

January 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 21ST TO JANUARY 27TH 2019

PAKISTAN ELECTED 'VICE CHAIR' AT UN ENVIRONMENT FORUM

By APP Published: January 26, 2019

Pakistan was elected as the vice chair at the third UN Environment's Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific that was held in Singapore from January 23 till January 25.

Adviser to Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam revealed this Friday in a tweet. He said Pakistan got elected to the position owing to the country's 'sincere and dedicated' environment preservation endeavours.

Forty-one environment ministers of the region voted for Pakistan to represent them at the forum in Singapore, which was the host country and chair of the UN Environment Forum.

Speaking at the forum, Aslam said, "It is an honour for Pakistan as 41 environment ministers of the Asia Pacific, including China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand among others have chosen Pakistan to represent them."

The third session of UN Environment's Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific took place at Marina Bay Sands Expo & Convention Centre in Singapore.

The forum focused on the theme of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA), 'Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production' essentially aimed at a joint approach at the 4th UN Environment Assembly, scheduled in Kenya during March.

Adviser to PM along with Additional Secretary Babar Hayat Tarrar were representing Pakistan at the third session of UN Environment's Forum of Ministers & Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific, said a press release.

Addressing a panel at the forum, he said Pakistan is leading in climate actions to tackle the effects of climate change. "Pakistan is utilising her own available limited resources for implanting environment preserving initiatives and is also taking measures beyond her Nationally Determined Contributions."

He said Prime Minister Imran Khan has launched a nationwide Clean and Green Pakistan movement for the protection of environment that involves a 10 billion tree plantation drive, solid and liquid waste management and total hygiene and clean drinking water initiatives

Aslam also briefed the panel about the One Billion Tree Tsunami project successfully completed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province last year that got global recognition from the World Economic Forum, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

The adviser also held meetings with the UN Environment Assembly President Siim Kiisler and Estonia's minister for environment on the sidelines of the forum. Besides, he also met Sri Lanka

president, Tuvalu's prime minister, Singapore's deputy prime minister and minister for environment and the UN Environment acting executive director to discuss cooperation for environment protection initiatives.

The UN Environment has finally decided in principle to open an office in Pakistan, this demand was made by Pakistan and followed up consistently, said the press release.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1897031/1-pakistan-elected-vice-chair-environment-forum/>

‘EFFORTS AFOOT’ TO MITIGATE DAMAGES FROM DROUGHT

By Mohammad Zafar Published: January 26, 2019

QUETTA : Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs Mir Zia Ahmed Langove on Friday said the provincial government with the assistance of Centre and National Disaster Management Authority was making all-out efforts to overcome the damage caused by drought.

“Last week, during the National Workshop on Drought the provincial government presented a strong case of Balochistan regarding long-lingering drought,” he said during a visit to Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA).

The minister, who also holds the portfolio of PDMA, was accompanied by lawmakers from both opposition and treasury — provincial Minister for Livestock Mitha Khan, MPA Nawabzada Gohram Bugti, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Sardar Khan Rind, MPA Younus Zehri, and Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal leader Asghar Ali Tareen.

PDMA DG Imran Zarkoon briefed the delegation about his department's relief activities in drought-stricken areas.

On their visit, the leaders stressed that the PDMA should utilise all its resource for providing relief to the drought-affected people. They said: “We won't tolerate any excuse regarding relief operations”.

Meanwhile, the home minister also visited the IG Office where Police IG Mohsin Hassan Butt and DIG Abdul Razzaq Cheema briefed him about law and order.

“The provincial government has been following zero-tolerance policy toward law and order. The law enforcement agencies have been given orders to beef up monitoring in border towns to prevent terrorists' movement,” said Langove.

He also paid a surprise visit to the Quetta Central Jail and directed authorities to treat all prisoners with respect so they could turn into responsible citizens after being set free.

Upon hearing complaints, Langove directed the provision of adequate facilities to all prisoners.

The minister also visited the District Police Station and Levies Headquarters in Pishin.

The home minister said Pishin district would be linked with Quetta Safe City project. The decision came during a visit to the district where DPO Tariq Elahi Mastoi and Deputy Commissioner Pishin,

Opposition leader Advocate Malik Sikandar, MPA Gohram Bugti, provincial minister Mitha Khan Kakar, and other MPAs were present on the occasion.

Aurangzeib Badini shared law and order situation in A (police deployed) and B (Levies deployed) areas of the district.

Langove said that today crime was being controlled through technology. In addition to the support of manpower, the district needs machinery and latest equipment for maintaining order in the province, he added.

He said that the law enforcement agencies including police and Levies were playing a crucial role in restoring peace.

The incumbent government was utilising resources to protect the lives and property of the masses, he said. However, "In order to discourage crime we have to move forward with strong intelligence based system".

Langove said: "Pishin district would be linked with Quetta Safe City project while we have decided to increase Levies deployment in the district from 100 to 300". He announced regularising illegal Kabuli vehicles through an official mechanism.

During the visit to the Pishin Rest House, tribal elders called on provincial home minister and informed him about their issues particularly law and order and risks due to illegal trade of un-registered vehicles.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1897034/1-efforts-afoot-mitigate-damages-drought/>

FIRST URBAN FOREST OF SINDH WILL BE IN KARACHI, SAYS MINISTER

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated January 22, 2019

KARACHI: The first urban forest of the province will be built in Karachi as part of the Green Karachi Project by planting eco-friendly trees near the Malir rivulet and railway line to counter the adverse effects of climate change and pollution.

This was stated by Sindh Minister for Works and Services, Forest and Wildlife Syed Nasir Hussain Shah while presiding over a meeting held at his office to discuss the sustainable forest management policy 2019, annual development programme, and implementation of the orders of the Supreme and High Courts.

The minister said that a green Sindh is the aim of the provincial government and for this purpose a transparent and comprehensive policy would be devised for the development and expansion of forests in the province which would be based on merit and proper check and balance. He said that owing to climate change, increase in temperature and air pollution, the first urban forest of the province will be built in Karachi which will be expanded gradually to other parts of the province.

Mr Nasir Shah said in coordination with public-private partnership, eco-friendly trees will be planted to combat climate change and pollution. He directed the department to gear up before the upcoming spring season and also asked the officers to contact the relevant NGOs in this regard.

He said that short- and long-term planning should be devised for the enhancement and protection of forests of the province. The minister also directed the officers of the forest department to follow the orders of the Supreme and High Courts in this regard.

The minister also directed them to initiate urban forestry at divisional and district levels.

He recalled that PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah are also quite interested in the development of forests and tree plantation in the province, and had issued directives in this regard.

Earlier secretary forest briefed the meeting about the sustainable forest management policy 2019 saying that after various consultative workshops, seminars, meetings and consulting with all the relevant stakeholders a draft in this regard will be presented next week.

Published in Dawn, January 22nd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1458999/first-urban-forest-of-sindh-will-be-in-karachi-says-minister>

DOCUMENTATION OF FOREST RESOURCES STARTS IN MANSEHRA

By APP Published: January 22, 2019

PESHAWAR: The federal government has started work on documentation of sustainable and unsustainable forests and other allied resources on pilot basis in Mansehra district besides rehabilitation of 5,000 hectares of degraded land, which would be achieved through massive plantations under 'Plant for Pakistan' initiative of Prime Minister Imran Khan.

All sustainable and un-sustainable forest resources including assessment of pasture management, harvest of non-timber-forest produce (NTFP) and wildlife through trophy hunting programmes and other eco-tourism enterprises will be documented in Mansehra district during next three years, said Sustainable Forests Management (SFM) Project Coordinator Faique Khan on Monday.

FSM project with allocation of \$8 million was launched in Khyber Pakthunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh provinces in 2017 by Ministry of Climate Change Islamabad with financial support of UNDP Pakistan and Global Environment Faculty (GEF) with major focus on sustainable conservation and management of forests and allied resources in the province.

He said 5,000 hectares including degraded forests land would be rehabilitated by carrying out massive plantations during the second phase of billion trees afforestation project (BTAP) under which one billion trees would be planted in K-P, adding FSM project will continue till 2021.

In K-P, he said two major landscapes in Kaghan and Siran forests divisions were selected on pilot basis to secure multiple benefits from its rich eco-system and biodiversity of high conservation value forests (HCVF).

Efforts are focussed on addressing issues of climate change besides environmental degradation through embedding effective management tools for sustainable use of elements of biodiversity and conservation forests resources on scientific lines.

"The project has initiated the task to revise working plans codes of 1952 on which whole management, conservation and exploitation of forest resources depends," he said.

Faique said development of monitoring mechanism was also under process through Forestry Planning and Monitoring Circle Peshawar to effectively measures reports, document data and assess different parameters of working plans' implementations.

Through an effective monitoring system, he said, data will be managed to extract information and ensure timely decisions even in routine functioning of field formations based on available data and findings for prompt service delivery.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 22nd, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1893663/1-documentation-forest-resources-starts-mansehra/>

URBAN FOREST PLANNED FOR KARACHI, SAYS NASIR SHAH

RECORDER REPORT | JAN 21ST, 2019 | KARACHI

Sindh Minister for Forests and Wildlife Department, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah has said that a transparent and comprehensive policy would be devised for the development and expansion of forests in the province. He said that a sustainable system based on merit and proper check and balance will be formulated in this regard, this he said while presiding over a meeting in which detailed discussion on preparation for the Sustainable Forest Management Policy 2019, Annual Development Programme and implementation of the orders, directions of the Supreme and high courts in various matters.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that owing to the climate change, increase in temperate and air pollution first urban forest of the province will be built in Karachi that will be expanded to other parts of the province gradually. He said that as part of the Green Karachi Project in coordination with public-private partnership Eco Friendly Trees will be planted near Malir rivulet and railway line.

The minister was of the view that the only purpose of the Urban Forest is to counter the adverse effects of the climate change and pollution. He directed to gear up the efforts before the upcoming spring season and also asked the officers to contact the relevant NGOs in this regard. Nasir Hussain Shah said that long and short term planning will be devised for the enhancement and protection of forests of the province.

The minister also directed the officers of the Forest Department to follow the orders of the supreme and high courts in letter and spirit. He also directed them to initiate urban forestry at divisional and district levels.

The minister asked the officers that each any every step should be taken for the development of forests and tree plantation in the province. Secretary Forests on the occasion briefed the meeting about the Sindh Sustainable Forest Management Policy 2019 thoroughly.

He said that after various consultative workshops, seminars, meetings and consultation with all the stakeholders a draft Policy in this regard will be presented next week. The inister said that a Green Sindh is an aim of the provincial government.

The meeting was also briefed in depth about the Annual Development Program. The minister directed all the officers to ensure the completion of ongoing development schemes on time with no compromise of the quality.

The meeting was attended among others by the Secretary Forests Department, Abdul Rahim Soomro, Chief Conservative of Forest Department, Aijaz Nazamani, Chief Conservative Inland Mangroves, Riaz Ahmed Wagan, Conservative Forest Department, Agha Tahir Husain, Social Forest Secretaries of Hyderabad, Zulfikar Ali Memon and Sukkur, Haider Raza Khan.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/01/20190121441186/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 14TH TO JANUARY 20TH 2019

UNGA CHIEF PARTICIPATES IN TREE PLANTATION DRIVE

RECORDER REPORT | JAN 20TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

President of UN General Assembly Maria Espinosa along with Advisor to Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam and Pakistan's Ambassador at UN Dr Maleeha Lodhi planted a tree here in the federal capital on Saturday as part of Ten Billion Tree Tsunami project of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government.

Earlier, the adviser to PM inaugurated the first private eco-friendly steam operated car wash plant in Islamabad.

Speaking on the occasion, Aslam said the new sophisticated car wash technology utilised only 12 litres of water to completely wash car and sustain its performance. "It is remarkable initiative and we appreciate such environmental friendly investment," he said, adding the depleting water resources and increasing population were constantly indicating to change the way of thinking and habits.

The director of the Mint-Pro Service Station, eco-friendly car wash, said, "We are struggling to bring profound changes in consumption of least water and the concept developed by Mint-Pro to revamp and organise the cleaning sector by introducing state-of-the-art technology and protocols empowering the most special feature of steam technology."

He added Mint-Pro was a brand which was literally going to change the way people think about car cleaning. It is a unique mechanised car cleaning concept where cars are getting pampered by the latest equipments and technology.

This includes high pressure cleaning machines, spray extractors machines, high powered vacuum cleaners, steam cleaners, polishers and many other such things.

The adviser said that such measures of water conservation would help save enough water for the future generations and help the country overcome ever-increasing water scarcity.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/01/20190120441022/>

CALL FOR AWARENESS ABOUT PROTECTING SNOW LEOPARD

A Correspondent January 19, 2019

GILGIT: Speakers at a function here on Friday emphasised for need of creating awareness among people about snow leopard's survival for healthy ecosystem.

The function was held to launch Pakistan Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programme (PSLEP) in Gilgit-Baltistan. The event was jointly organised by ministry of climate change, UNDP-Pakistan and Snow Leopard Foundation (SLF).

Wildlife experts, officials from government and non-government organisations, educational institutions and representatives of local communities participated in the event.

GB secretary agriculture, livestock and fisheries Khadim Hussain Saleem was the chief guest.

On the occasion, SLF director Dr Mohammad Ali Nawaz said prime objectives of the project were to promote landscape approach for survival of snow leopard and its prey species by reducing threats and applying sustainable land and forest management in critical habitats in northern Pakistan.

He also briefed the participants about the key challenges and barriers the project intended to address, including inadequate capacity, knowledge and proven models for conserving snow leopard and wildlife species at a landscape level; inadequate representation and protection of important habitats, including forests, in existing protected area network; insufficient economic incentives and alternatives to current practices of unsustainable land and forest use by local communities; and lack of awareness and skills necessary for wildlife monitoring, wildlife crime prevention and detection and effective conservation decision-making.

Syed Mahmood Nasir, inspector general forests, ministry of climate change, stressed the conservation of snow leopard as the animal is symbol of healthy ecosystem. He said climate change was major threat to snow leopards as agricultural lands were shifting in high mountains due to fast melting of glaciers and snow.

He appreciated initiatives of SLF like livestock vaccination and insurance schemes to support the community.

On the occasion, Mr Saleem acknowledged the conservation efforts of the organisations, particularly those working for snow leopard and its ecosystem conservation.

Talking about PSLEP, he said he hoped that the project would bring positive impact on the selected landscapes and valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan.

He offered full support of his department in implementation of the project.

A documentary on PSLEP introduction was also screened at the event.

Published in Dawn, January 19th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1458390/call-for-awareness-about-protecting-snow-leopard>

MILLS ASKED TO USE DANISH WATER TREATMENT TECHNOLOGY

By Imran Rana Published: January 19, 2019

FAISALABAD: Close liaison between developed and developing countries is imperative to share the benefits of modern technologies in order to face emerging challenges, said Embassy of Denmark Deputy Head of Mission Bente Schiller.

Speaking to members of the All Pakistan Textile Processing Mills Association (APTPMA) on Friday, she pointed out that the Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa) was installing a waste water treatment plant to recycle textile effluent.

This plant will recycle 45 million gallons of waste water daily, which could be utilised for irrigation, she said, adding a memorandum of understanding (MoU) had already been signed while physical work on the project would start very soon.

She underlined the importance of clean environment and told the millers that the industrial community of Faisalabad should adopt latest and environment-friendly Danish water treatment technology to overcome the potential hazards and challenges posed by the heavy discharge of untreated industrial effluent.

APTPMA Chairman Engineer Rizwan Ashraf said the association had 400 textile processing units as its members from across the country.

He said the processing sector was water-intensive and most of the textile processing units were paying aquifer charges and almost all units had dedicated sedimentation tanks for primary treatment of their effluent.

He welcomed the Punjab government's initiative of installing a joint waste water treatment plant and using the recycled water for irrigation.

Almost all processing units used skin-friendly dyes and chemicals while most of them had already been shifted out of the thickly populated areas, the chairman claimed and added now the Punjab government had established the M-3 Industrial Estate with support of the Faisalabad Industrial Estate Development and Management Company.

"Most of these units will shift to this well-planned industrial estate as work for the allotment of land has already been completed. Now, work on providing utilities like electricity, gas, sewerage and water treatment plants is in full swing," he said.

The government had assured that all these facilities would be provided to the processing units immediately after their relocation to the M3 Industrial Estate, he added.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 19th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1891605/2-mills-asked-use-danish-water-treatment-technology/>

EPD ISSUES DATA ON ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY MEASURES

Xari Jalil January 17, 2019

LAHORE: The Punjab Environment Protection Department (EPD) has stated that it has worked to control smog in the first few months of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government and air quality index (AQI) remained 'below the safe limits of 300', and mostly between 100 to 150.

Spokesperson for the EPD Naseemur Rehman said the recent decline in air quality was because of brick kilns' reopening.

"As kilns are functional again, a high AQI is to be expected," he said.

"That does not mean we have shelved the issue. We're pushing kiln owners to convert to the new zigzag technology in a couple of months. We will raise awareness among them, but after a certain time we'll not tolerate old style kilns." To add to smog control, the EPD closed down brick kilns in 'smog months' of November and December, 2018 in 11 districts falling in the red (danger) zone. These districts are Lahore, Sheikhpura, Kasur, Okara, Sahiwal, Khanewal, Multan, Nankana Sahib, Gujranwala, Faisalabad and Narowal. He said in collaboration with the All Pakistan Brick Kilns Owners Association, the government has been promoting zigzag kilns and 100 kilns have been converted to the zigzag technology.

EPD Secretary Dr Zafar Nasrullah says the construction of conventional brick kilns has been banned in Punjab, while kiln owners will be given loans for environment friendly zigzag kilns.

"Health related smog cases reported by the Health Department were also very negligible in 2018," he added.

The department held five meetings – three with the chief minister and two with the chief secretary on smog. He said the department was now monitoring the smog phenomenon with satellite imagery with the support of Met Department and SUPARCO.

"Our air quality monitoring stations (AQMS) have been revived," he said. "These AQMS are installed at Met Office, Township and one near Wagah border in Lahore and one AQMS each in Gujranwala, Faisalabad and Multan. Moreover, Stack Emission Analyzers are also functioning now." He clarified the AQI was being measured by the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) labs and being updated daily on its website and app. He said earlier they challaned 18,860 smoke emitting vehicles with the assistance of the traffic police and imposed a Rs840,932 fine on them.

After the Punjab government imposed section 144 on burning of crop stubble, solid waste, and rubber and plastic waste from October 1 to December 18, it improved the situation, he said. Also, more than 600 first information reports were lodged against violators. The situation of stubble burning is more controlled in Pakistan as compared to India. He said the smog issue was also being taken up with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for making this a regional environmental issue.

Dr Nasrullah said that meetings were arranged with major industrial associations, including chambers of commerce and industry, Steel Mill Associations, All Pakistan Brick Kiln Owners Association, Cement Factories and Sugar Mills Owners' Association, to formulate a policy for the compliance of the Punjab Environmental Quality Standards.

He said that scrubbers and other emission control devices were installed in about 70 of the steel furnaces of Sheikhpura and the similar devices were being installed in the factories of Lahore, Gujranwala and other districts.

Actions were also taken against violators under the Punjab Environmental Protection Act of 1997 (Amended 2012). Accordingly, 3201 notices have been issued to violators and 759 polluting factories were sealed. Similarly 4,210 notices were also issued to smoke emitting brick kilns. In October, a National Environment Commission on Air and Water Pollution was established, under the chairmanship of Dr Parvez Hassan on the orders of the Supreme Court. The EPD states that they

succeeded to control air pollution in the case of cement factories in Kahun Valley, Chakwal, with the assistance of the Supreme Court, the officer added.

Also, major companies involved in vehicle manufacturing and imports were told to provide information regarding category, fuel, quantity, make, model, engine capacity, engine type and pollution control devices for environmental protection. At the same time, according to the Prime Minister's Clean and Green Pakistan campaign, 984,744 trees were planted in Punjab.

Published in Dawn, January 17th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1457977/epd-issues-data-on-environment-friendly-measures>

LANDSLIDE KILLS EIGHT DASU DAM WORKERS ON KKH

The Newspaper's Correspondent Updated January 16, 2019

MANSEHRA: Eight labourers working on Dasu hydropower project were buried alive after their vehicle was struck by a huge landslide in Zero Point area of Upper Kohistan in wee hours of Tuesday.

