less or no rains during September and October delayed in some places and affected wheat sowing operations in rain-fed (barani) areas. However, rainfall in November infused a new life in the sowing season.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department forecast, 10pc to 15pc less rains are expected during October-December as compared to the normal level of this period, which may affect wheat production, particularly in the rain-fed areas.

Similarly, the country has to face a shortage of irrigation water during the current Rabi season because of less storage in dams owing to about 25pc less monsoon rains from July to September.

The Federal Committee on Agriculture has fixed this year's wheat target at 26.46m tonnes on an area of 8.95m hectares, compared to 25.75m tonnes and 9.05m hectares a year ago.

The government intends to increase per-acre crop yields of wheat and promote the area of sowing of oilseed crops. However, drought conditions coupled with shortage of irrigation water will be key obstacles to achieving the target.

Considering 9m hectares area with a seed rate of 120kg per hectare, wheat sown will be around 1m tonnes during the current Rabi season, according to CIMMYT's Country Director Dr Muhammad Imtiaz.

In Punjab, two kinds of wheat varieties have been introduced during the current season under the USAID-funded programme. The recommended seeds are Barani-17 and Anaaj-17 for Punjab and Khaista-17, Wadan, Pasina, Nifa-Aman and Kohat-17 for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to the CIMMYT, new wheat varieties and quality seeds amounting to 130 tonnes were distributed through a network of national partners to stallholders, including women beneficiaries.

Under the AIP, the CIMMYT has provided seed and trainings to more than 27,000 wheat growers across Pakistan. Another 5,000 wheat growers will be reached out during the current Rabi season.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1374300>

KHADIM-E-PUNJAB SAAF DEHAT PROGRAMME: MONITORING TEAM CHECKS IMPLEMENTATION IN VARIOUS VILLAGES

Business Recorder, 8 December 2017

FAISALABAD: A three-member monitoring team during a visit checked the implementation of Khadim-e-Punjab Saaf Dehat Programme in different villages of the district.

The monitoring team was comprised of MPA from Dera Ghazi Khan Syed Aleem Shah, Secretary Livestock Punjab Nasim Sadiq and SP Special Branch Rana Ghulam Mustafa.

Deputy Commissioner, Salman Ghani, Chairman Zila Council, Ch Zahid Nazir, ADC (HQ), Mian Aftab, Deputy Director Local Government, Ch Abdul Hameed and other officers were also accompanied them. The monitoring team went to Chak No 275/J.B and Chak No 276 Dandhewala and reviewed the process of cleanliness of heaps of garbage.

They also interacted with the local population and inquired about the arrangements of cleanliness and importance cleanliness campaign.

MPA Syed Aleem Shah said that rural cleanliness campaign has been started first time in the history of the country and during first phase all villages of Punjab would be cleaned one time during the month period.

He informed that in second phase comprehensive strategy was being devised for the regular cleanliness in the villages.

He said that the funds of Rs 2.5 million were being spent in each and every Union Council of the province to complete the development schemes under LG development package.

He asked the rural population to extend all-out cooperation for the success of cleanliness system in connection with maintaining cleanliness in the villages.

Deputy Commissioner Salman Ghani welcomed the monitoring team and informed that dumping sites had been selected out of the villages for the disposal of solid waste.

He informed that regular monitoring was being carried out for completing the one time cleanliness in the villages of district successful. Secretary Livestock Nasim Sadiq said that the planning was also being devised for the proper disposal of dung and its relevant waste and this system would be linked with the cleanliness campaign for achieving the better results.

Chairman Zila Council Ch Zahid Nazir appreciated the vision of CM Punjab Shehbaz Sahrif regarding the cleanliness of villages and said that the 70 years long deprivation of the rural areas would be eliminated through this revolutionary step. He said that the environment of the villages would be pleasant by the implementation of Saaf Dehat Programme and it would also be helpful to control the different diseases.

The Globalization Bulletin
Environment

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/12/08/13-page/686497-news.html>