"We have pulled out bodies of all the eight victims and handed them over to their families," Abdul Saboor Khan, Upper Kohistan district police officer, told reporters.

The labourers were on way to Dasu, the headquarters of Upper Kohistan, from the dam site after work when their vehicle was hit by landslide on the Karakoram Highway.

The local people and police rushed to the scene and retrieved bodies after hectic efforts of many hours and shifted them to civil hospital in Dasu.

Those killed in the tragedy were identified as Hamat Mir, Sowan, Mohammad Ghani, Mohammad Riaz, Abdul Malik, Malook Badshah, Saifur Rehman and Shabir Ahmad.

People block the highway, seek compensation for families

"We have started an investigation into how the incident occurred," said DPO Saboor.

Meanwhile, the angry people of Kohistan took to the streets later in the day and blocked the KKH in protest against Wapda. They also offered funeral prayers of the victims on the road and demanded compensation for the bereaved families of the workers.

"We will not reopen the highway to vehicular traffic until Wapda announces compensation for the bereaved families," said a speaker while addressing charged protesters.

He alleged that landslides were triggered because of the heavy blasting being carried out in the region by a Chinese company.

"The general manger of Dasu dam and I have started parlays with protesters to convince them to clear the highway," said Mr Saboor, adding: "I am optimistic the highway will soon be opened to vehicular traffic."

He said two sessions of talks had already been held with the protesters and hoped the third session would prove successful to convince the protesters to end the KKH blockade.

ROAD ACCIDENT: A man was killed and another sustained critical injuries when a van plunged into a ravine in Asharya area of Torghar on Tuesday.

The vehicle was on way to Judbah from Oghi when the driver while negotiating a sharp turn lost control over the steering.

The locals rushed to scene and shifted the bodies to a nearby hospital where doctors pronounced Shamsur Rehman dead.

Police after lodging FIR started investigation to ascertain the exact cause of the accident.

Published in Dawn, January 16th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1457809/landslide-kills-eight-dasu-dam-workers-on-kkh>

AIR POLLUTION TERMED GREATEST ENVIRONMENTAL THREAT TO HEALTH

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated January 15, 2019

KARACHI: Describing air pollution as the world's single biggest environmental health risk, experts at a three-day international conference, which concluded at Karachi University (KU) on Sunday, called for collaborative research efforts to determine the impact of specific sources of air pollution on human health.

They were speaking at the fifth international conference on 'Environmental horizon, sounding the alarm! Environment, climate change and health' organised by KU's department of chemistry and Office of Research Innovation and Commercialisation (ORIC), and International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS).

Sharing global concerns on air pollution, Dr Haider A. Khwaja from Wadsworth Centre at the School of Public Health of University at Albany in New York, said that air pollution was a serious public health issue the world over as population-based studies had documented health risks resulting from short-term exposure to air pollutants.

"The World Health Organisation reports that in 2012 around seven million people died — one in eight of total global deaths — due to exposure to air pollution. This data confirms that air pollution is now the world's largest single environmental health risk," he noted.

He said that the South Asian and Western Pacific regions had the largest air pollution-related burden in 2012 with 2.6m deaths linked to outdoor air pollution and 3.3m deaths related to indoor pollution, according to WHO.

A significant number of these deaths, he said, occurred due to stroke and cardiopulmonary diseases. These findings were not based on a significant increase in pollution but rather on improved knowledge of the links between air pollutants and cardiopulmonary diseases.

Dr James J. Schauer, a senior civil and environmental engineer heading the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said that the association of atmospheric particulate matter particles with adverse health effects had been well established and led experts to develop standards on these pollutants and implement control measures.

According to him, different strategies can be used in air pollution control programmes to reduce the impact of particulate matter, also known as particle pollution, given the complex nature of the sources of these pollutants.

He emphasised the need for collaborative efforts between atmospheric science studies and epidemiological and toxicological studies to establish how specific sources of air pollution were affecting human health.

Sheryl H. Ehrman from Davidson College of Engineering, San Jose State University, USA, informed the audience that anthropogenic pollutants had been successfully reduced in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States, resulting in improved air quality.

However, she said that parts of the mid-Atlantic were still non-attainment regions (areas which are considered to have air quality worse than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards as defined in the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1970 of the United States).

The ozone, she pointed out, was a secondary air pollutant, formed by reactions between volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides. Ozone precursors were mainly emitted by power plants, motor vehicles, industrial operations and biogenic sources.

“In the past several years, a new influx of emissions associated with hydraulic fracturing-based production of natural gas in the Marcellus Shale (the largest gas field in the US) may be counteracting the benefits that have been gained. On the flip side, low-cost natural gas could replace coal as fuel for power plants, potentially reducing emissions,” she observed.

Another speaker, Parisa A. Ariya of the department of chemistry and department of atmospheric and oceanic sciences, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, shared that the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) and WHO had identified airborne particles as a research priority of the utmost importance.

She said the IPCC pointed to the importance of aerosol-cloud processes due to their impacts on the absorption and scattering of irradiation, altering the earth’s climate whereas WHO predominantly considered aerosols to be health hazards.

Former federal minister for science and technology Atta-ur-Rahman spoke about how progress in science and technology had dramatically changed socio-economic conditions in different countries.

Director ICCBS Prof M. Iqbal Choudhary said biodiversity was a manifestation of chemical diversity and plants contained a fascinating array of highly evolved, specific and effective gene products.

Published in Dawn, January 15th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1457589/air-pollution-termed-greatest-environmental-threat-to-health>

GLOBAL WARMING THREATENS DIVERSE RANGE OF MARINE LIFE: STUDY

RECORDER REPORT | JAN 14TH, 2019 | TAMPA

The world’s oceans are heating up at an accelerating pace as global warming threatens a diverse range of marine life and a major food supply for the planet, researchers said. The findings in the US journal

Science, led by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, debunk previous reports that suggested a so-called pause in global warming in recent years.

The latest technology shows no such hiatus ever existed, raising new concerns about the pace of climate change and its effect on the planet's main buffer the oceans. "Ocean heating is a very important indicator of climate change, and we have robust evidence that it is warming more rapidly than we thought," said co-author Zeke Hausfather, a graduate student in the Energy and Resources Group at the University of California, Berkeley.

About 93 percent of excess heat trapped around the Earth by greenhouse gases that come from the burning of fossil fuels accumulates in the world's oceans. The latest report relied on four studies, published between 2014 and 2017, that gave more precise estimates of past trends in ocean heat, allowing scientists to update past research and hone predictions for the future. A key factor in the more accurate numbers is an ocean monitoring fleet called Argo, which includes nearly 4,000 floating robots that "drift throughout the world's oceans, every few days diving to a depth of 2,000 meters (yards) and measuring the ocean's temperature, pH, salinity and other bits of information as they rise back up," said the report.

Argo "has provided consistent and widespread data on ocean heat content since the mid-2000s," it said. The new analysis shows warming in the oceans is on pace with measurements of rising air temperature. And if nothing is done to reduce greenhouse gases, "models predict that the temperature of the top 2,000 meters of the world's oceans will rise 0.78 degrees Celsius by the end of the century," it said. The thermal expansion water swelling as it warms would raise sea level 12 inches (30 centimeters), above any sea level rise from melting glaciers and ice sheets.

"While 2018 will be the fourth warmest year on record on the surface, it will most certainly be the warmest year on record in the oceans, as was 2017 and 2016 before that," Hausfather said. "The global warming signal is a lot easier to detect if it is changing in the oceans than on the surface." "If the ocean wasn't absorbing as much heat, the surface of the land would heat up much faster than it is right now," Malin Pinsky, an associate professor in the department of ecology, evolution and natural resources at Rutgers University, told The New York Times. "In fact, the ocean is saving us from massive warming right now."

Laure Zanna, an associate professor of climate physics at the University of Oxford and who was not involved in the study, told the Times the new research was "a very nice summary of what we know of the ocean and how far the new estimates have come together."

"We are warming the planet but the ocean is not warming evenly, so different places warm more than others," Zanna said, according to the paper. "And so the first consequence will be that sea level will be different in different places depending on the warming."

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/01/20190114439558/>

PESTICIDE, METAL EXPOSURE TIED TO INCREASED RISK OF HEART DISEASE

January 14, 2019

NEW YORK: Workers who are exposed to pesticides or metals on the job may be significantly more likely to develop cardiovascular diseases, a US study suggests.

Researchers examined data on occupational exposure to solvents, metals and pesticides for 7,404 workers who were part of a Hispanic/Latino health study in four cities: Chicago, San Diego, Miami and New York. Overall, 6.5 percent of participants reported exposure to solvents at work, 8.5 percent encountered potentially toxic metals and 4.7 percent had pesticide exposure.

Individuals who were exposed to pesticides were more than twice as likely overall to have conditions like heart disease, heart failure or an irregular rapid heartbeat known as atrial fibrillation. Metal exposure was associated with a four-fold increase in risk for atrial fibrillation.

“Occupational exposures have been associated with clinical risk factors of cardiovascular disease such as high blood pressure, but few studies have evaluated whether there is actually an association with cardiovascular disease itself,” said lead study author Maria Argos of the University of Illinois at Chicago.

“Our study suggests that occupational exposures to metals or pesticides is associated with an elevated prevalence of coronary heart disease and atrial fibrillation,” Argos said by email.

It’s not exactly clear why this is the case, or whether Hispanic workers might be more or less susceptible to heart problems associated with pesticide exposure than people from other racial or ethnic groups, Argos said.

It’s possible, however, that exposure to pesticides or metals might increase inflammation or directly cause damage in the cardiovascular system, Argos said. Overall, 6.1 percent of the workers in the study had at least one form of cardiovascular disease. Most of these cases were coronary heart disease, in which narrowed arteries reduce blood flow to the heart.

Workers exposed to pesticides were 2.2 times more likely to have coronary heart disease than workers without this exposure. Pesticide exposure was also associated with nearly six times the odds of atrial fibrillation and a 38 percent higher risk of blood vessel damage in the brain.

Organic solvents used for tasks like degreasing, dry cleaning and making things like paint, plastics and textiles were not associated with an increased risk of heart problems, the researchers reported in the journal *Heart*.

One limitation of the study is that researchers relied on workers to accurately recall and report on any exposure to pesticides, solvents and metals on the job, the authors note. Researchers also lacked data on the total amount of exposure to these potential toxins, making it impossible to distinguish between occasional and habitual contact.—Reuters

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/01/14/10-page/758525-news.html>

K-P MAY FORM COMMISSION TO PROBE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

By Our Correspondent Published: January 14, 2019

PESHAWAR: The provincial government has hinted at creating a joint commission which will probe the air pollution allegedly caused owing to the rising number of oil and gas fields in Kohat division.

This was suggested by Adviser to the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) Chief Minister (CM) on Energy and Power Development Himayatullah Khan during a visit to inspect different oil and gas fields in the

division including in Dhoke Hussain, Noshaba and Makri. The commission, Himayatullah said, would investigate ways and means to control rising air pollution and devise a comprehensive strategy in this regard.

He directed the companies to take appropriate, positive and solid measures to keep the environment clean to safeguard valuable lives in the division, adding that companies could plant more trees under their corporate social responsibilities to keep the environment clean.

Member National Assembly (MNA) Shahid Khattak, MPAs Nisar Gul Kakakhel, Zahoor Shakir, and Shah Faisal stated how the local infrastructure, including roads of the division, had been damaged owing to the presence of the oil and gas companies.

They further complained that the oil and gas royalties provided to locals is quite low and it should be increased so that the living standard of the people could be improved.

Energy and Power Department secretary stated that land for the oil and gas fields had been purchased on nominal rates through the old land lease agreement. However, he said that these agreements will be revised soon after the relevant legislation is passed by the K-P Assembly.

Himayatullah assured that an audit will be conducted through a third party so that the good work done is appreciated apart from encouraging those working for the welfare of the people of the area.

Moreover, he directed the relevant oil and gas companies to revise their plans and provide much-needed employment to residents of the area.

He also directed them to announce scholarships for local students apart from creating sporting and other entertainment opportunities for the youth of the area.

The adviser also visited the control room of the Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) where he was told that the Noshaba oil and gas fields produce some 18,400 barrels oil and 86 Million Cubic Feet per Day (MMCFD) of gas along with 300 metric tonnes of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) on a daily basis.

He also directed the concerned quarters to computerise all processes so that actual production could be gauged.

Locals had filed a petition before the Peshawar High Court (PHC) in which they sought an order for the formation of a joint investigation team to probe the theft of crude oil worth Rs142 billion from the oil and gas fields of Karak.

A counsel for the petitioners had told the bench that the petition had been filed in the interest of the public at large and thus it should be heard by a division bench of the high court. In the petition, the residents requested the court to declare that the people of Karak, Kohat and Hangu, whose properties and lands were damaged and faced health hazards and environmental degradation, were entitled to compensation from the provincial and federal governments.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 14th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1887701/1-k-p-may-form-commission-probe-environmental-impacts/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 7TH TO JANUARY 13TH 2019

CALL FOR MASSIVE PLANTATION

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter January 13, 2019

KARACHI: Highlighting how environmental degradation is affecting community life and health, experts said that one important contribution every individual could make towards saving nature is to get involved in plantation in a big way.

They were speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the fifth international conference on 'Environmental Horizon, Sounding the Alarm! Environment, Climate Change and Health', which opened at Karachi University (KU) on Friday. It was held at the International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS) jointly organised by KU's department of chemistry, Office of Research Innovation and Commercialisation and the ICCBS.

Speaking about environmental challenges, Hammad Naqi Khan, the director general of the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan, said that it was high time to take concrete measures to address environmental challenges in the country.

"There is a dire need to understand the gravity of environmental challenges that Pakistan faces today, including deforestation, climate change and reduction of freshwater resources. They are adversely impacting environment, health and economy of the country," he said.

Sharing details of government plans to improve environmental conditions, Zartaj Gul Wazir, federal minister of state for climate change, said environmental degradation and public health were interlinked and the country currently faced serious challenges in both sectors. One indicator was Pakistan's high child mortality rates, especially those dying of diarrhoea caused by contaminated water and food, she added.

Expressing government's resolve to tackle health and environment-related problems, she said that her ministry was following the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan to make the county green.

The government, she said, believed that country's youth could play a critical role in improving environmental conditions. The first step in this regard was to make them aware of the importance of forests and nature conservation.

Touching upon the subject of untreated waste water being discharged into the sea, she said the issue needed immediate attention from authorities concerned, hinting at Sindh government's lack of initiatives in this regard.

ICCBS director Prof Iqbal Choudhary pointed out that Pakistan was the seventh most vulnerable country to climate change. He said climate change and environmental degradation should be treated as a communal problem. Referring to statistics of international organisations, he said the country was suffering from many ecological challenges posing severe threats to human health and life.

“Deforestation, air pollution, water pollution, noise pollution, climate change, pesticide misuse, soil erosion and desertification are all environmental issues directly affecting public health,” he said. Special secretary health Dabeer A. Khan briefed the audience about Sindh government’s efforts in environmental and health sectors.

Published in Dawn, January 13th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1457225/call-for-massive-plantation>

‘INDUSTRIES CAN REDUCE POLLUTANTS WITH IN-HOUSE TREATMENT TECHNIQUES’

The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter January 12, 2019

KARACHI: Faced with a water crisis and increasing environmental degradation, Pakistan needs immediate steps to strictly implement environmental laws and ensure that industries put in place technologies that could help reduce the level of pollutants in effluent. This initiative would also help improve the country’s exports.

These points were raised during a two-day training workshop organised by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) which concluded on Thursday.

Titled ‘Environmental Monitoring and Smart Environmental Management Practices (SEMPs)’, the workshop was organised in collaboration with the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWF-P) and conducted in Karachi and Hyderabad.

Both parties have recently signed a memorandum of understanding under which Sepa staff would receive technical assistance from the WWF-P on environmental assessment.

The workshop aimed at helping Sepa staff review their existing procedures and practices pertaining to environmental monitoring and sampling methodologies.

The event started off with a briefing by Komal Naeem, representing the WWF-P, on the European Union-funded project titled ‘International Labour and Environmental Standards (ILES) — Application in Pakistan’s Small and Medium Enterprises’, being implemented jointly with the International Labour Organisation in Lahore, Karachi, Sialkot and Faisalabad.

The aim is to implement international labour and environmental standards in Pakistan. She said the six-year project involves building capacity of the textile and leather sector to adopt smart environmental management practices to efficiently use water and energy resources and reduce the use of hazardous chemicals by 15 to 20 per cent.

Arjmand Qayyum Amjad, coordinator at ILES, WWF-P, shared a detailed overview on environment and climate change in the context of multilateral environmental agreements signed and ratified by Pakistan.

He was of the view that industries could reduce the level of pollutants (biochemical oxygen demand and chemical oxygen demand) by 80 to 90pc through proper in-house treatment techniques.

Published in Dawn, January 12th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1456928/industries-can-reduce-pollutants-with-in-house-treatment-techniques>

SPEAKERS FOR ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

RECORDER REPORT 2019/01/12

KARACHI: Every year around 54,000 Pakistani children die of diarrhea, the Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul Wazir expressed on Friday.

She resolved that Pakistan, as a great nation, had to battle with the dilemma of climate change and environmental degradation. The minister asked the citizens to plant trees in the metropolis to make it green, clean and beautiful.

She was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the fifth international conference on 'Environmental Horizon, Sounding the Alarm! Environment, Climate Change and Health' held at Prof Salimuzzaman Siddiqui Auditorium, International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), University of Karachi on Friday.

The international event was jointly organised by the Karachi University's Department of Chemistry, ICCBS, and the University's Office of Research Innovation and Commercialization.

The ceremony was well attended and addressed by Special Secretary Health Dabeer A Khan, World Wide Fund for Nature Director General Pakistan Hammad Naqi Khan, ICCBS Director Prof Dr M Iqbal Chaudhry, Chairman Chemistry Department Prof Dr Majid Mumtaz, and two US delegates including Dr James Schauer. The chemistry event will conclude on Sunday.

The minister said her ministry was following the vision of PM Imran Khan to make the country green and beautiful. She regretted that untreated wastewater was being released to ocean. This issue needs immediate attention, she observed.

The minister stated that the students, listening to her in the auditorium, was her target audience, and said Pakistan had the largest part of youth in her population. She maintained that the nation needed to make her youth aware about the importance of forests and clean and green environment for human survival.

She appreciated the University for holding such a useful international conference. Meanwhile, Prof Iqbal Chaudhry pointed out that Pakistan was the seventh most vulnerable country to climate change. He said climate change and environmental degradation should be treated as a communal problem.

Quoting statistics issued by the international organizations, he said the country was suffering from many ecological challenges posing severe threats to human health and life.

In Pakistan environmental issues include deforestation, air pollution, water pollution, noise pollution, climate change, pesticide misuse, soil erosion, natural disasters and desertification, Prof Chaudhry said.

Dabeer A Khan said the provincial government was fighting against various health issues and diseases which are directly associated with the environmental degradation and climate change.

Speaking on the issue, Hammad Naqi Khan said it was the right time for talking concrete measures to address environmental challenges in the country. He said deforestation, climate change and the reduction of freshwater resources were the major environmental issues in Pakistan which are adversely impacting the environment, health and economy of the country.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/01/12/17-page/758295-news.html>

‘MOSQUITO BIRTH CONTROL’ DRUG COULD BE READY IN FIVE YEARS

Thomson Reuters Foundation Updated January 10, 2019

LONDON: Scientists in the United States said on Tuesday they had taken a major step towards developing a “mosquito birth control” drug to curb the spread of malaria and other killer diseases blamed for hundreds of thousands of deaths a year.

Researchers at the University of Arizona said they had discovered a protein unique to female mosquitoes which is critical for their young to hatch. When the scientists blocked the protein, the females laid eggs with defective shells causing the embryos inside to die.

The team said developing drugs which targetted the protein could provide a way to reduce mosquito populations without harming beneficial insects such as bees.

“It’s an important discovery,” Roger Miesfeld, head of the university’s department of chemistry and biochemistry, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone. “We’re certainly excited about it ... This gets around mosquito resistance and also has a much better chance of being bio-safe [than other methods].”

Mosquitoes are one of the world’s deadliest animals, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) which has warned that global progress against malaria is stalling.

The disease infected around 216 million people in 2016, killing 445,000 of them, predominantly babies and young children in sub-Saharan Africa. Other diseases spread by mosquitoes include Zika, Chikungunya, yellow fever, West Nile virus and dengue, which has risen 30-fold in recent decades, according to the WHO.

Miesfeld said current methods of controlling mosquitoes had been used for so long that the insects were becoming resistant. He said the research team was surprised to find that treated females could no longer reproduce for the rest of their two- to three-week life span.

He added that he hoped the discovery could lead to the development of a new generation of insecticides in five years.

These could be applied to bed nets and other areas in the same way as current sprays and would be absorbed by the mosquito through her legs and body.

Published in Dawn, January 10th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1456612/mosquito-birth-control-drug-could-be-ready-in-five-years>

‘BIOCHAR CAN CUT CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT ON PLANTS’

The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter January 09, 2019

KARACHI: Latest research initiatives taken up in various parts of the world on halophytes (salt-tolerant plants) came under discussion on Tuesday, the second day of an international conference currently in progress at the Karachi University (KU).

The three-day event titled ‘Sustainable development: halophytes for green revolution’ has been organised by KU’s Institute of Sustainable Halophyte Utilisation (ISHU) at the university’s business school.

Giving a presentation on his team’s research work focused on improving crop productivity and minimising build-up of salts, Professor Xiaojing Liu of Chinese Academy of Sciences said that research-based amendments in soil structure and chemical composition were important to help prevent degradation of soil.

He agreed with other scientists’ view that utilisation of halophytes as non-conventional crops for arid saline lands held immense potential to ensure food security in the future.

Prof Todd P. Egan from the USA described salinisation of land as one of the major impediments for conventional agriculture especially in the arid and semi-arid regions of the world.

“Lack of rain and high summer temperatures can further aggravate the situation in these areas. Most of our conventional crops are salt-sensitive and can’t endure even low levels of soil salinity. Hence, there is a dire need for innovative approaches to overcome these problems,” he noted.

He also briefed the audience on the work of his team which had prepared a “super absorbent” material that could retain about 90 per cent of the soil moisture and essential nutrients, a prerequisite for long-term crop productivity.

“Use of such material can be of immense aid for high-saline agriculture,” he said.

Prof Hans Werner Koyro, a senior plant ecologist from Germany, delivered his lecture on global climate change and use of biochar; it is a charcoal-like substance produced from agriculture and forest wastes which contains 70pc carbon and is used as a soil enhancer to increase fertility, prevent soil degradation and to sequester carbon in the soil.

“Biochar is a potential remedy to minimise harmful impacts of climate change on plants and can be a solution for enhancing productivity of agricultural land.

“Anthropogenic activities have accelerated global climate changes which are evident worldwide in the form of weather anomalies, drought spells, floods and tsunamis,” he observed, adding that these conditions also impacted crop productivity.

Biochar, according to him, can sequester sodium and heavy metals, which are toxic for plants.

“Hence, the use of biochar can play an important role in cultivation of halophytes as non-conventional crops on saline lands in sustainable way,” he suggested.

Dr Irfan Khan, a senior professor of environmental sciences at Islamic University in Islamabad, gave a presentation on the use of halophytes to achieve United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly of SDG-2.

“This specific goal is about eliminating hunger from the world. The cultivation of halophytes as non-conventional crops is also in accordance with Pakistan’s National Sustainable Development Policy,” he said.

He was of the opinion that the gap between policymaking bodies and academia had to be bridged in order for policies to be successful and ensure that research really benefited people at the grass-root level.

The conference concludes tomorrow (Wednesday).

Published in Dawn, January 9th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1456284/biochar-can-cut-climate-change-impact-on-plants>

AIRPORT POLICE STEALS 8,000 PANTS, SELLS THEM AT KARACHI’S ZAINAB MARKET

By Sajid Rauf Published: January 9, 2019

KARACHI: The investigation police, with the help of Citizens Police Liaison Committee (CPLC), arrested on Tuesday a shopkeeper of Zainab Market and two brokers involved in the theft of 8,000 export quality pants worth millions of rupees. They also seized 334 pants worth Rs117,000 from their possession.

According to the investigation officials, the inquiry revealed the presence of an organised group of thieves at the airport comprising an official of Airport Police Station, Javed, and a private broker, Yasir. Several accused along with the police officials of Airport Police Station were found involved in the group’s activities.

The investigation police said that the consignments were dispatched from the company sealed in cardboard boxes and that the thieves made holes in the cartons to steal the pants. They had fixed points from where they would steal.

The investigation officials said that the group used to sell the stolen items in different markets of Karachi through brokers. The actual price of a single pant ranges from Rs3,000 to Rs4,000, but the group sold these pants for a price between Rs500 and Rs600, they said. The shopkeepers purchased these pants and sold them to their customers at higher rates.

Officials further said that Javed had acquired pre-arrest bail while Yasir had gone into hiding. Raids are being carried out to arrest him. The investigation officials said that more revelations were expected in the theft case.

On December 25, the manager of a renowned textile company, Fayaz Ahmed, son of Abdul Ghani, registered case number 1334/2018, under Section 34/407, at the Korangi Industrial Area Police Station. He said that his company exports clothes, mainly pants, to European countries however for the last six months their clients had complained of receiving less quantity of products. He said that the company was sending the correct quantity of products in their shipments, but according to the

complaints received, they had ascertained that 8,000 pants had been stolen. He claimed that the pants were either stolen by the brokers at the airport or their own workers after being dispatched from the company.

The manager added that the theft not only caused a great financial loss to the company but also affected its reputation in the foreign market. The robberies also perpetuated a negative image of the country. He demanded that action be taken against the accused.

The arrested include shopkeeper Rizwan, son of Abdul Wahid, and brokers, Tahir and Shahid.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1884111/1-karachi-airport-police-steals-8000-pants-sells-market/>

GREEN PAKISTAN PROGRAMME: PDWP APPROVES FUNDS OF OVER RS32B TO RECLAIM FORESTS

By Imran Adnan Published: January 8, 2019

LAHORE: To enhance forest cover in Punjab, the Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP) has approved development funds of Rs32.426 billion for the ‘Green Pakistan Programme – Reclamation and Development of Forest Areas in Punjab’.

The scheme was approved in a special meeting of the PDWP for FY2018-19 on Monday. The meeting approved the aforementioned amount as per revised estimates and up-scaling of phase-1 of the programme.

The meeting was presided over by the Planning and Development Board (P&D) Chairman Habibur Rehman Gillani. It was also attended by P&D Secretary Iftikhar Ali Sahoo, members of the board, provincial secretaries and other senior representatives of relevant departments.

The project was originally initiated by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in January 2016 after considering a summary submitted by the Ministry of Climate Change.

The subject of the document was “Revival of Forestry and Wildlife Resources in Pakistan.” At the time, he took the decision to reclaim and develop forest areas under the Green Pakistan Programme.

In November 2016, the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) had approved an umbrella PC-I at a total cost of Rs3.652 billion with the aim to launch a countrywide drive to improve and enhance the forest cover of the country. Later, the CDWP reduced the government of Punjab’s share to a PC-I cost of Rs1.283 billion which was approved by the PDWP.

In view of the significance of this initiative, the programme also included the 11th Five Year Plan (2013-18) which was approved by the Planning Commission of Pakistan.

The project was also in line with a relevant component of the Environment and Climate Change of Vision 2025.

According to the Punjab Forest, Wildlife and Fisheries Department, the province has poor forest cover and needs to increase such areas in the next few years by a adopting two-pronged strategy, including short and long term actions.

It highlights that in countries like Pakistan, where dry weather conditions persist, the role of forests is vital to improve water conservation and increase resilience to disaster. Currently, the forestry sector is confronted with a number of challenges.

These include the massive the degradation of watersheds, deforestation, encroachments, conversion of forests, overuse of rangelands, pressures on habitats, biodiversity loss, desertification, impact of climate change and prolonged droughts. There are also the problems of the heavy dependence of the rural population on biomass energy, complex land tenure; weak forestry institutions, ineffective enforcement of law and lack of inter-sectoral coordination and forest fires and spread of invasive species.

The department underscores that the overall improvement of the forestry sector in the province will require continuous efforts through a number of initiatives under the long-term Green Pakistan Programme.

Existing forest resources, being crucial to environmental stability, demand serious interventions from the federal/provincial government.

It requires both to lead from the front with a commitment for sufficient financial contribution through an umbrella project to improve and enhance the existing forest cover of the country.

The Third Party Validation Study Report report finds that road and canal side plantation was below 50% of the target and variance of average height and diameter were also not satisfactory. Under rehabilitation and restocking of historical plantation, specie selection was largely neglected across all forests and violations of space size (10' X 6') were recorded at Changa Maanga and the Chichawatni plantation.

The report finds that under the Green Pakistan Programme 2016-17, overall plantation and progress is partially satisfactory. It was found that the mixed culture of indigenous species was not followed, spacing size was largely violated. Also, uncertain and high variation of height and diameter measurements of planted species pointed out flaws in its execution, operation and maintenance. The proper record of procurement and procedures, if followed as per PPRA Rules, was not provided. GPS coordinates mentioned in the PC-I and available with field formation were inaccurate also and would distract from the findings of dashboard monitoring.

Published in The Express Tribune, January 8th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1883483/1-green-pakistan-programme-pdwp-approves-funds-rs32b-reclaim-forests/>

SAUDI, QATARI ROYAL FAMILIES ON HOUBARA HUNTING VISIT

Intikhab Hanif Updated January 07, 2019

LAHORE: The Saudi and Qatari royal families are, like every year, hunting houbara bustards in the designated areas of Punjab after paying fees which the previous PML-N government had waived.

And the authorities are awaiting the arrival of the members of the royal families of the UAE, saying the limited hunting would not endanger the migratory birds which fly to relatively warm areas every winter.

The annual three-month hunting season starts in Pakistan on Nov 1 and lasts till Jan 31. South Punjab districts are the main hunting areas and major beneficiaries are the Arab rulers.

Officials said on Sunday each group of royal families had paid \$100,000 to the federal government for permission to hunt houbara bustards. An equal amount of money had also been paid to the Punjab government for allocation of the hunting area. The permission is for 10 days and each group can hunt up to 100 houbara bustards.

Officials said the previous government was not charging any fees for the hunting for the past nearly three years. They said the group of the Saudi Arabian royal family was hunting the birds in their designated Vehari, Multan, Mianwali and Sargodha districts.

Those from Qatar were hunting in Layyah, Khushab, Jhang and Bhakkar.

The royal guests from Dubai had been allocated two areas – Muzaffargarh and Bahawalpur including Fort Abbas in Bahawalnagar. Those from Abu Dhabi had been allocated Rahim Yar Khan, Rajanpur, Dera Ghazi Khan and Chakwal.

Officials said the mandatory fees had been imposed on the directions of the prime minister. For stay beyond the initial 10 days limit, an additional \$100,000 would be charged. Half of the fees would be spent on the development of the assigned area, 35 per cent for the improvement of the houbara bustard habitat and 15 per cent on security.

A fee of \$1,000 each is for bringing along one falcon and taking it back home. Hunting beyond the limit of 100 birds would entail a fine of \$1,000 per bird.

Hunting is allowed only through falconry and use of firearms is prohibited. Only notified dignitary is allowed to hunt. Advance camping is allowed for them which is required to be removed within seven days of the departure of the dignitary.

Officials said as per the federal government directions, provincial, divisional and district level committees had also been formed. The one under the chief secretary and comprising secretaries of different departments concerned was required to coordinate with the federal government for licensing and approved hunting areas, approval of schemes received from the divisional areas development committee considering sector wise guidelines, requirements and available funds, and monitoring the progress and utilisation.

Published in Dawn, January 7th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1455919/saudi-qatari-royal-families-on-houbara-hunting-visit>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 31ST TO JANUARY 6TH 2019

EXPERTS DISCUSS THREATS TO MARINE FLAGSHIP SPECIES

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter January 03, 2019

KARACHI: Collaborative efforts at national and regional levels are immediately required to protect marine megafauna facing multiple threats. These animals are considered flagship species and indicate health of the marine ecosystem.

This was stated by experts during a consultative workshop organised on Wednesday by the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWF-P) at a local hotel.

The event aimed at highlighting key challenges to the survival of flagship species in Pakistan's waters.

Speaking about WWF-P role in marine conservation, Dr Babar Khan, director conservation at the organisation, said it had been working to improve existing fishing practices and taking steps to minimise fishing induced mortalities of endangered, threatened and protected species, including marine dolphins, whales, sharks and turtles.

He underscored the need to provide better livelihood opportunities to local fishers who were playing instrumental role in protecting marine megafauna.

Sharing data on the distribution and abundance of marine flagship species in Pakistani waters, Muhammad Moazzam Khan, technical adviser on marine programme at WWF-P, said that the organisation had initiated a programme to help gather information on marine mammals (whales and dolphins), sharks, marine birds and other important species.

"In order to reduce mortality and entanglement of these animals in fishing gears, the WWF-P has also introduced subsurface gillnetting which is now fully adopted by fishermen," he said.

The initiative was being acclaimed globally as it had led to conservation of many marine animals mainly turtles, dolphins and whale sharks, he added.

He also shed light on various management measures which had been taken for conservation of 'endangered, threatened and protected' species.

Samar Hussain Khan, the deputy conservator wildlife at the climate change ministry and national focal person for Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, said that most marine turtles were migratory and faced various threats while travelling through different oceans.

Pakistan, he pointed out, was signatory to several multilateral environmental agreements aimed at addressing conservation challenges to marine cetaceans.

Highlighting the role of marine cetaceans in eco-tourism, a source of livelihood for local fishermen, Master Abdul Rasheed from Sonmiani Development Organisation shared details of the dolphin watch programme.

“This programme has brought about multiple benefits as it generates income for locals and enhances awareness of the ecological significance of these animals,” he explained.

Other speakers included officials from the provincial and federal fisheries departments, academia and relevant government organisations.

At the end of presentations, participants in the workshop were asked to develop a conservation framework with recommendations to address key threats to marine megafauna in Pakistan.

The workshop was held as part of Sustainable Fisheries Entrepreneurship Project being implemented by WWF-P in collaboration with Engro Foundation in the selected priority coastal areas of Karachi.

The project promotes improved fisheries management by reforming fisheries governance that helps combat illegal fishing and reduce pressure on marine ecosystem.

Published in Dawn, January 3rd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1455096/experts-discuss-threats-to-marine-flagship-species>

SINDH GOVT’S ‘INDIFFERENCE’ TO DEFORESTATION ANNOYS SC

Nasir Iqbal January 03, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday expressed concern over perceived foot-dragging and indifference on the part of the Sindh government over retrieval of large pieces of forest land leased out to private developers.

A three-member Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar was also visibly disturbed over the lack of measures taken to protect forest cover and instead launching of new housing schemes.

The court took up a petition moved by Qazi Ali Athar, an attorney specialising in environmental issues, who requested the court to restrain the provincial government from introducing any scheme on land with forest cover for housing schemes or townships, or for the purposes of land distribution, land reforms or any other schemes or policies that amounted to deforestation or land possession.

When Justice Ijazul Ahsan wondered how the Bahria Town was handed over forest land in the province, the petitioner informed the court that the tycoon concerned was provided 11,000 acres of forest land in Karachi and another 4,000 acres in Nawabshah.

At this, the chief justice expressed disappointment at the provincial government’s inaction to recover forest land and observed that if the functionaries concerned did not want to work they should leave the country because they were not capable of running the government.

Petitioner says forest land in the province should be declared protected areas

In his petition, Mr Athar had questioned the official step in January 2012 of de-notifying the status of forest land in favour of the Sindh government's land utilisation department, Federal Board of Revenue, as well as the 2010 summary of the chief minister allowing the conversion of "forest land" to "revenue land".

The petitioner alleged that the-then president ordered conversion of forest land to revenue land, a step which was declared as illegal by the Sindh High Court. Similarly, former chief minister Qaim Ali Shah failed to conduct a satellite survey of the land despite the high court's directives.

The petitioner requested the court that all the 2,858,748 acres of forest land in Sindh be declared national asset and a protected zone. The forest cover should never be allowed to be depleted under any circumstances. Therefore all the allotments and leases involving forest land should be cancelled and vacated from all kinds of land grabbers through an indiscriminate operation, the petition said.

The petitioner also highlighted the June 19, 2015 policy of the Sindh chief minister for allotment of 9,552 acres of land among families of martyred army soldiers on an ownership basis.

For that purpose, the chief minister had issued directives to the chief secretary as well as the forest department to move a summary for approval of change in the status of land in Shikarpur district and other areas.

The petition alleged that a piece of land from the Nasri Forest in Shaheed Benazirabad district measuring 3,410 acres was given to the said tycoon for the development of his third mega project — the Bahria Town, Nawabshah.

Likewise, in Karachi thousands of acres from the Kathore Reserve Forests and green belts were allotted to the Bahria Town, Karachi.

This countrywide grabbing of forest land was in continuity to their previous projects on the statutory protected forests of Rawalpindi and Lahore, the petition said.

It regretted that Pakistan was a signatory to the millennium development goals 2005 of the United Nations and was supposed to increase forest cover from 4.2 per cent to 15pc but deforestation was continuing apace in northern areas, Azad Kashmir, Margalla Hills of Islamabad, Punjab and Balochistan. In particular, the riverine forests of Sindh are continuously facing such threats under the nose of the forest department.

The petition called for constitution of a judicial commission to investigate the organised deforestation or degradation of forests, A national forest commission could also be set up on a permanent basis under the supervision of the ministry of climate change for monitoring and conservation purposes.

The petition also requested the court to restrain the Sindh government from leasing forest land to private or local landlords or political/influential persons. It also invited the attention of the court towards the deforestation of mangrove forests on the coasts of Sindh.

The court should also issue instructions for ensuring sustainable management of natural forests in the country, the petition contended, adding that the provincial government should be asked to take measures to restore green banks of the Indus, irrigation canals and streams.

The petition requested the court to order the provincial government to cancel the Sindh Agro-Forestry Policy of 2004 and instead formulate a comprehensive forest rehabilitation and protection programme with consultation with all the stakeholders.

The apex court postponed further proceedings till Jan 9 and said the hearing would take place at the Karachi registry of the court. The bench directed the Sindh government to furnish a reply before that hearing.

Published in Dawn, January 3rd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1455158/sindh-govts-indifference-to-deforestation-annoys-sc>

February 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 18TH TO FEBRUARY 24TH 2019

WILDLIFE STAFF SAVE RARE LEOPARD CAT, ARREST POACHERS

Jamal Shahid Updated February 24, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Punjab and Islamabad wildlife departments carried out a joint operation that saved a rare leopard cat that was being sold on the black market for Rs45,000 and arrested two poachers.

Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) Field Supervisor Zaheer Khan told Dawn on Saturday that the cat, which is extremely rare, was trapped in the Margalla Hills and the poachers were trying to sell it on the black market on College Road.

“They had also posted an advertisement on Facebook. That’s how one of our volunteer staff members, Mohibullah, found out and reported the case, and both the wildlife board and the Punjab Wildlife Department responded,” he said.

Field officers first approached the poachers as interested buyers and made a down payment. The poachers, both Rawalpindi residents, were arrested at the meeting point at Faizabad when they came to deliver the cat.

“The leopard cat is safe and unharmed and out of danger now,” Mr Khan said.

IWMB Assistant Director Fahim Changwani said the Margalla Hills National Park used to be home to a variety of creatures, but intrusions and illegal trapping has caused their numbers to dwindle.

The number of leopard cats in the hills is not known, but Mr Changwani said there are probably less than half a dozen to be found in the national park.

Slightly bigger than an ordinary cat and often confused from a leopard cub, the leopard cat is almost extinct in the Margalla Hills. Its trade and trapping is illegal.

Published in Dawn, February 24th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1465672/wildlife-staff-save-rare-leopard-cat-arrest-poachers>

POLICY TO PROTECT SINDH'S FORESTS BEING FRAMED: MINISTER

RECORDER REPORT | FEB 24TH, 2019 | KARACHI

Sindh Minister for Forests and Wildlife Syed Nasir Hussain Shah has said that government was in the process of formulating a policy to promote and protect forests in the province as once this policy would be unveiled; everyone concerned would be required to fully abide by it. He said that plantation of trees on both sides of the arteries had been made a compulsory component of all the new development schemes concerning the construction of new roads in the province.

He said that maximum species of shade and fruit trees would be planted in the city in the upcoming forestry campaign which will commence from Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Park in Clifton.

Chairing a meeting, he said that all the concerned stakeholders should duly give their suggestions to the provincial authorities concerned as the same would be incorporated in the upcoming budget of Sindh government for promoting greenery in the city.

He said that it was the duty of every responsible organization to do tree plantation in the parks present in their immediate surroundings. Sindh Secretary for Forests Abdul Rahim Soomro said that provincial government had been working on the plan to turn Karachi into an urban forest as at present it had virtually assumed the shape of a concrete jungle.

He said that tree saplings of minimum three feet height should be planted at each of the suitable available space so that there should be no serious problem in their growth.

President of National Forum for Environment and Health (NFEH) Muhammad Naeem Qureshi said that his association would provide utmost support to the government to promote greenery in the city as in this regard the forests department and other relevant agencies of the government should also lend support to the concerned NGOs to make this campaign a resounding success. A committee was also constituted on the occasion to do planning, spread awareness among masses, look after the plants, and take care of other aspects of the upcoming tree plantation drive in the city.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/02/20190224449734/>

CHINA READY TO EXTEND MORE FINANCE FOR CLEAN KARACHI: CHINESE CG

Parvez Jabri February 21, 2019

KARACHI: Chinese Counsel General (CG) in Karachi, Wang Yu Thursday said the Chinese Government was keen to see Karachi a clean city and was ready to finance the projects for this purpose.

Chinese envoy was speaking at a ceremony to hand over Chinese Garbage Tractor and Loading Bike to the Pakistan's youngest Councilor Mustafa Karani, from UC-18 Al-Falah area of PS-129, here at the Governor House, said an official statement.

Sindh Governor Imran Ismail thanked the Chinese Consulate for offering more Garbage Tractors and Loading Bikes to the City Government to keep Karachi clean.

The Governor recalled that Sino-Pakistan friendship went back to decades, which was becoming stronger with the passage of time. In the future, he said, these two border countries would expand their cooperation and partnership in more sectors especially in the economy.

He said the friendship did not exist only between the two governments but in the people of the two countries.

“Pakistanis and Chinese do feel at home when they visit each other’s country,” he remarked.

To a media question, the Governor said that the accountability process is going across the board and on merit. For the first time, it was being carried in very transparent manner to the satisfaction of even the common man.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insfa’s members of Sindh Assembly from Karachi Dr. Imran Ali Shah, Haleem Adil Shaikh, Mr. Adeel and CPLC Chief Zubair Habib were also present.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/02/21/476035/china-ready-to-extend-more-finance-for-clean-karachi-chinese-cg/>

FLASH FLOODS, HEAVY RAINS CLAIM 19 LIVES ACROSS COUNTRY

Dawn Report Updated February 22, 2019

PESHAWAR: Torrential rains lashed several cities in the country, leaving at least 19 people dead and 18 injured, authorities said on Thursday. Most deaths took place because the roofs of houses could not withstand the torrential rains and landslides. The deaths were reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Punjab and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

In two incidents in Khyber tribal district, two Frontier Corps personnel and two minor girls were killed. Two other women were injured. Security officials in Bara confirmed the death of the FC men, affiliated with Mehsud Scouts, Muhammad Kamran and Sher Zaman when the roof of their house collapsed in the Ghaibi Neeka area of Tirah valley. As for the two minor girls, Afsa and Kalsum, they were buried alive when the roof of their house in Bacha Maina locality at Torkham caved in due to excessive rain on Tuesday and Wednesday. Their deaths occurred on Wednesday evening. Two women were also injured in the incident and were later shifted to a local hospital.

Four people including two brothers were killed and two others in Upper Dir district on Thursday when their houses caved in due to landslides. The first incident took place in Karo Dara, a far flung remote area of Wari tehsil, when a boulder fell down on a house killing two little brothers on the spot and injuring their parents. The injured parents were taken to Wari hospital. In Gandigar, too, a boulder hit a house and a portion of it caved in due to which one person identified as Ibrahim was killed. Similarly, a woman was killed when her house collapsed due to landslide in Ali Gasar area of the Usheri Dara in Upper Dir.

KHAR: Three people were killed when a roof of their house caved in Barang tehsil of Bajaur tribal district on Thursday. Residents and officials said that the deaths took place in Ainzari village of Asil

Targao locality at about 9am. Mohammad Ali's family had gathered in a room for breakfast when the roof of his house collapsed due to rain. A woman and a five-year-old child were among the dead.

CHITRAL: Two persons died and seven injured when a jeep carrying nine persons was going from village Washich to Rech fell into a river on Thursday morning. An official of Chitral police said the vehicle slipped due to heavy snow. The dead were school teachers Aziz Rahim and Jamilur Rahman of Washich. The injured including three women and driver Shahzad Ali were admitted to the Rural Health Centre Shagram where they are said to be in stable condition.

SHANGLA: A man was killed, 10 houses and a shop collapsed due to heavy rainfall and landslides in the upper parts of Shangla district. Deputy Commissioner Shangla Fayaz Sherpao said that eight houses and a shop had completely collapsed and three houses were partially damaged. Provincial Disaster Management Authority said Shamshad, resident of Mian Kaly Pir Abad, died after he was hit by a landslide avalanche.

GUJRANWALA: One person was killed and four were injured in rain-related incidents on Thursday. Schoolteacher Shakeela was killed and head teacher Gulzar was injured when the roof of their school's office collapsed due to heavy rain in Aroop village of Gujranwala.

In Kasur, three municipal committee workers Asim Mash, Shahid Masih and Rizwan Ali were injured when the roof of the Pattoki MC chief executive officer office caved in.

LASBELA: Three people were killed in Lasbela district as they were swept away in floodwaters overnight, officials said. Four other people were also swept away but they were still missing till the filing of this report. Army and local administration launched a rescue operation in flood-hit areas of Lasbela, Awaran and parts of Makran after worsening situation in the three districts. Official sources said that around 500 families were affected due to the floods.

MUZAFFARABAD: An avalanche struck three siblings in a high altitude village of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on Thursday morning, leaving one dead and two others injured, officials said. The victims, children of Gulzar Ahmed Lone, were on their way to their school in village Reshian in the morning when a mass of snow engulfed them as they were passing through a water channel. Locals and army personnel rushed to the site to rescue them. They recovered all three but nine-year old Halima, a student of class three, succumbed after few moments. Khadija, 16, a student of class ten, was injured and admitted to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital in Hattian Bala. Abid, the eldest, however, was unhurt. The village is located approximately 70kms southeast of Leepa Valley at an altitude of 1,674 metres (5,492 ft).

Published in Dawn, February 22nd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1465333>

CHINA READY TO HELP CLEAN KARACHI: CG

APP February 22, 2019

KARACHI: The Chinese Counsel General (CG) in Karachi, Wang Yu, on Thursday said that the Chinese government was keen to see Karachi a clean city and ready to finance projects for this purpose.

The Chinese envoy was speaking at a ceremony held to hand over Chinese garbage tractor and loading bike here at Governor House, said an official statement on Thursday.

Sindh Governor Imran Ismail thanked the Chinese consulate for offering more garbage tractors and loading bikes to the city government to keep Karachi clean.

The governor recalled that Sino-Pakistan friendship went back decades, which was becoming stronger with the passage of time. In the future, he said, these two bordering countries would expand their cooperation and partnership in more sectors, especially in the economy.

He said the friendship did not exist only between the two governments, but also in the people of the two countries.

“Pakistanis and Chinese do feel at home when they visit each other’s country,” he remarked.

Responding to a question, the governor said that the accountability process was going on across the board and on merit.

For the first time, it was being carried out in a very transparent manner to the satisfaction of even the common man, he said.

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf members of Sindh Assembly from Karachi Dr Imran Ali Shah, Haleem Adil Shaikh, Mr Adeel and CPLC chief Zubair Habib were also present.

Published in Dawn, February 22nd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1465236/china-ready-to-help-clean-karachi-cg>

DHAKA FIRE KILLS 70 AS EXPLOSIONS RAIN FIRE ON THE STREETS

RECORDER REPORT | FEB 22ND, 2019 | DHAKA

Fire and explosions that ripped through apartment buildings packed with illegal chemical stores killed at least 70 people in the Bangladeshi capital which was left stunned by its latest disaster. The inferno started in a building where chemicals for deodorants and other household uses were stocked amid apartments. It spread at lightning speed to four nearby blocks, the fire service said.

Chemical fireballs set ablaze the clogged narrow streets even engulfing passengers on rickshaws in flames. Witnesses told of harrowing scenes as people became trapped by flames at a bridal party and in restaurants. Bangladesh fire chief Ali Ahmed gave a death toll of 70. Doctors said at least 10 of the scores of injured were in critical condition. Hundreds of firefighters who took almost 12 hours to bring the fire under control went through the blackened floors of the building, littered with spray cans, looking for bodies.

“We found 24 bodies in one corner of a building and another nine bodies at a pharmacy where the shutters were down,” firefighter Shariful Islam said at the scene. “They thought they would survive by bringing down the shutters.” The fire started late Wednesday night in the Chawkbazar trading district in the old Mughal part of the capital. Ahmed said it may have been started by a gas cylinder and quickly spread because of the chemicals stored in rooms alongside the apartments.

Authorities promised a crackdown after a similar blaze in 2010, in an old Dhaka building also used as a chemical warehouse, that killed more than 120 people. But no effective action was taken, according to critics. "After the warehouse owners, the city corporation and the law enforcers are mainly to blame for this," said Abu Naser Khan, head of the POBO citizens lobby group.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/02/20190222449143/>

NON-COMPLIANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS: SEPA ORDERS FIVE BEVERAGE FACTORIES TO CEASE OPERATION

RECORDED REPORT | FEB 22ND, 2019 | KARACHI

Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) on Thursday ordered five beverage factory owners to stop operations, immediately over non-compliance of environmental regulations. Director Regional Office SEPA (Karachi) called the factory owners for personal hearing at the agency's headquarters and asked them to stop working till the compliance of environmental law.

A SEPA official said the factory owners were discharging waste water as none of them has waste water treatment plant and having no environmental NOC.

Under section 21(2) of SEP Act, Environment Protection Order (EPO) will be issued for them.

The official while referring to the Supreme Court (SC) Case No 26/2018 stated that all bottle companies, beverage factories should ensure environmental compliance within a time period of three months.

Therefore, he said the agency is writing letters to those concerned by asking them to submit their environmental management plan to it.

SEPA will also make sure of tree plantation via their corporate social responsibility account.

On February 18, a SEPA team inspected Pakistan International Bulk Terminal (PIBT) and Coal Jetty 3 and 4, the SEPA officials said. The Director General (DG) had also called for personal hearing 22 importers of coal along with Port Qasim Authority and Pakistan Railways to get their view point on dumping of coal in Karachi particularly at the area of Malir.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/02/20190222449281/>

BALUCHISTAN DROUGHT

Editorial February 18, 2019

AT the end of last year, the Balochistan home minister announced the results of a province-wide survey undertaken by deputy commissioners in the province. Twenty out of the 33 districts in Pakistan's largest province were drought-stricken, he said, affecting around 109,000 families. This was not particularly shocking to hear: reports of severe water shortages in Balochistan and Sindh have been published in these pages regularly. Still, it confirmed the worst fears of many. There are already reports of climate-based migration taking place in the 'resource-rich' province and other parts of the country, with settled people adopting the way of nomads by moving to different parts of the province.

Balochistan's predominately agriculture- and livestock-dependent economy has taken a severe hit. Groundwater has seeped to dangerously low levels due to the lack of rainfall and there is widespread, unregulated use of tube wells that draw water. Balochistan's chief minister has announced the setting up of emergency cells and distribution of relief goods on trucks, which is currently under way, but nowhere close to the size and scale required by the emergency situation, as pointed out by opposition members. Most recently, a mission team comprising members from WHO, WFP, International Children's Emergency Fund and FAO amongst others has assured the provincial government of assistance during these challenging times.

It is important to remember that the drought did not occur overnight. It was 10 years in the making, with the province receiving scant rainfall over the past decade. Fortunately, there has been some light rainfall this month, but policymakers cannot rely on nature's small blessings. While donor agencies and relief efforts can ease some of the hardships of the people in the short term, one hopes that policymakers are also implementing long-term solutions, and that their words soon turn into actions. The people of Balochistan are dependent on the fulfilment of the government's promises.

Published in Dawn, February 18th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1464529/balochistan-drought>

55 BILLION PLASTIC BAGS BEING USED ANNUALLY IN COUNTRY

By Shabbir Hussain Published: February 18, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The usage of non-degradable plastic is high in the country despite a ban on the manufacturing, purchasing and selling of non-degradable plastic bags.

According to a survey report of Environment Protection Department, as many as 55 billion plastic bags are used per year in Pakistan while the amount of plastic use is increasing by 15 percent each year. The report disclosed that more than 8 thousand plastic manufacturing units are present in Pakistan with an average daily production capability of 250kg-500kg.

Further, this industry provides direct employment to some 0.2 million people whereas it is the source of bread and butter of some 0.6 million people indirectly.

According to a latest report of Environment Protection Department, around five trillion plastic bags are consumed every year worldwide out of which some thirteen million tons of plastic bags are dumped into the seas causing danger to marine life as around 0.1 million marine animals die annually due to swallowing plastic.

The report revealed that around seventeen billion barrels of oil are used every year for the production of plastic while it is a startling fact that plastic decomposes after a period of 100 years.

Two years ago, the environment protection department issued notices to all traders in Islamabad to ensure full implementation on the ban on usage of plastic bags in Islamabad, while it also published advertisements in national newspapers so that the people could get awareness about the hazards of plastic. However, all the measures went in vain while the ban did not give any desired outcomes.

An Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) source revealed that the Sindh government banned the manufacturing, production, purchase, sale and use of polyethylene bags for the first time in 1994 while Punjab's Institute for Conservation of Environment placed a similar ban in 1995.

The Baluchistan government completely banned and prohibited the use of Polythene bags throughout the province in 2001 through the "Baluchistan Prohibition on Use and Sell of Polythene Bags 2001" Ordinance. Similarly, K-P's department of Industries also banned manufacturing of polythene bags across the province, while the current K-P government has banned the use of polyethylene bags.

EPA sources disclosed that the federal government prohibited manufacturing, production, purchasing and selling of plastic shopping bags in Islamabad during the year 2013 with issuing official SROs. According to the SRO, it was prohibited for an individual to manufacture, trade, supply, distribute, produce, purchase or sell any non-degradable plastic product or non-degradable plastic itself.

The officials of EPA told that there were several plastic manufacturing home industries operating across the country with no plan for environmental protection as well as NOC.

They added that the shopkeepers or traders give these bags for free with the grocery items as they are very cheap which, he termed, was a big cause of its large scale usage. He suggested that the usage of plastic bags could only be reduced if they were produced with an improved standard and sold at an increased price.

The officials expressed that the polythene bags or plastic shoppers cause severe threat to the environment, while being non-degradable they choke the sewerage lines. Further, the smoke emitted after burning of plastic bags was hazardous to health and environment.

Similarly, these shoppers lying in open spaces are eaten by animals which they could not digest and ultimately it becomes a cause of their death.

Similarly, if anything warm is kept in these shoppers, the chemicals present in the plastic enter into the items and become a source of cancer.

EPA officials told that there are plants for recycling of polyethylene bags in developed countries and now these countries have also introduced the "Oxfo biodegradable" and "Photo-biodegradable" system for recycling of polyethylene bags.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 18th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1912781/1-55-billion-plastic-bags-used-annually-country/>

GOVT TO LAUNCH WASH PROGRAMME IN 11 DISTRICTS SOON

By Imran Adnan Published: February 18, 2019

LAHORE: The Punjab government is going to initiate Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) programme soon under stunting reduction programme in 11 districts of South Punjab, The Express Tribune learnt on Sunday.

Official documents show the WASH programme will be rolled out in Rahim Yar Khan, Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur, Multan, Khanewal, Vehari, Lodhran, Muzaffargarh, Dera Ghazi Khan,

Layyah, and Rajanpur. The project is estimated to benefit some 10 million people in 4,630 villages of Multan, Bahawalpur and Dera Ghazi Khan divisions.

The project aims to reduce stunting by improving nutrition status through ensuring access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all women, men, and children and substantially reduce open defecation in rural areas of targeted districts of South Punjab by 2021-22.

The main objective and stipulated output of the programme include: promote knowledge, behaviour change, demand for services and opportunities for participation in rural communities, including children, women, and men to create open defecation free (ODF) environment and increase public awareness about water-borne and water-related diseases, nutrition and hygiene.

Under the programme, 4,630 villages will be certified ODF, 350,000 toilets will be constructed by community on self-help basis, eight million people will be reached through awareness sessions of village organisations (VOs), and 3,500 ODF villages (75% of total villages) provided cash reward of Rs200,000, the incentive will be used by VOs for improving WASH infrastructure or supporting poorest of the poor, where needed.

According to the documents, the programme will help create a healthy and safe environment through the provision of safely managed total sanitation facilities (sewerage, drainage, wastewater treatment, solid waste bins). Under this programme 25 ODF villages will be provided sewerage, drainage facility, PCC pavement in streets, wastewater treatment facility, solid waste bins; at least 75,000 people in 25 model villages will gain access to safely managed total sanitation facilities.

Missing set of latrine (boys and girl's latrine with hand washing station) for at least one school for every ODF village will be provided. This will be done in coordination with the school education department. The project will only provide this facility for villages not covered under their project on missing school facilities.

Drinking water facility will be provided to each of the model villages through ongoing initiatives of the Punjab Saaf Pani Company. Animal segregation areas and waste management will be promoted through advocacy and free vaccination promoted to those in compliance through coordination with the livestock department's ongoing initiative.

The capital cost of the project is estimated at Rs3.08 billion of which 67% will be funded by the provincial government while the rest will be financed by the World Bank.

The documents indicated that the government has allocated Rs1.13 billion for the current fiscal FY2018-19, Rs1.21 will be earmarked for FY2019-20, Rs684 million for FY2020-21 and Rs58 million for FY2021-22. Upon execution, schemes will be handed over to communities so they become responsible for operation and maintenance but need-based allocation for major repair (resulting in non-functionality) may be considered by the government. A proper mechanism will be developed by VOs for revenue collection and its spending. Further, there is no O&M required for ODF.

Initially, this project was reflected in the Annual Development Programme 2017-18 under Water Supply and Sanitation sector with an estimated cost of Rs1 billion. The scheme was presented in 43rd PDWP held on 5.1.2018 costing Rs6.18 billion (World Bank share: Rs1.02 billion and Punjab government share: Rs5.16 billion) to certify 3,500 villages as ODF, including 100 model villages in 11 Districts of South Punjab.

However, after a detail deliberation, the scheme was approved in principle with the condition that all uncovered villages in selected districts will be covered for ODF while model villages will be taken to the extent of donor funding. The project proposal after amendments will be submitted for the cost clearance and onward submission to the federal government.

The documents highlighted that the decision was communicated to the World Bank which expressed some concerns and requested that its funds can primarily go into model villages but some items such as information, education, and communication (IEC) material and capacity building should also have our co-financing. This is a Department for International Development (DFID) requirement where they want to ensure that their funds are spent on a larger population and funding model villages only will reduce their footprint of attribution. “So not to lose government funds, we suggest that an equal amount of government funds may also be assigned to model villages. This will be a healthy collaboration. The same was communicated to the Planning and Development Department, along with amended cost.”

The revision was made accordingly and the project proposal was submitted to the P&D at a cost of Rs3.06 billion targeting all 4,630 remaining villages for ODF, including 25 model villages. However, within July, the P&D has returned the proposal for re-examination in the light sectoral priorities and budgetary provisions in ADP 2018-19.

The project proposal has been amended and the cost has been changed from Rs3.06 billion Rs3.08 billion for the period July 2018 to June 2022.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1912881/1-govt-launch-wash-programme-11-districts-soon/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 11TH TO FEBRUARY 17TH 2019

ARRANGEMENTS TO HUNT HOUBARA BUSTARD FOR SAUDI TEAM FINALISED

NUZHAT NAZAR & ALI HUSSAIN

ISLAMABAD: The Khan administration has made arrangements for the high level visiting Saudi delegation led by Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman to hunt the internationally protected bird, houbara bustard.

Security sources told Business Recorder that arrangements are in place for the hunt in some areas between Punjab and Sindh, and in Balochistan.

The Pakistan army has made the arrangements, sources revealed, adding that it was not confirmed whether the crown prince would join the hunt given his tight schedule.

Earlier this month the federal government issued special permits to members of the Gulf States’ royal families to hunt the houbara bustard.

Allowing the hunting of Houbara bustard has been a cornerstone of Pakistan’s foreign policy, particularly with regard to Gulf States. Successive governments have facilitated Arab royals to hunt the internationally protected bird.

The ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had criticized the previous administration when it issued hunting permits to members of the Arab royal families last year and announced that it would not allow them to hunt in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where the PTI was in government.

The crown prince is due to arrive in Islamabad today along with a high powered delegation after a one day delay. The Foreign Office on Friday issued a new schedule of the visit from February 17-18 instead of February 16-17. However, no reason was given for the delay.

A senior official of the Foreign Office told Business Recorder that the dates of the scheduled visits of foreign dignitaries are finalized at the diplomatic level after thorough discussions; he added that prior to finalizing the dates there are a few set of proposed dates that are discussed at the diplomatic level.

He expressed his inability to state the reason behind the one day delay.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/02/17/2-page/763720-news.html>

EMERGENCY STEPS BEING PLANNED AFTER GLACIER SURGE IN GILGIT-BALTISTAN

Jamil Nagri Updated February 16, 2019

GILGIT: Emergency measures are being taken to mitigate the effects of a possible disaster which may be caused by Shisper Glacier surge and possible burst of an artificial lake in Hasanabad village in Hunza.

The Shisper Glacier, a few kilometres from Hasanabad village, started to surge in May last year. The unusual surge has blocked water flow from a stream originating in nearby Muchuhur Glacier, which normally falls into Hunza river at Hasanabad, thus forming an artificial lake.

The glacier is moving towards Hunza at a speed of seven metres per day and water level in the dammed lake is also increasing with each passing day, posing a threat to downstream areas.

Authorities conduct aerial visit of Shisper Glacier surge, artificial lake created by it

Commander of the Force Command Northern Areas (FCNA) Maj Gen Ehsan Mehmood Khan, Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Secretary retired captain Khurram Agha, Director General of the Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA) Farid Ahmed and heads of the departments concerned along with representatives of local community carried out an aerial visit of the Shisper Glacier on Thursday to assess the emerging situation.

Addressing a community gathering in Hasanabad, the chief secretary and the FCNA commander assured the local people of their support in case of any untoward incident.

The chief secretary directed the relevant departments to carry out an assessment of houses and means of livelihood of the vulnerable people of Hasanabad.

He said that as per the contingency plan the GB government had stockpiled 40,000 wheat bags and medicines to cope with any crisis in case of a disaster.

According to an official press release, a team of experts, also from several national organisations, has been monitoring the movement of the glacier and its effects through satellite and ground visits since November 2018.

According to the experts, blasting/leakage of the Shisper Glacier through any means is not possible due to the surging nature of the glacier and its vast width.

After going through the reports, the experts and the GBDMA have come to the conclusion that three scenarios are possible in coming weeks in the event of a lake burst and/or further surging of the glacier towards human settlements.

Under the first scenario, it is expected that the lake will gradually release through crevices and the glacier may also melt gradually, resulting in normal to slightly above normal discharge of water. This situation will not create any hazard to the local people and installations downstream.

Under scenarios 2 and 3, medium to heavy discharge of water is expected which depends on weather conditions. A sudden rise in temperature during June and July may result in rapid melting of the glacier and a lake burst. This may create a hazardous situation, which can affect the people and installations downstream.

The press release said a contingency plan had been prepared to cope with any emergency situation.

According to it, the GB government is undertaking several proactive measures. Mock exercises for evacuation of people are being carried out. Safe routes for evacuation and safe havens have been identified to relocate the residents of Hasanabad in case of high water discharge from the lake during summer.

Protective work to safeguard public and private properties is underway and will be completed in given time frame. Funds to the tune of Rs31 million have been released to carry out protective works of urgent nature.

Arrangements to safeguard the irrigation channels and water supply networks from Hasanabad stream to central Hunza are to be undertaken.

In case of blockade of the Karakoram Highway at Hasanabad, a road network will remain linked to upper parts of the region through an alternative route via the Sas Valley, Nagar.

A makeshift bridge has been arranged by the National Highway Authority which will be shifted to the site of a bridge that may be washed away in case of a lake burst.

To reduce the risk of food shortage, the food department is stocking up food supplies for four to five months.

Published in Dawn, February 16th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1464135/emergency-steps-being-planned-after-glacier-surge-in-gilgit-baltistan>

BREAKING FREE FROM THE GRIP OF PLASTIC

Steel straws and cloth bags are the easy part of a pledge more people are making

For Beth Terry, the epiphany came when she read an article about how albatross chicks are being killed by discarded plastics. It was time to banish plastic from her life. First, she focused on her kitchen and got rid of the shopping bags, microwavable Stouffer's macaroni and cheese, Clif energy bars and prewashed salads in plastic tubs. Then she turned to her bathroom, where she switched to shampoo bars instead of bottles and made her own hair conditioner from apple cider vinegar. Toothpaste without plastic packaging was exceptionally hard to find, so she started making her own with baking soda. Sometimes her personal war on plastic created awkward moments. During a vacation to Disneyland in California to run a half-marathon, Ms. Terry and her husband left their reusable cloth bags in the hotel but soon discovered that the local supermarket had only plastic bags. How to carry a bunch of apples, oranges, avocados and melons? "We just rolled it up in our T-shirts and carried it that way," said Ms. Terry, 54, recalling how she crab-walked back to the hotel to stay true to her principles. "If I let myself off the hook this time, it would be easier for me to take plastic next time." Treating plastic like a drug habit that needs to be kicked is a lifestyle pledge being shared by more and more consumers, horrified by the nearly 300 million tons of plastic created worldwide each year, much of it in the form of single-use items like straws, that end up in landfills or, worse, the oceans. As a marketing term, "plastic-free" is emerging as the new "no carbs." Stores that pride themselves on zero plastics have opened in Brooklyn and London, selling items like silicone water bottles, cardboard poop scoopers, biodegradable vibrators and iPhone cases made of flax. Designers have embraced plasticfree as a new challenge, whether it's building a supermarket aisle without plastics or making eco-friendly clothing that does not involve "virgin" plastics. Celebrities including the actor Jeff Bridges and the singer SZA have joined the anti-plastic crusade. And there are many, many blogs and books that offer primers. Even some Fortune 500 companies, like Procter & Gamble and PepsiCo, want a piece of the action. This summer, those companies will test selling products like Tropicana orange juice in glass bottles, Pantene shampoo in aluminum bottles and other items in refillable nonplastic containers, harking back to the days of the milkman. "The awareness has exploded," said Susan Freinkel, a journalist in the San Francisco Bay Area and the author of "Plastic: A Toxic Love Story." "The movement to get rid of trivial plastic has taken off. There is a critical mass of consciousness."

To exist in the modern world without plastic, however noble a goal, may not actually be possible. If you gathered up all your plastic waste each week, as Ms. Terry once did, you would have a huge mound on the floor. Where to even begin? "The one thing I try to emphasize to people is to go step by step," said Ms. Terry, an accountant who lives in Greenbelt, Md., and who is the author of "Plastic-Free: How I Kicked the Plastic Habit and How You Can Too." "Don't try to do everything at once. It's been a practice of mine to not get overwhelmed by it all." That's more easily said than done, because once you wake up to the plastic problem, you see it everywhere: in jars of peanut butter and bags of grapes, in tubes of toothpaste and Tupperware containers, in bottles of Dawn dish soap and Tide laundry detergent, in the wrappers of Doritos chips and the lining of milk cartons. "I thought I'd be able to find a plasticfree version of all the convenient foods I was consuming," Ms. Terry said. "I didn't realize that plastic made those foods possible." At the grocery store, you find yourself staring at a 10-foot shelf of yogurt brands, with only one in a glass jar: Oui by Yoplait. But you don't like Oui by Yoplait. Also, it costs much more. What do you do? To navigate the consumer minefield, plastic purgers develop mental maps of places where they can shop. It may take months, but they learn where to get milk in a glass bottle, or which health-food store lets you grind your own peanut butter. And rather than see it as a huge inconvenience, they treat living plasticfree as a game. "I wake up and think, 'How am I going to make it through the day without using any single-use plastic?'" said Dianna Cohen, 53, an artist in Santa Monica, Calif., and a founder of Plastic Pollution Coalition, an advocacy group. "Right away, the challenge hits you in the bathroom with the toothbrush." For her, the answer

is often the farmers' markets, which exist year-round in Southern California. "I'm a big fan of baskets," Ms. Cohen said. "I bring baskets and canvas bags to put vegetables in. I will bring my own glass jam jars." Like many who aim to live plastic-free, Ms. Cohen never leaves home without her eco-survival kit, which includes a steel cup, a set of bamboo utensils or metal spork, two stainless-steel straws and a cloth bag. To her, it's worth the extra minutes it takes to ready herself before leaving the house. "I have to be very thoughtful in advance," she said. Indeed, plastic purgers need to rearrange their lives to avoid the offending material. If a restaurant serves food only on plastic plates, they won't eat there. Fast food? Most wrappers contain plastic. Smoothies from a juice bar? Unless they put the smoothie in a stainless-steel to-go cup, move on, or make your own at home. Bread? Buy it from a local bakery to avoid fresh-seal bags. But there are certain situations in which plastics are unavoidable. Try having a medical procedure without using a plastic syringe or an intravenous drip bag. Plastic water bottles can be indispensable after natural disasters. Despite their best efforts, the purgers all say they can't totally banish plastic from their lives. For Ms. Cohen, it's a favorite hairbrush she has had for decades. And Ms. Terry confronts the limits of her plastic ban each time she visits the pharmacy, where no pharmacist would put medicine in a Mason jar. "It's a daily challenge," Ms. Cohen said. "But I think it's becoming easier. It's really just learning new behavior."

Going plastic-free is also easier these days because there's more awareness and alternatives. Stores now sell dental floss made of silk, wooden toothbrushes with pig-hair bristles, stainless-steel ice cube trays, food wrappers made with beeswax-coated cotton, and other nonplastic versions of household items. Jay Sinha and Chantal Plamondon, who live in Wakefield, Quebec, started the store Life Without Plastic in 2006, a few years after their son was born. They wanted to avoid exposing him to bisphenol A and other toxins found in many baby bottles, but they had trouble finding a safer alternative. Since then, the Life Without Plastic site and its customer base have evolved. "It was more the mother crowd before, but in the past few years, it's about plastic pollution, the oceans," Ms. Plamondon said. "Recently we noticed more millennials shopping the site." One of those younger converts is Tessa Carleton, 24, who makes and sells handmade goods like macramé in rural Quebec. After a conversation with an environmentalist friend four years ago, Ms. Carleton donated or gave away the shampoo bottles, nail polish remover and Ziploc bags. And she is still purging. "It was a long process," Ms. Carleton said. "I still don't think it's over." The farmhouse she shares with her husband, Jacob, feels like a 75-year-old time capsule. In addition to raising pigs and chickens for food, they make their own deodorant, lip balm and body moisturizer. And almost everything, like the hemp shower curtain she bought from Life Without Plastic, is made of natural materials in subdued colors with no branding. Still, some wonder whether buying metal ice-cube trays is just another example of conscious consumerism. Buying a four-pack of metal straws at Urban Outfitters can be a kind of trendy virtue signaling. It offers a way to feel good without examining one's larger environmental impact (like the energy required to ship glass or metal, both heavier than plastic). But those committed to living plastic-free say that the small steps add up and make an impact. "Given that single-use disposable plastics are at the heart of the plastic pollution problem, if you do these simple things, you could potentially reduce your plastic consumption by 80 percent or maybe even more," said Mr. Sinha, who wrote a guide to avoiding plastics with Ms. Plamondon. Nevertheless, it is usually more expensive to buy stainless-steel or wood items than plastic ones, or fresh foods instead of packaged ones. And it can be difficult to avoid plastic in poorer communities. Not everyone has access to year-round farmers' markets, or the means to shop at them. Kristal Ambrose, 29, an environmental scientist who founded the Bahamas Plastic Movement, an advocacy group, faces that challenge daily. Much of what is sold on the island nation is imported and shipped in plastic. "I avoid plastic in areas where I can control," said Ms. Ambrose, who carries bamboo cutlery and a reusable bottle with her at all times. "For me, not using a plastic bag means so much more. But the mother

who's juggling work, kids, other things — their priorities are different.” Part of her mission is to show that you don't need to be rich to avoid plastic. “Sometimes people can't afford a bamboo kit, but you can take a fork from home,” Ms. Ambrose said. “Even an old pasta sauce jar can be made into a reusable item.”

<http://iht.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/viewer.aspx?issue=1003201902160000000001001&page=1&article=138bf097-9b51-479e-bcb6-d1c415b87bb6&key=SN0NByJY6YfrLkgOSEeDQ%3D%3D&feed=rss>

UN PROMISES ALL HELP TO OVERCOME DROUGHT EFFECTS IN BALOCHISTAN

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent February 15, 2019

QUETTA: A United Nations mission team has assured all assistance to the Balochistan government in its efforts to cope with drought-like situation in 20 districts of the province.

A UN delegation, headed by Markus Werna, met Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani on Wednesday.

The UN delegation comprised officials from the World Food Programme, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, World Health Organisation, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Development Programme, Food and Agriculture Organisation and members of SPARCO Pakistan.

Provincial ministers Zahoor Buledi, Mir Ziaullah Langove, Mir Naseebullah Marri and officials of the departments concerned were also present in the meeting.

The meeting discussed efforts to minimise the effects of drought in Balochistan and to provide immediate relief and assistance to the people living in the drought-stricken areas.

Director General of the Pakistan Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Balochistan, Imran Zarkoon, briefed the delegation on the drought situation in the province, including relief and rescue operations.

During the meeting, the UN delegation assured its assistance to tackle malnutrition in the affected areas and shared its plan to start a nourishment programme in the province.

The meeting agreed to launch short-term, mid-term and long-term programmes in Balochistan that would be completed with the support of the UN and its sub-organisations and donor agencies.

“Lack of rains in the last 10 years caused the drought situation in Balochistan which affected agriculture and livestock sector of an already impoverished province where people are living in poverty,” CM Alyani told the delegation, adding that the provincial government required funding to provide basic facilities in the remote areas of the country's largest province.

The provincial government assured full cooperation and complete access to the UN organisations and donor agencies for their assessment in drought-hit areas and decided to facilitate the international agencies on the one-window operation.

Mr Alyani said the drought had depleted the water level rapidly in Balochistan and, therefore, the government had been focusing on building new dams for water storage.

“The government of Balochistan has been focusing on climate change and preparing safety measures to save the province from its effects,” he said.

The chief minister said his government was committed to introduce good governance in the province.

He said the government had established a food security department.

Published in Dawn, February 15th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1463928/un-promises-all-help-to-overcome-drought-effects-in-balochistan>

LIGHTNING KILLS FIVE IN KOHAT

RECORDER REPORT | FEB 15TH, 2019 | PESHAWAR

Five people, including two women died and six others were injured when lightning fell in Surgul area of Kohat district on Thursday. Local sources said lightning fell on the 1,100KV power transmission line in Kelwala area of Kohat in the morning. The power transmission line fell over the transformer due to which nearby houses caught fire. Four people died on the spot, while another person died in hospital.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/02/20190215447239/>

SENATORS WANT A ‘PLASTIC-FREE’ CAPITAL

By Our Correspondent Published: February 14, 2019

ISLAMABAD: A sub-panel of the Senate on Wednesday resolved to make the Parliament House and the offices of federal government free of plastics such as polythene bags as part of a move to make the federal capital ‘plastic-free’. In this regard, the climate change ministry was directed to come up with an action plan.

This was directed in a sub-committee of the Senate’s Standing Committee on Climate Change which met in the Parliament House on Wednesday with Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed in the chair.

Senator Syed said that Islamabad should be rid of all plastic and other environmental pollutants to turn it into a model city which other cities of the country should aspire to emulate.

“The abundance of plastic products was not only destroying the environment but a lot of hazardous impacts are also coming to fore,” he said.

He added that like a lot of other countries, a ban on plastic bags had been introduced in Pakistan, but it was never implemented. Syed further said that awareness must be raised amongst the public for better results.

The subcommittee’s convener directed the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) to run public service advertisements at prime time over the hazardous impacts of plastics.

The sub-committee further decided to launch an awareness drive on February 23 in which parliamentarians, civil society representatives, students of the COMSATS University, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and the Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation (IMC) will participate.

Further, to make the parliament house and offices of the federal government plastic-free, the sub-committee decided to write to the chairman of the Senate and the National Assembly speaker.

Giving a briefing on improving the environment of the federal capital, officials of the Pakistan Environment Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) said that the environment of the city can be improved by generating power through alternative means such as solar and wind.

Moreover, the subcommittee was told that plastic bags were cheap, easily and widely available which made switching from them so difficult.

Climate Change Ministry Additional Secretary Hassan Nasir Jamy told the committee that he had “held meetings with officials of the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) and IMC to discuss cleanliness and polythene-free endeavours. The two organizations have issues, which need to be redressed,” he said.

One of the major issues, he said, was that a statutory notification (SRO) for non-biodegradable plastic products had been imposed in the federal capital, which was not fully implemented.

In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Islamabad, oxo-biodegradable plastics — which are biodegradable and not expensive — were introduced.

“However, research by experts revealed that it was more hazardous than the polyethene,” he concluded.

Senator Mushahid said the COMSATS University was the only institution of the country which was plastic free.

Rector COMSATS Prof Dr Raheel Qamar said the varsity had over 30,000 students, who could contribute in a cleanliness initiative in the city at no cost. He also called for a complete ban on the use of plastic in the federal capital.

On the request of Senator Syed, Dr Qamar announced that he would bring around 500 students of his university for a cleaning and tree plantation drive at proposed garbage sites in the city.

A ministry official, in his presentation on controlling plastics, told the committee that the plastic industry was the fifth largest revenue generating source of the country which employed around 320,000 labourers in Sindh alone.

“We are going to distribute free jute bags, which cost Rs200 per bag, amongst the secretariat workers to promote anti-plastic culture,” he said.

At this, State Minister for Climate Change Zartaj Gul Wazir expressed concerns over the loss of livelihood for workers associated with the plastic bag industry. She suggested a gradual restriction on plastic bags.

“We need to impose a tax on plastic bags other than placing abrupt prohibitions. There is a need to introduce cotton bags and other such alternatives to end use of plastic bags which I proposed in past meetings of the Senate Caucus on Climate Change,” she added.

“We need to work on capacity building of the institutions who collect garbage, build proper landfills and take responsibility in this matter,” she said.

IMC Mayor Sheikh Anser Aziz told the committee that he had conducted numerous garbage collection and disposal campaigns including placing bins in all sectors. However, he said that they were hampered by a severe shortage of resources. He added that there was an imbalance between environment and sanitation staff with 3,000 staffers under the former wing and just 700 in the latter wing.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 14th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1910027/1-senators-want-plastic-free-capital/>

HONG KONG, CROSSROADS OF THE CRIMINAL WILDLIFE TRADE

By Charles Homans Feb. 12, 2019

HONG KONG — It was after dark on a Tuesday evening in December 2017 when the vans pulled onto Island House Lane, a placid side street of residential complexes and community garden plots in the suburban Tai Po district.

High-rises gave way to lush forest as the street wound down to a pebble beach. Across the harbor was Tolo Channel, and jagged green hills descending into the sea all the way to the coast of China’s Guangdong province.

On the water, a speedboat was waiting. Men began unloading the vans’ cargo onto the beach.

When officers from Hong Kong’s Customs and Excise Department arrived, the boats fled out to sea. Marine officers pursued them for two hours before losing them in the channel’s warren of rocky coves and mangrove estuaries.

From the vans, however, officers were able to recover part of the contraband cargo.

There were about \$1 million worth of mobile phones, digital cameras and tablets. And, packed into cardboard boxes, the agents discovered more than 300 kilograms of smooth brown scales, each a couple inches across, that looked like they had been stripped from some prehistoric reptile.

In fact, they came from pangolins: a housecat-sized, forest-dwelling mammal that resembles an armor-clad anteater. Pangolin meat is a delicacy in southern China, where it is critically endangered, and its scales are prized as an ingredient in traditional Chinese medicine.

Over the past decade, the animal has been hunted out of most of its range in Southeast Asia, and it is being poached at alarming levels in Central Africa. The pangolin’s value has increased with its rarity — the shipment seized in Tai Po had a street value of around \$300,000.

In the geography of the illegal wildlife trade, Hong Kong occupies a unique and essential position. It is a city that has built its reputation and economy as a frictionless connector of countries and capital, located on the doorstep of mainland China — the most ravenous wildlife market in the world.

Over the past decade, the appetites of segments of the booming Chinese middle and upper class — for jewelry, artwork, traditional (though often scientifically uncreditable) remedies and exotic foods — have dramatically expanded a global wildlife black market that has decimated species in Africa, Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

The pangolin is the latest casualty: Four of the eight species are now endangered, and the international trade in pangolin products has been banned since 2016.

Researchers at the ADM Capital Foundation, a Hong Kong-based organization focused on environmental issues, recently analyzed data on seizures of wildlife products from the Customs and Excise Department.

In a report published last month by the Hong Kong Wildlife Trade Working Group, a consortium that includes the foundation, the researchers found that the territory accounted for more pangolin seizures than any country.

Between 2013 and 2017, Hong Kong seized 43 metric tons of pangolin scales and carcasses — representing tens of thousands of animals — in shipments arriving from six countries, principally Cameroon and Nigeria.

The amount intercepted between 2013 and 2015 alone is equivalent to 45 percent of all the pangolin products seized worldwide between 2007 and 2015, according to the most recent figures from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Although the data analyzed by the foundation does not include 2018, pangolin seizures nearly doubled from 2017 to 2018. In January 2019, Hong Kong authorities intercepted the territory's largest-ever shipment of pangolin scales, nine tons in all, on a cargo ship bound to Vietnam from Nigeria.

The pangolin products appear to have been mostly destined for mainland China — though they are not hard to find in Hong Kong, either. On the well-trafficked Queen's Road in the Sheung Wan district, the clerk at one small shop, presiding over a counter piled with dried goji berries, almonds and mung beans, readily offered pangolin scales to an inquiring customer.

"We sell a lot, and we've been doing this business for a long time," she said. One liang — a Chinese measure equal in Hong Kong to about 37.5 grams — retailed for 300 Hong Kong dollars, about \$38. "It's quite luxurious," she said.

While the shop was careful not to keep the product on the premises, she said that with a phone call it could be delivered in half an hour, and getting it across the border undetected was easy.

"We'll just grind it into powder," she said. In order to avoid getting caught, she advised, "don't get too much at one time."

In recent years, as alarm has grown about both the ecological consequences of the illegal wildlife trade and its links to other forms of crime and security threats, many countries have significantly stepped up their response, stiffening laws and increasing the resources dedicated to enforcing them.

In the United States, wildlife trafficking is now often prosecuted under muscular organized-crime statutes. The U.N. describes the trade in wildlife as "one of the largest transnational organized criminal activities."

Hong Kong stands out against this trend, conservationists here charge. While other countries with the political and law-enforcement capacity to fight wildlife trafficking have begun to do so, the territory's government — which is otherwise relatively aggressive in combating corruption, organized crime and other ills — has appeared reluctant to follow suit, even as an enormous share of the illegal trade passes through the territory's airport and shipping terminals.

The territory's Customs and Excise Department estimates the wildlife contraband it has seized over the past five years — by value, principally pangolin, elephant ivory and timber — to be worth more than \$71 million, a figure that suggests the possibility of a billion-dollar illicit industry.

But environment and law-enforcement officials routinely reject the notion that these seizures suggest the existence of serious criminal enterprises. “We do not have very strong evidence that organized crime is organizing” the Hong Kong wildlife trade, said Tse Chin-wan, Hong Kong's under secretary for the environment, in an interview in August.

Fewer than 20 percent of the seizures of pangolin products that A.D.M.C.F. identified resulted in prosecutions. (According to the Customs and Excise Department, no charges have been filed yet in the speedboat smuggling case in December 2017.) Cases involving ivory — the largest segment of Hong Kong's illegal wildlife seizures by value, with \$26.3 million worth seized from 2013 to 2017 — were more likely to be prosecuted.

But arrests were rarely made above the level of the individual couriers, known as “ant smugglers,” who were caught red-handed at the airport and generally received little more than a few weeks in prison and modest fines.

The official reluctance to crack down on the illegal wildlife trade is explained in part by the territory's long history as perhaps the world's premier entrepôt for legal wildlife products. The city is culturally and physically adjacent to Guangdong province, a center of traditional Chinese medicine and ivory craftsmanship for centuries, where the consumption of wildlife for food is also deeply ingrained.

Hong Kong is also close to Fujian province, a coastal region famous for its carving industry, where many illegal wildlife products — rhinoceros horn, helmeted hornbill crests, rosewood — are turned into high-end jewelry, knickknacks and statuary for the Chinese market.

Hong Kong's century as a British territory gave it connections to merchants in the former African colonies who traded in elephant ivory, rhinoceros horn and animal skins prized by consumers around the world. The city was the center of the international ivory trade until it was banned in 1989, importing as much as 700 tons of tusks from Africa annually at its 1970s peak.

For years, Hong Kong has been a leading importer and exporter of shark fins — a popular soup ingredient in Cantonese cuisine. By the most recent available statistics, the territory leads the world in imports of live fish and reptiles.

Much of this legal trade is visible in neighborhoods like the commercial district of Sheung Wan, where storefronts crammed with dried sea horses and birds' nests crowd the street beneath billboards of the Kardashians.

Conservationists charge that this legal commerce complicates efforts to tackle Hong Kong's role as a key node in the global illegal trade. Once they are skinned and dried for sale, the fins of the endangered scalloped hammerhead shark, for instance, are almost impossible to distinguish from the fins of legally caught blue sharks in Hong Kong's seafood shops.

Among the dried fish swim bladders — also a popular soup ingredient — hanging in the same shop windows, it is similarly difficult to distinguish the sustainably caught species from the swim bladders of the totoaba, a critically endangered fish whose illegal harvest off the Pacific Coast of Mexico has also pushed the vaquita, a porpoise that is often caught in fishing nets, to the edge of extinction.

The massive growth of the shipping industry and global connectivity have made the markets for these species ruthlessly efficient and fast-moving. “I’m wondering, what’s the next species?” said Timothy C. Bonebrake, a biologist at the University of Hong Kong’s conservation forensics laboratory, which assists local law enforcement in analyzing wildlife contraband.

“Is there a way you can be proactive about this and stop it before these things are all critically endangered? And certainly, in Hong Kong, we’re seeing there is always a new species, all the time.”

Efforts to patrol Hong Kong’s wildlife imports are also hampered by the sheer scale of commerce in a territory whose economy was built on unencumbered movement.

Most of the seized pangolin scales have turned up in shipping containers in Hong Kong’s port, the fifth largest in the world, where inspecting more than a sliver of the nearly 21 million containers that pass through annually would be a herculean task.

Ivory and rhino horn from Africa increasingly arrive through Hong Kong’s international airport, which leads the world in airfreight and is the eighth most-trafficked by passengers.

“We’re serious about enforcement and prosecution,” said Mr. Tse, the environment under secretary. “But we have to accept the reality that Hong Kong is a free port, and it offers a lot of opportunities for this kind of activity to happen. Every day we have tens of thousands of cargos going in and going out of the city.”

Mr. Tse argues that in the face of these daunting challenges, the best hope for reducing Hong Kong’s role in the illegal wildlife trade is reducing local consumer demand for legal products. He points to the territory’s consumption of shark fins, imports of which fell 50 percent between 2007 and 2017.

“I think the community has begun to accept that if something is not good for the environment, it should be phased out,” he said. “The world is changing.”

Hong Kong has also made some moves to address its role as a wildlife-shopping destination for consumers from mainland China, where the appetite for wildlife products shows little sign of abating.

In 2018, Hong Kong took the significant step of banning the sale of ivory, following similar moves by China and the United States two years before. It was a momentous change, and a recognition that while the city is important to the ivory trade, the ivory trade is no longer very important to the city or its residents.

The busy Nathan Road shopping district, which was crammed with ivory shops as recently as the 1980s, is now mostly given over to outposts of international luxury brands. “There’s no reason why we have to focus on ivory here,” Mr. Tse said.

Since the international trade was banned in 1989, Hong Kong traders have been allowed to sell their stocks of pre-ban ivory — and for years, conservationists, citing that stockpile’s suspiciously slow depletion, argued that traders were using it to launder ivory from freshly killed elephants.

Some ivory sellers readily admit that such sleight-of-hand occurred, blaming unscrupulous traders while casting themselves as collateral damage in the struggle to contain the illegal wildlife trade.

“Sly and dishonest businessmen, they make it difficult for us,” said Leung Shun-cheung, who with his sister, Leung Yun-tim, runs the Hang Cheong Ivory Factory, a small shop on Queen’s Road. “They use the smuggled ivory to fill the space in their quota for legal ivory. That’s how they did it. But we are innocent.”

On an early evening in August, Mr. Leung was crouched over a workbench in the shop, sanding a pair of ivory chopsticks he had carved, while Ms. Leung sorted through bills at a nearby desk. The bare fluorescent light bulbs illuminated dusty glass shelves packed full of ivory carvings, but no customers.

“Because of the ban, we don’t have much business,” Ms. Leung said. “From time to time, the locals come here to buy a small piece.” She said that in three years, when the domestic ban goes into effect, they intended to close their shop, which their father opened before World War II.

Mr. Leung produced a sheaf of letters he had received from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, advising him of the 2021 deadline and offering to enroll him in training for a new career. He was 72 years old, and had only ever worked in the ivory shop.

“The government is asking me to retire at the age of 75,” he said, laughing grimly. “They’re very concerned about me.”

He settled the chopsticks in a display case: two slender increments of supply awaiting a demand that remained vast, but for the moment, out of reach.

Reporting was contributed by Xiaomei Chen in Hong Kong.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/12/science/hong-kong-wildlife-trafficking.html>

WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT BANS BIRDS’ TRAPPING, TRADE

Faiza Ilyas Updated February 12, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh wildlife department banned on Monday birds’ trapping, trade and transportation of all kinds of wild animals, withdrawing all trapping permits earlier issued by the department.

“Under the provision of Section 7 (sub-sections iii and v) of the Sindh Wildlife Protection Ordinance 1972, the hunting and poaching of wild animals (including all kinds of birds) through the use of net, snare, bhagwa, or any other trap is strictly restricted.

“The permits (if any) previously issued by Sindh wildlife department for trapping of any kind of birds are hereby cancelled forthwith,” says a notification.

It also prohibits trade and transportation of all kinds of wild animals.

“The wild animals and birds so confiscated shall be released in nature without unnecessary delay through transparent prescribed procedure. The offences shall be prosecuted and penalised as per the provisions of Sindh Wildlife Ordinance 1972,” the notification says.

Notification is not applicable to game birds

The notification, however, is not applicable to game birds (partridges and ducks) which are hunted under a license in the winter season.

Explaining this point, wildlife conservator Javed Mahar said that the order is specifically meant to discourage bird's trapping carried out throughout the year.

“Unlike game birds whose hunting with specific guns is allowed for two months in selected areas through a license and with a bag limit of 10, the license for trapping birds (sparrows and mynah) was for a year with no bag limits.

“This permission issued on a nominal fee was being widely misused and hunters were trapping all kinds of birds, including ducks and parrots, causing serious damage to the ecosystem,” he said.

These birds, he pointed out, were then transported to all parts of the country for illegal trade.

To another question, he said the hunting period for partridge (a game bird) was over whereas the shooting period for ducks would end this week.

According to Mr Mahar, the notification has been forwarded to the director general Rangers as well as police so that they could play their role and help protect wildlife.

The general public, he noted, could also help rescue animals by informing the wildlife department about any illegal activity involving animals.

Sources said that a trapping permit should be issued after population of birds and threats they faced in a specific area had been assessed through a scientific survey.

The department, however, had been allowing people to trap birds without carrying out such an exercise. The record, however, revealed that no data of trapped birds was maintained either by the wildlife department or by permit holder.

The reasons behind the department's failure in properly executing their responsibility was an acute lack of technical expertise in the department, shortage of staff and funds.

Published in Dawn, February 12th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1463305/wildlife-department-bans-birds-trapping-trade>

GULF ROYALS ALLOWED TO HUNT HOUBARA BUSTARDS

Bhagwandas February 11, 2019

KARACHI: The federal government has issued at least 12 special permits to the members of royal families of Gulf states to hunt the internationally protected migratory bird, houbara bustard, in Balochistan during the 2018-19 season.

According to highly placed sources, the special permits have been issued to an Emir and his father, a president, rulers and crown princes, a governor and other members of the royal families of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar and Bahrain.

According to the permits signed by the foreign ministry's Deputy Chief of Protocol Mohammad Adeel Pervaiz, Governor of Tabuk Prince Fahd bin Sultan Abdul Aziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia has been allowed to hunt houbara bustards in Awaran district and Nushki (excluding Nushki city) and Chagai district (excluding the area in the northwest corner of Balochistan located in Chagai district (Nokundi) and Prince Mansour bin Mohammad S. Abdul Rehman Al-Saud in Dera Bugti in Sui district.

The UAE president and Abu Dhabi ruler Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and Abu Dhabi's crown prince Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan have been allocated Panjgur, Kharan, Kalat and Zhob districts (excluding Qamar Din Karez).

UAE president's son and a former deputy prime minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan has been allowed to hunt the migratory bird in Loralai district (excluding Duki area), Abu Dhabi ruler's representative in the Western Region Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al-Nahyan in Lehri Tehsil of Sibi district (minus Domki area) and UAE's Vice President and Prime Minister and Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum and Crown Prince of Dubai Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum in Khuzdar and Labella district and the area in the northwest corner of Balochistan located in Chagai district (Nokundi).

Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani has been allotted Washuk district, his uncle Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani Musakhel and Drug Tehsils in Musakhel district and Sani Shoran Tehsil in Kachi district.

A member of the Supreme Council of the royal family of Qatar Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah Thani Al-Thani has been allotted Kech district less Hoshap.

Another member of Qatari royal family Sheikh Faisal bin Nasser bin Hammad Al-Thani has been allowed to hunt houbara bustards in Qila Saifullah district, including Kakar Khurasan and Qamar Din Karez.

Commander in Chief of Armed Forces of Bahrain Sheikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa has been allocated Toisar Tehsil in Musakhel district.

Minister of Interior of Bahrain Lt Gen Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa has been issued permit to hunt the prized bird in Jafferabad district.

The sources said the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government has issued the special hunting permits though Prime Minister Imran Khan used to criticise the previous governments for issuing such permits when he was in the opposition.

The PTI had never allowed the Arab rulers to hunt the highly rare bird in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where it was in power.

They said Adviser to the PM on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam, who is also the South East Asia vice president of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), looked the other way when these permits were being issued to the hunters having petro-dollar stuffed pockets. The IUCN is one of the largest NGOs working globally for nature conservation.

The sources said by issuing special permits to Arab hunters, who considered the houbara bustard to be an aphrodisiac, the government had violated various international nature conservation conventions as well as local wildlife protection laws.

Pakistanis are not allowed to hunt this migratory bird.

The sources said by issuing these permits the government had also put the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP-Plus) status given to it by the European Union under threat because as a beneficiary of the GSP Plus, Pakistan has to follow numerous international agreements, particularly those concerning the nature conservation. They said that the EU periodically checked if the country concerned was following its international commitments or not.

Published in Dawn, February 11th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1463157/gulf-royals-allowed-to-hunt-houbara-bustards>

OVER 70% OF SIBERIAN MIGRATORY BIRDS HAVE STOPPED VISITING PAKISTAN

By Syed Ashraf Ali Published: February 11, 2019

KARACHI: The number of migratory birds coming in from Siberia has declined drastically over the past three decades. Around 150,000 birds, including local and migratory waterfowl, were estimated to have landed at 12 aquatic ‘stopovers’, which is 70% less than in 2017-2018, according to a survey conducted during the winter season.

The migratory birds usually arrive in Pakistan at the end of August and begin leaving in February. The birds are all gone by March.

As the temperatures in Siberia drop below -30 degrees Celsius, the birds make their way to warmer climates. The route of the migratory birds is called ‘Flyway Four’ or the ‘Green Route’ in Pakistan. The migratory birds fly from Siberia, over Afghanistan and into Pakistan, where they track the Indus River on the way to Sindh.

Sindh Wildlife Game Officer Rasheed Ahmed Khan said that Pakistan has 19 sites where birds land, 10 of which are located in Sindh.

The migratory birds temporarily stop in Thatta, Rann of Kutch and Thar coastal areas. Later, they gradually spread to other lakes. Scores of birds stay at three Thatta lakes, Haleji, Keenjhar and Hadbero. A large number of birds arrive at Larkana’s Langh Lake, Drigh Lake and the Hamal Lake in the Qamber district. The birds live in lower and upper Sindh, feed there and stay at their habitats.

The Sindh Wildlife and Zoological Survey of Pakistan surveyed Hawkes Bay and 12 lakes in upper Sindh, including Keenjhar, Haleji, Hadero, Langh, Hamal, Manchhar, Daeihya Akro, Narardi, Mehrano, to determine the number of aquatic birds last year. Around 64 different species of local and migratory birds were identified. The total number of birds in the census stood at 153,916.

According to the experts, there are several reasons for the decline of the migratory birds in Pakistan, specifically Sindh, and both natural and human interventions are to blame.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Technical advisor Moazzam Khan said that less rainfall, dried up water passages and the changing of the location into agricultural land were the major reasons for the decline.

The system of two important fresh water lakes has also been ruined in Badin district. Tsunami has caused saltwater to intrude Jhabo and Nardri lakes. The change of the lake's water into saline water is drastically affecting the quality of life of marine animals and plants, and causing the number of the migratory birds visiting the lakes to decline. Moazzam said that both lakes were few of the important abodes for the migratory birds. A total of 4,601 birds arrived at Nardi habitat, which is considered as the best lake for the birds. A greater number of birds used to arrive here earlier.

He said that the natural habitat of the migratory birds will have to be improved to ensure the birds breed. He added that dried up water passages will have to be restored through provision of sweet water.

Badin District Game Inspector Ali Muhammad Nizamani said that the water shortage in the canal system and the decrease in rainfall combined with release of pollutants had systematically poisoned the lakes in Sindh and caused the birds to opt for safer lakes in neighbouring countries. He added that immediate preventive steps needed to be taken to address the issue.

Moazzam said that several water bodies in Sindh have been occupied and residential homes have been built or they are being utilised for agriculture and fish farming.

Furthermore, unchecked hunting and netting have caused irreparable losses to bird populations and saddened conservationists and wildlife lovers.

Hunting is permitted only in 13 areas and is strictly prohibited in 34 locations, all of which are habitats of migratory birds. But despite the prohibition, illegal and unchecked hunting has been going on for the past three months.

An expert hunter, requesting anonymity, said that innumerable migratory birds used to fly to Sindh during 1984, the time since he has been into hunting. Now, only 30% of them come to the province. He added that previously people used to hunt in limited places and as a hobby, for which the government used to issue permission deeds.

In the past decade, he said, hunting has turned into a business and powerful feudal lords allow people to hunt in Tando Adam Khan, Sujjawal, Keenjhar Lake and several other locations. A 1km game reserve is built with a bunker, he said, and five to eight hunters are allowed to use it. Each bunker is sold out for Rs150, 000. Several bunkers are built to hunt the migratory birds.

A social worker, Salman Baloch, opined that netting was a worse practice than hunting.

Many man-made lakes spanning several kilometres are built as private properties in Badin, Thatta, Sujjawal and other districts for fish farms. He said that the birds are caught in these temporary lakes through big nets.

On the other hand, Sindh Wildlife Game Officer cited the Afghan war as a factor in the decline in migratory bird populations. "The wars going on for 40 years have affected the route of the migratory birds which used to travel towards Pakistan."

Speedboats, fish farming and several other human activities on the lakes are also affecting the arrival of the birds.

Addressing the concerns, Sindh Wildlife Department Conservative Taj Muhammad Sheikh said that the department faced a shortage of staff and transport facilities. However, he added, the department was taking every possible measure for the conservation of wildlife with the available resources. “Netting is an illegal process and strict actions are being taken against those involved,” he said. Hunting of the migratory birds under legal conditions is permitted on specific locations. Sheikh said that Sindh wildlife department was taking stern actions to curb illegal hunting.

Moazzam said that the government should ban hunting for the conservation of the migratory birds or it should be brought under control and concrete steps should be taken for its monitoring.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1907626/1-70-siberian-migratory-birds-stopped-visiting-pakistan/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 4TH TO FEBRUARY 10TH 2019

PLANTATION DRIVE LAUNCHED IN BUNER, MANSEHRA

Dawn Report February 10, 2019

BUNER/MANSEHRA: Saplings were planted in Buner and Mansehra on Saturday to formally launch ‘Clean and Green Pakistan’ drive.

The drive was launched in Buner as officials planted saplings at Buner Press Club and the adjacent Daggar police station. Ahmed Jalil, divisional forest officer; Hazrat Meer, divisional watershed officer; Saeedullah Jan, assistant commissioner; DSP Zafar Khan, press club chairman AR Abid Bunery and SHO Daggar Khalid Khan planted the saplings.

DFO Ahmed Jalil said on the occasion that the target of planting the required number of trees would be achieved with the support of administration, police, media and local people.

He urged journalists to play their role and create awareness among people about the importance of the plantation drive.

AC Saeedullah Jan said that district administration would extend all out support to the forest and watershed departments to make the drive a success. He said that district administration planted covered most of the open space with saplings during the previous plantation drive.

Abid Bunery thanked the officials for of watershed, administration and police for launching the plantation drive from the press club. He said that journalists would highlight the importance of the drive to create awareness among people.

In Mansehra, the plantation drive was lunched by the watershed department.

“The watershed department has started planting over 2.7 million saplings in the district that will not only bring major change in environment but also restrict landslide,” Deputy Commissioner Ziaul Haq told the ceremony held in connection with launching of the plantation campaign.

He formally launched the plantation drive in the district by planting a sapling at the garden of government higher secondary school for boys.

The official said that both federal and provincial governments wanted pollution-free environment. “I appeal students and other segments of society to come forward and play their due role in making the country green and pollution-free,” he added.

The officials of watershed department were also present on the occasion.

Published in Dawn, February 10th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1462845/plantation-drive-launched-in-buner-mansehra>

BALUCHISTAN CM KICKS OFF TREE PLANTATION DRIVE

By Mohammad Zafar Published: February 10, 2019

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan has launched the spring tree plantation campaign, vowing to plant 2.5 billion trees and saplings across the province in five years.

“In the first phase of the tree plantation drive 80,000 trees and saplings are being planted today across the province and during this spring season 1.2 million trees will be planted, which definitely would create a positive impact on our environment,” CM Kamal said while talking to reporters after planting a sapling at Chief Minister Secretariat to kick off the drive in the province.

“The government has plans to plant more trees in areas having good rainy seasons but we have also decided to plant species that can be grown in dry areas with less water.” Kamal said, adding that the provincial government was taking steps for environmental protection.

He said his government had decided to introduce a new Forest Act because the earlier law was over 100 years old and the department had not set its direction during the period.

“We have a complete scheme regarding the current tree plantation drive and its sustainability, and we are focusing on how to expand our forests.”

To a query regarding previous campaigns, Kamal said, “We can see saplings planted by previous chief ministers but we want to change the precedents. We have decided to plant trees and saplings on patches of 100 or 200 acres that should have a positive impact on the environment of the province.”

He said, “The first meeting of environmental council was held during our tenure and unfortunately the province was under grip of drought for the past three years. As we all know, we can’t plant trees in all seasons because they can better grow in spring.”

The chief minister said that after the recent rains the province had a suitable season for plants and trees to flourish.

Kamal said Pakistan is in a better situation as compared with other countries affected by climate change and in Balochistan there is less carbon emission because of fewer industries.

“Tough we have brick kilns but the government has experimented to install filtration plants to control the smoke and it was a good experience. We have plans to install filtration plants in all brick kilns.”

Kamal said the provincial government will sign a memorandum of understanding with the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco), which has the capability of identifying suitable land for agriculture through real-time data of satellite imagery.

“Keeping in view the level of water ascertained with Suparco’s help, we can make irrigation plans for Balochistan, including identification of areas suitable grazing. It was an initiative of our government that will yield long-term positive environmental impact for Balochistan.”

Replying to a question, Kamal denied presence of land grabbers in provincial coastal strip, saying the region was deserted, but the government and National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had launched an inquiry against illegal settlements in Gawadar.

Chairing a meeting on the performance of the Education Department, CM Kamal said the provincial government has released funds for educational development and the authorities should ensure an effective system of attendance for teachers and students.

Provincial Minister for Education Muhammad Khan Lehri, Minister for Information and Higher Education Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, representatives from Unicef and education department officials attended the meeting.

Education Secretary Tayab Lehri gave a detailed briefing on the Education Management Information System, GIS Profile and Real-Time Monitoring System (RTMS).

“In all, 14,250 primary schools exist in Balochistan, of which 1,623 boys and girls schools were non-functional due to various reasons, while following action against ghost teachers, 16 teachers were sacked for remaining abest from duty,” the secretary informed the meeting, adding that the salaries of such teachers were being deducted.

The government of Balochistan has declared mandatory the education department’s approval for establishing new schools, while deciding to take experts’ assistance during construction of the schools.

Lehri said Balochistan was the only province in the country where the GIS Profile System was fully functional and the department had complete data of all enrolled children, while ensuring the attendance of teachers and students through the RTMS.

Chief Minister Kamal ordered revival of educational activities in all non-functional schools and said new appointments must be started in accordance with the cabinet’s guidelines to reopen schools closed due to lack of teachers.

“The government has been paying special attention to educational department after declaring an educational emergency and deciding that there will be no compromise in the sector in Balochistan.”

CM said there should be at least one Model High Schools in each district along with an information technology lab and a hostel.

“The education department should focus on a teachers’ training programme,” he added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1907070/1-balochistan-cm-kicks-off-tree-plantation-drive/>

‘ALARMING DECLINE IN MIGRATORY BIRDS’ VISIT DUE TO DRIED LAKES’

Tahir Siddiqui February 09, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly was on Friday informed that the number of migratory birds which added colours to the wetlands of the province had declined alarmingly mainly due to shortage of waters in lakes and freshwater reservoirs.

While responding to lawmakers’ written and oral queries during Question Hour in the provincial assembly, Forest and Wildlife Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, said that over 1.75 million birds, including houbara bustards, cranes, teals, mallards, geese, waders and pelicans, had migrated from Siberia using Indus Flyway in 1992, while their numbers had now reduced to somewhere between 15,000 to 200,000 in 2019.

He said that the lakes were getting either dry or saline which was adversely affecting wildlife, particularly the migratory birds.

The minister, who was replying to the question of opposition member Arif Mustafa Jatoi, said that the provincial wildlife department was taking several steps for the protection of wildlife.

He said that the wildlife department remained in contact with the irrigation department for provision of sweet water in the lakes and wetlands during the migration of waterfowls from Siberia.

The minister said that effective steps were taken to check and control hunting of migratory birds as there was a complete ban on hunting at the lakes.

He said that migratory birds started their journey from Siberia in September or October and began returning to their native areas by the end of February or start of March every year.

When Opposition Leader Firdous Shamim Naqvi asked why provincial government did not arrange water for the migratory birds’ sanctuaries, he sarcastically said that there was not enough water even for the crops in the province.

In reply to a written question asked by MPA Arif Jatoi, a well-prepared Shah said that there were 13 animals declared protected in the province and penalty for hunting them ranged between Rs50,000 to Rs150,000.

He said that the protected animals were Sindh ibex, Afghan urial (Rs150,000), chinkara, blue bull, hog deer, Indian wolf, honey badger (ratal), mugger or marsh crocodile, gharial or gavial, smooth coated Indian otter, Indus blind dolphin, greater flamingo and fresh water turtles.

Mr Shah further said that two cases of illegal hunting of chinkara deer at Umerkot and Tharparkar were detected and fines of Rs60,000 and Rs30,000 respectively were imposed on the violators. To a supplementary question, he said that the killer of the animal was fined Rs60,000, while the one who injured the animal was fined Rs30,000.

He said that there were some private game reserves where a number of species were being raised. However, the minister said, the operators of the game reserves had to undergo an official process for the activity.

Replying to another supplementary question raised by Mr Jatoi, he said that a new law was under consideration and it would be tabled soon for the protection of wildlife. He said that the penalty would be enhanced in the new law.

In reply to a written question asked by opposition member Nusrat Sehar Abbasi, the minister said that no drip irrigation system was being used by the Afforestation Division of Riverine & Inland, Forest Department.

However, he said, nine solar tube-wells were being used in a section of Pai Forest called as Afforestation Division, Shaheed Benazirabad.

Certain comments by Ms Abbasi before asking a verbal question led to a little rumpus in the house as Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani repeatedly asked her to confine her to the supplementary question she wanted to ask.

“You always disturb the house. I will not allow this,” said Mr Durrani further saying “no one behaves like you in the house”.

The speaker made it clear that he would not allow anyone to deliver political speeches during Question Hour. “You may go out of the house to do politics,” he advised Ms Abbasi.

Replying to the query as to why all the tube-wells were installed in Shaheed Benazirabad district, the minister smilingly said that it was due to acute shortage of water in Pai Forest.

“It is the oldest forest”, added Speaker Durrani before he announced that Question Hour was over.

Published in Dawn, February 9th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1462644/alarmed-decline-in-migratory-birds-visit-due-to-dried-lakes>

PM TO INAUGURATE PLANTATION DRIVE TODAY

AAMIR SAEED | FEB 9TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Imran Khan will inaugurate the fresh plantation drive “Plant for Pakistan” today (Saturday) by planting a sapling while a total of 150 million saplings are expected to be planted across the country during the campaign.

Under the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami campaign of the PTI government, more than 1.5 million trees were planted in September last in a countrywide tree plantation drive. Ministry of Communications and Ministry of Climate Change signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in connection with afforestation campaign on Friday. Minister for Communications Murad Saeed and State Minister for Climate Change Zartaj Gul speaking on the occasion said the government was committed to retrieving the encroached forest land and planting trees.

The government has devised a plan to retrieve the encroached forest land in Punjab province and turn it into forests again by planting saplings there. All provincial governments have submitted their targets with the Ministry of Climate Change to plant saplings in their respective areas while plant distribution points will be established across the country for general public as well.

Ministry of Climate Change has also reached an agreement with a private company to plant saplings initially on 100 acres of land through drones. If the experiment proves successful, more plants will be planted through drone technology.

For transparent monitoring of the project, the ministry is intending to hire a private independent monitor like it did in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province where the PTI claimed to have planted over one billion trees during its five year tenure in the government.

Advisor to Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam claimed that survival rate of plants in the KP is counted to be over 85 percent while four percent of the forest area stood expanded through the Billion Tree Project.

He said that different species of saplings have been identified for different areas to preserve the ecosystem and ecology while provincial governments will plant the saplings independently in their respective areas as per their PC-I submitted to the Ministry of Climate Change.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/02/20190209445819/>

GOVT TO BRING AN EFFECTIVE WILDLIFE PROTECTION POLICY

By Shabbir Hussain Published: February 9, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has decided to formulate an effective policy to ensure wildlife protection and stop illegal hunting.

The government has decided to improvise on the wildlife policy draft made a few months ago before presenting it at the next cabinet or Council of Common Interest session.

The government after starting discussions with all stakeholders has started preparing a new policy draft, sources said, adding the Ministry Of Climate Change had previously decided to present the four-month old policy draft for approval but now it has decided to include additional input and suggestions from all stakeholders.

The ministry's draft had proposed even tighter legislation aimed at protection of wildlife and animal habitat while strict implementation of existing rules and regulations was also proposed.

The policy recommendations also included active role of all provinces, federal government, community members, non-governmental organisations and other institutions to work for wildlife protection taking support from the general public.

It was also proposed the provincial wildlife departments should pay special attention to conservation of endangered animals.

The Zoological Survey of Pakistan was advised to continue to work for ascertaining statistics for wildlife species and their living conditions and prepare its periodic reports. The draft's recommendations also included measures to ensure safety of the migratory birds and habitats of wild animals as well as steps for trophy hunting, wildlife population, urban wildlife, zoo and safari parks and prohibition of animal torture.

According to sources, the country currently has 174 types of mammals, 177 species of reptiles and 668 species of birds. Over 90 of these animal species are considered endangered, including snow cheetahs found in northern areas. In addition, 50 species of mammals, 27 birds and 17 types of insects are also endangered.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1906572/1-govt-bring-effective-wildlife-protection-policy/>

PARC SET TO TURN BARREN THARPARKAR DESERT GREEN

By Our Correspondent Published: February 7, 2019

HYDERABAD: For the barren desert of Tharparkar, Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) appears set to embark on an ambitious project of growing cash crops and fruit orchards. The council in this regard entered into an agreement on Wednesday with the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company's (SECMC) Thar Foundation in Tharparkar.

Cultivating cash crops and fruit trees, modifying seeds and fodder, reducing salinity and developing multi-directional commercial value chains, that involve livestock, are the objectives. The two partners will also carry out an analysis and undertake pre-emptive remedy against land degradation caused by salinity.

PARC will also station supervisors on-ground who will be available to supervise designated bio-saline projects, which have been initiated by the foundation. The two organisations will also conduct a feasibility study on installing domestic biogas units modelled on the utilisation of animal waste as fuel.

PARC Chairperson Dr Yusuf Zafar said that their supreme objective was to eliminate drought in the region. He said that the council would replicate successful models in Tharparkar which were implemented by the Arid Zone Research Institute in the neighbouring Umerkot district.

Syed Murtaza Azhar Rizvi of Thar Foundation said that the desert was blessed with huge reserves of groundwater, which are estimated at around 80 billion cubic meters. The subsoil water, he added, can be pumped out to make Tharparkar district rich in agriculture.

For the project, the foundation is providing 20 acres of land for the execution of a pilot project. The provision of the required resources including water, seeds and saplings will also be the foundation's onus.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 7th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1905021/1-parc-set-turn-barren-tharparkar-desert-green/>

ANOTHER US CITIZEN HUNTS MARKHOR

The Newspaper's Correspondent Updated February 05, 2019

GILGIT: A third American citizen on Monday hunted the highest-priced markhor during the current hunting season in Sassi village of Gilgit.

According to the Gilgit-Baltistan wildlife department, Bryan Kinsel Harlan successfully hunted a flared-horned markhor from Sassi-Harmosh community conservation area.

The hunter had paid a record 110,000 US dollar as permit fee for hunting of the rare wildlife species in the region.

This is the highest permit fee ever offered in the country.

The foreign hunter managed to hunt a 41-inch markhor trophy, which is considered a good-sized trophy.

“It was an easy and close shot and I am pleased to take this trophy,” said the US hunter.

On Jan 21, another US citizen Dianda Christopher Anthony had hunted the highest-rated Astore Markhor after paying 105,000 US dollars.

On Jan 16, yet another American, John Amistoso, had hunted the Astore Markhor in the community-controlled Bunji area of Gilgit, paying the 100,000 US dollars permit fee.

So far, about 50 wildlife animals have been hunted by foreigners and national hunters in GB under trophy hunting season 2018-19.

Published in Dawn, February 5th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1461958/another-us-citizen-hunts-markhor>

‘POISONOUS PESTICIDES, POLLUTED WATER CAUSING CANCER’

RECORDER REPORT | FEB 5TH, 2019 | LAHORE

Poisonous pesticides and polluted underground and river water are the main causes of increasing cancer among citizens. Kissan Board Pakistan President Chaudhry Nisar Ahmad stated this while addressing a seminar arranged by the Board to mark the ‘International Cancer Day.’ Other agricultural and health experts also addressed the seminar.

Chaudhry Nisar said according to a study carried out by an international health organization the number of people suffering from this disease would reach 22 million from 15 million by the year 2032.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/02/20190205444810/>

BATTLING PUNJAB’S SMOG

Amin Ahmed Updated February 04, 2019

THE Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations has asked the Punjab government to provide support to farmers to purchase machines that can harvest with low residue.

It has also urged the adoption of relevant climate smart practices to help increase yields and the usage or sale of residue as fertiliser, animal feed supply, bio-gas production, instead of being burnt.

The contribution of the agriculture sector, particularly crop residue burning, is significant to the seasonal smog phenomenon in Punjab. It is the third largest sector by emissions following transport and industrial sector.

Up to 88pc of farmers say they would agree to accept a law banning the burning of crop residues provided that alternative methods are made available

There is an urgent need for crop residue-based renewable energy planning since a number of such initiatives are being undertaken in neighbouring countries for bio-energy generation, emphasises the FAO report: “Remote Sensing for Spatio-temporal mapping of Smog in Punjab and Intensification of the Underlying Causes Using GIS Techniques (R-SMOG),” submitted to the Punjab government this week.

The report provides an insight into the importance of the design and implementation of appropriate climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies and actions. In particular, these should be an integral part of any plan for the revitalisation of the agriculture sector,” said FAO Representative in Pakistan, Mina Dowlatchahi.

Rice residue burning accounts for 20 per cent of total air polluted emissions with respect to other sectors. Though the emission contribution is minimal as compared to other sectors, it may support significantly the seasonal smog phenomenon in Punjab, according to the report.

The emissions from residue burning of other crops have not been estimated due to the fact that since smog usually happens in October and November and these two months only involve burning of rice residue.

A comparison of total fire events from 2008-2018 shows that the number of fire events is significantly higher in the months of October and November which complements the fact that more crop residues burning activities are carried out in these months to prepare land for next crop.

Assessment and mapping of aerosol point sources indicate that 65 per cent of aerosol sources were detected within Pakistan which means most of the sources are located within Pakistan and sources of smog need to be managed and controlled within the country first,

Biomass burning and mixed-type pollutants were found mostly originating from within Pakistan in the smog dominated zone, however, sources were also detected in neighbouring regions such as India, Afghanistan and Iran with Indian contributions mainly constituting to fine mode biomass/urban type pollutants.

In carrying out the study the focus group, in collaboration with agriculture specialist from the Punjab Agriculture Department, held discussions with farmers which helped understand the reasons, and get insights about the trends in residue burning practices. Overall, farmers reported that burning of crop residues for the past sixteen years, ranging from five to thirty years.

An important factor is that in the past farmers used crop residue as fodder for their animals before burning started. This is no longer widely practiced.

Up to 88pc of the farmers say they would agree to accept a law banning burning of crop residues provided that alternative methods are made available. These farmers also demanded the government to provide subsidy or better technology for incorporation of crop residue.

The remote sensing analysis of fire events indicates more fire events occurring in Indian-administered Punjab, therefore it is evident that smog is a trans-boundary issue and requires regional cooperation.

The report emphasised the need for inter-country collaboration on data and information sharing as well as collaborative strategies. Cumulative measures and joint efforts can help eradicate a problem that respects no boundaries, report says.

The establishment of an early warning system for potentially severe smog incidents and smog monitoring network was recommended.

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, February 4th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1461681/battling-punjabs-smog>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 28TH TO FEBRUARY 3RD 2019

5,000 TREES TO BE CUT TO MAKE WAY FOR LEH EXPRESSWAY

By Zulfiqar Baig Published: February 3, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Leh Expressway dubbed as a mega project to end road congestion in Rawalpindi, comes with an environmental cost of chopping of at least 5,000 trees, sources said on Saturday.

According to official sources, the present map of the project shows that some 5,000 trees coming on its route will be uprooted during the completion of this project.

PM's Advisor on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam said that the project was being constructed for the facilitation of the public and in the larger interest of the people, some trees would have to be cut down to make way for the expressway.

"No doubt trees play an important role in keeping the environment clean therefore, an environmental impact survey will be carried out before the project is kicked off," said Aslam.

He added that the government would try to cut down fewer numbers of trees. If many trees were cut, the government would plant fast growing myriad trees as compensation.

The citizens of Rawalpindi, Riaz Raja Jehangir, and Sarfaraz Malik demanded that the government should soon start this project while they added that Leh Expressway should rapidly be completed whereas they also urged the government to plant more trees than those being cut down during the construction of Expressway.

The feasibility report for this project was prepared in the tenure of former President Pervez Musharraf on the personal desire of the current Federal Minister for Railways, Sheikh Rasheed. However, the following governments stopped the project.

The initial cost of the Leh Expressway was calculated to be around Rs18 billion. Today it has been calculated at Rs80 billion.

Subsequently, Shekih Rasheed Ahmed announced to resume this project after his victory in the 2018 General Elections. Later, he was appointed as the focal person of Leh Expressway and Flood Channel project by the government of Tehreek-e-Insaf.

The current government decided to prepare feasibility report of the project under the supervision of Sheikh Rasheed with the consultation of Ministry of Planning, Development & Reform as well as Punjab government along with all related departments.

The length of the Leh Expressway project has been increased from 19 kilometres to 21 kilometres.

The project will start from the Soan River and will extend to Peshawar Mor after passing through IG Principal Road. The project will also provide interlink for Islamabad International Airport and Islamabad Secretariat. The project will also have two interchanges, 11 flyovers and three underpasses. The expressway will also have a big field channel and a treatment plant for sewerage water, the output from which will be used for irrigation.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 3rd, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1902556/1-5000-trees-cut-make-way-leh-expressway/>

PHA TO PLANT OVER 1M SAPLINGS IN SPRING

RECORDER REPORT 2019/02/02

LAHORE: Over one million saplings would be planted in spring under Parks & Horticulture Authorities (PHAs) in the Punjab during next two months.

This was decided in a meeting headed by Minister for Housing & Urban Development, Mian Mahmood ur Rasheed which was attended by Chairmen and Director Generals of PHAs of entire province. Addressing the meeting, Mahmood ur Rasheed said that beautifying the cities of the province is a priority of the Punjab government in accordance with the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/02/02/13-page/761477-news.html>

19 WETLANDS DECLARED AS RAMSAR SITES OF WORLD IMPORTANCE

RECORDER REPORT | FEB 2ND, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has so far designated 19 wetlands across the country as Ramsar sites for being a signatory to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance while the government is taking all possible measures to conserve the wetlands to mitigate adverse impacts of climate change.

Ministry of Climate Change said this in a statement on Friday, adding that Pakistan's wetland includes lakes, rivers, deltas, estuaries, swamps, peat lands, coral reefs mangroves and other coastal areas. "These are among the most diverse and productive ecosystem supporting rich biodiversity and providing valuable products and services to human beings," it said. Each year February 2 is celebrated as Wetland Day to mark the date of adoption of Ramsar Convention on this day in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran.

Theme of World Wetland Day 2019 is “Wetland and Climate Change,” as due to human activities, global climate is changing faster than any previous century. As a result, temperatures are rising, oceans are warming, glaciers are melting and sea levels are rising.

The frequency of disasters worldwide has more than doubled in just 35 years and 90 percent of these disasters are water related. Extreme weather events are predicted to be on the rise. Wetland plays a significant role in mitigating impact of climate change.

Wetland acts as carbon sink, which is one of the major contributors of global warming and a natural buffer to absorb the shock of natural disasters and protect the communities. The Ministry of Climate Change is working to harmonise the potential of floods for groundwater recharge, pollution control and poverty alleviation. In this connection, Recharge Pakistan Project is being considered for implementation. Besides, plantation and regeneration of forest cover in mangroves zones and other appropriate areas near wetlands is planned, the ministry added.

Meanwhile, a sub-committee of Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change discussed environmental issues pertaining to the Islamabad Capital Territory.

The meeting of the committee was held under the convenership of Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed. The meeting was called to formulate a work plan for the next two months. Suggestions from parliamentarians, experts and media persons covering the meeting were welcomed.

Emphasis was placed on running awareness campaigns on national television with a special focus on mobilising students, garbage collection and disposal, making Islamabad a plastic free zone, cleaning up of nullahs and manholes, and establishment of an abattoir.

The committee recommended that the next meeting should be held on February 12, 2019 and that government agencies such as Capital Development Authority (CDA), Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI), Islamabad Capital Territory Administration (ICT), Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) be summoned.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/02/20190202444229/>

CLEAN AND GREEN INITIATIVE: SENATE PANEL GEARS UP EFFORTS FOR ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION

By APP Published: February 2, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Senate Sub-committee on Climate Change on Friday devised terms of reference (ToRs) for the committee’s work plan to gear up for the federal capital’s environment conservation amid journalists suggestions and active participation to play role in the green endeavours.

The convener of the Sub-committee Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed chaired the meeting with Senator Keshoo Bai as member whereas Senator Sitara Ayaz, Environmental Activists and experts Saima Umar and Dr Dushka Saiyid as special invitees and members of journalist fraternity presented their suggestion to the committee to devise a comprehensive and inclusive plan to take up the green issues.

The convener said the committee had been given the mandate of 60 days whereas it would be focused to counter the alarming issues other than water pollution to garbage disposal, cleanliness of drains and hospital waste management.

Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change Chairman Senator Sitara Ayaz observed that a parliamentary caucus on climate change was also working to address ecological issues across the country.

“It has already declared Nathia Gali plastic free whereas a few private companies were invited to collect and dispose the garbage of the federal capital,” she added.

Senator Keshoo Bai suggested that an awareness campaign should be launched to take all concerned departments and community on board for creating a vibrant understanding of environmental issues and their role in mitigation measures.

Saima Umar recommended that the garbage collection and disposal was among the core issues of the federal capital which needs to be taken on priority.

Dr Dushka Sayed was of the view that the initiative of ban on open disposal of garbage and plastic waste could be set as an example for the entire country.

She said Rwanda (East African) country known for the genocide occurred in her state had imposed ban on plastic where every foreigner or local visitor landing at its airport any plastic goods or items were confiscated from the passengers to keep the country free of plastic.

“We should make Islamabad Plastic-Free city as a model for the rest of the country as plastic is a non-decomposable material and has serious impacts over environment and public health,” she added.

The journalists during the session also presented their suggestions as it was proposed to hold awareness-cum-student mobilization drive to effectively address the green issues in the federal capital, biodegradable plastic researches and solutions by Jamshoro University to be incorporated to replace the non-biodegradable plastic, cleaning of Nullahs, waste management especially hospital waste, inclusion of national television for awareness campaigns, reduction of open defecation in public places and natural parks and also taking help from YouTube for easy, tried and tested solutions to overcome plastic pollution.

Senator Mushahid added that the committee would not merely remained confined to the committee rooms rather would also go for site visits from markets, Nullahs to National Parks and public places or any other place indicated by the committee members, journalists and civil society.

“Media, particularly journalists, have a significant role than the government in highlighting issues and bringing forth solutions and negligence of the departments concerned,” Mushahid said.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 2nd, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1902088/1-clean-green-initiative-senate-panel-gears-efforts-environment-conservation/>

PFA UPROOTS CROPS IRRIGATED WITH HAZARDOUS WATER

By Imran Asghar Published: February 1, 2019

RAWALPINDI: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) on Thursday destroyed crops grown on a 10-Kanal-strip of land which was being irrigated with dirty water from the Nullah Leh.

The crops destroyed included cabbage, lettuce, spinach, and carom (ajwain).

Some people had illegally occupied a strip of land along the banks of the massive stormwater drain, Nullah Leh, and were using it to grow vegetables for years. They had diverted the flow of hazardous water from the nullah to irrigate their fields.

The Rawalpindi District Health Department's Health Officer Dr Naveed Akhtar, when asked about vegetables, were being grown using hazardous water had said that they had issued a high alert about the presence of the poliovirus and dengue larvae in the waters of the Nullah Leh.

"Forget drawing water for crops, even breathing near the Nullah Leh could be hazardous," Dr Akhtar had said.

A spokesperson for PFA had said that they had never received such a complaint from Rawalpindi and promised to take action.

After a report about the matter had been published in The Express Tribune last week, the PFA spokesperson on Thursday said that crops being grown using water from Nullah Leh on land near Khayaban-e-Sir Syed, Dhoke Dalal, Pir Wadhai, Kashmir Colony and Carriage Factory Road, have been destroyed.

The official added that teams of the PFA first tried to get tractors to the fields. But when that was not possible, they got labourers to uproot the crops spread over 10 kanals of land and destroyed them.

The PFA official added that they did not face resistance of any kind from the farmers while uprooting the crops. However, a warning has been issued to those involved in maintaining the plantation that if they tried to grow crops using hazardous water, then they will be prosecuted.

In the news report, it had been found that crops grown using hazardous water was being sold in the markets of the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Published in The Express Tribune, February 1st, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1901337/1-pfa-uproots-crops-irrigated-hazardous-water/>

HOSPITAL WASTE TREATMENT PROJECT STUCK FOR MONTHS

By Khalid Hasnain | 1/31/2019 12:00:00 AM

LAHORE: The execution of a project to install three autoclaves to treat about 15,000 kilogrammes of hospital waste a day at Mahmood Booti continues to be delayed for several months due to various issues on the part of the provincial government.

The project, which will be executed by the Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) and is sponsored by the specialised healthcare department, had been envisaged about a year ago during the tenure of the PML-N government following growing public complaints related to nonincineration of tonnes of hospital waste in the provincial capital.

‘The preparatory work of the project began in January 2018. And by May, the company received a cheque from the government to proceed further. But that could not materialise after the interim government stopped release of funds to all the projects,’ an official source told Dawn on Tuesday.

The Rs484 million project, according to its PC-1, comprised various components, including installation of three autoclaves (each with a capacity to treat 5,000kg of hospital waste), repair/restoration of the two out-of-order incinerators of Children Hospital, training/capacity building of staff, construction of yellow rooms for infectious waste storage in 17 public sector teaching hospitals and waste collection and disposal. Of the above, work on repair/ rehabilitation of the incinerators and collection and disposal was completed; the work on construction of yellow rooms was halted after the interim government took over and ordered freezing of development funds.

‘The work on training/capacity building of the staff will begin after installation of the autoclaves at Mehmood Booti. The work on yellow rooms is yet to resume,’ the official added.

Under the project, currently hospital waste weighing 2,000kg to 3,000kg from Children, Ganga Ram, Jinnah and Lady Aitchison hospitals is being incinerated daily at the two facilities at Children Hospital. The waste generated by other public sector hospitals is being incinerated at private facilities, while private hospitals also have such facilities for their waste.

‘Lahore generates about 17,000kg of hospital waste daily. Of this, 2,000kg to 3,000kg is being incinerated at Children Hospital and the remaining at the private facilities.

And after installation of the autoclaves, the remaining 15,000kg will be treated at Mehmood Booti,’ he added.

The official further said the new government had referred this scheme, as well as others, to the cabinet for a review. ‘At least three months ago, the LWMC completed the bidding process and awarded the project to a joint venture of two companies a Pakistani and a Chinese. But, there were no funds available despite the fact that we issued a letter of acceptance to the joint venture. The funds were finally released last month and now the contract of the project and other relevant documents are being reviewed by the respective provincial secretary. Now it is up to the government when to allow the company to execute the project, the official added.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=31_01_2019_176_005

WORLD BANK TEAM TO REVIEW PUNJAB GREEN UPLIFT PROJECT

Amin Ahmed Updated January 31, 2019

ISLAMABAD: A World Bank mission is coming to Pakistan to review the pace of implementation of the Punjab Green Development Programme — an initiative aimed at strengthening environmental governance and promoting green investments in the province.

The project became effective in May last year, but its implementation has been delayed after the general elections. The bank is in close communication with the new government on actions needed to initiate implementation of the programme, reveals a document released by the World Bank.

The planned programme expenditures over five years amount to \$273 million, of which \$200m is to be financed by the International Development Association (IDA).

Implementation of project has suffered delay after last year's elections

The status report of the bank shows no money has so far been disbursed for the project.

Punjab being the most populated and second largest province accounting for more than half of the country's GDP is particularly affected by pollution. Lahore is one of the world's most polluted cities and has been increasingly affected by toxic smog in recent years, caused notably by increasing emissions from industries, vehicles, power generation, and open trash and crop burning.

Smog from Lahore and other cities in Punjab can extend throughout the province depending on the season and weather patterns.

The Punjab Green Development Programme is meant to support provincial authorities' renewed efforts to strengthen environmental management and mainstream green development.

The World Bank-assisted programme is presented in recent strategic documents adopted by the provincial government, including the Punjab Smog Policy 2017 and the Punjab Climate Change Policy which is under preparation.

Published in Dawn, January 31st, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1460882/world-bank-team-to-review-punjab-green-uplift-project>

POLLUTION PROMPTS CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS IN BANGKOK

Reuters January 31, 2019

BANGKOK: Choking air pollution has prompted schools to close in the Thai capital for the rest of the week and people celebrating next week's Lunar New Year holiday were urged to curb the use of incense and fireworks.

Air quality in Bangkok is hovering at unhealthy levels as the amount of hazardous dust particles known as PM 2.5 exceeded the safe level in 41 areas around the capital, according to the Department of Pollution Control.

PM 2.5 is a mixture of liquid droplets and solid particles that can include dust, soot and smoke, one of the main measures of the Air Quality Index (AQI).

Wednesday's AQI was 175 at midday, according to airvisual.com, which measures levels in cities worldwide, making Bangkok the fifth most polluted city. India's capital, New Delhi, ranked first at 257.

Classes in more than 400 public schools in Bangkok were cancelled at noon on Wednesday while other public and private schools in Bangkok and surrounding provinces will be closed on Thursday and Friday, government spokesman Puttipong Punnakan told reporters.

Published in Dawn, January 31st, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1460921/pollution-prompts-closure-of-schools-in-bangkok>

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN AGAINST SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BAGS

RECORDER REPORT | JAN 30TH, 2019 | KARACHI

The Orange Tree Foundation organized a carnival at the Hockey Stadium in Khadda Market, Defence to raise funds for the education of poor children. A large number of stalls at the carnival were put up by ladies. The event provided them a platform to market their products and businesses and to contribute towards the economic well-being of their households.

The Carnival hosted one particularly interesting stall. This stall was set up by the Citizens for a Clean Karachi (C.C.K) – a group of women volunteers working on a self-help basis to rid Karachi of the single-use plastic bags' menace. The group is particularly focused on creating awareness against the excessive usage of plastic bags or shoppers as they cause long term environmental damage. They are working to promote the use of cloth/ canvas bags as a more environment friendly alternative.

Single-use plastic bags have many disadvantages. They are: dangerous for all life forms whether human, animal or plant; toxic if burnt and release fumes that cause diseases such as cancer; detrimental to fertility of agricultural soil; often found blocking gutters and drains; a traffic hazard as empty bags sometimes fly out of nowhere onto vehicles, obstructing visibility.

The rampant use of plastic bags has turned Karachi into a huge garbage dump! Karachi's residents can curtail this plastic bag menace by taking a few simple steps, such as:

1. Refusing to accept shoppers from stores
2. Reusing the plastic bags already at home multiple times
3. Recycling plastic bags into other useful items such as furniture for gardens and parks
4. Reducing the use of plastic bags and replacing them with cloth or canvas bags as an eco-friendly alternative. People should carry cloth bags with them or keep them in their vehicles for use during shopping.

Milk, yogurt, eggs etc. may be carried home from shops in glass or metal containers which can be used again and again.

5. Becoming a volunteer of CCK and working with them to make Karachi clean again.-PR

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/01/20190130443342/>

NEPALESE EXPERT TO TRAIN BRICK KILN OWNERS

ZAHID BAIG | JAN 30TH, 2019 | LAHORE

The Nepalese environment expert will extend training to brick kiln owners of Punjab from February 11 regarding environment-friendly zig zag technology. The training has been arranged in response to a request of the Brick Kiln Owners Association to extend technical and financial assistance to kiln owners of the province for converting their facilities to new zig zag technology.

Moreover, Environment Protection Department (EPD) Punjab officers will also hold meetings with kiln owners during the next three months in every district of the province to create awareness amongst them about advantages of using zig zag technology. These programmes are part of efforts being carried out by the government to control issue of smog.

This was disclosed by Secretary Environment Protection Department Dr Nasrullah Khan while chairing a meeting on Tuesday to review the progress on converting old brick kilns to zig zag technology. President Brick Kiln Owners Association Shoaib Khan Niazi, General Secretary Mehar Abdul Haq and all divisional presidents attended the meeting.

Director Environment Protection Department (EPD) Punjab Naseem ur Rehman Shah and Shahid Hassan also attended the meeting. The meeting was informed that around 226 brick kilns have been converted to zig zag technology while the Association had requested for technical and financial assistance to help other kilns for adopting this technology.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/01/20190130443379/>

CLIMATE MINISTRY PROPOSES TAX ON PLASTIC BAGS

By Shabbir Hussain Published: January 30, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul Wazir has said the federal government in order to reduce the use of plastic bags has decided to impose tax on them and the Ministry for Climate Change has suggested a tax of Rs1-2 per plastic bag.

Speaking to Express News, the state minister said the aim of this tax is to get rid of plastic bags and the government believes imposing tax is the only way to make people stop using plastic bags.

She added the ministry has consulted provinces regarding the proposal and the tax will be imposed after taking provinces into confidence

“The use of plastic bags is injurious to human lives as well as other land and sea creatures and we are trying to get rid of it,” said Wazir adding the use of biodegradable or paper bags should be promoted in order to curb plastic pollution.

Earlier in the Senate’s caucus for climate change, ministry officials briefing about use of plastic bags and hazardous waste said Pakistan is a signatory of the Basil convention which focuses on trans-boundary hazardous pollution waste management, control and its disposal.

The officials further informed in compliance of the convention import of harmful waste was banned in the country and no person was allowed to import the said item to the territory under the Pakistan Environment Protection Act 1999.

During the briefing, they also revealed recently 800 containers transporting plastic waste into the country through Karachi port have been confiscated. The minister also informed the committee that

regarding this matter, a discussion is ongoing in cabinet and a probe committee has been formed which will soon present its report.

Meanwhile, committee chairperson Sherry Rehman asked the ministry, “There is ban on import of waste through formal procedure but what is the framework to stop illegal import and what strategy is ministry preparing for its control.”

Wazir replied the ministry’s work is policy-making and correspondence, implementation lies at the end of provinces. Rehman further said this is a serious issue however with making the ministry should be more self-determined and work to gather provinces for implementation.

Moreover, Leader of the House in Senate Shibli Faraz said that for implementation on industrial convention we need to build a framework between federation and provinces so such issues can be resolved.

“To get rid of plastic bags we need to raise awareness among people while there is need to encourage the use of cloth bags,” suggested Senator Ayesha Raza while the minister responded that the government is imposing tax on plastic bags to discourage their use.

However, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senator Faisal Javed opposed the tax.

“Your idea is good but tax cannot be imposed, instead of this you should bring an innovative suggestion or educate people first, kindly create awareness, run an ad campaign so that people know about it,” said the senator announcing he would not support the tax.

The ministry’s additional secretary suggested if you don’t want to impose tax then at least one percent of all PSDP project funds must be submitted in climate change fund so it can provide an alternative of plastic bags.

On this the chairperson formed a sub-caucus comprising Senator Muhammad Ali Saif and Ayesha Raza which has been tasked to formulate suggestions to rid the country of plastic bags.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1899712/1-climate-ministry-proposes-tax-plastic-bags/>

MODERN SHIP-BREAKING YARD TO BE BUILT IN KAPPAR: ZUBAIDA

30 Jan, 2019

GWADAR: Federal Minister for Defence Production Zubaida Jalal said a modern ship-breaking yard would be set up at the Mauza Kappar, which would usher a new era of development in the country, especially the deep seaport city and provide 5,000 jobs to the youth.

Addressing a news conference after visiting Turbat and Gwadar port here, the minister said jobs would be given to the people of Balochistan on priority.

She said the Gwadar port was operational and the entire world looking towards it as an attractive destination for trade activities.

The minister said federal and provincial governments were making sincere efforts to mitigate sufferings of the locals and for development of the area, assuring that all possible measures would be taken for welfare of fishermen.

Due to wrong policies of the past regimes, she said a number of projects in Balochistan remained at low-pace. The present government was taking corrective measures for fast-track implementation of the development projects, she added.

Zubaida said Saudi Arabia had planned to set up a mega oil city at Gwadar, adding that training institutes were also being established so that the Balochistan youth could get vocational education and training for jobs in different fields.

<https://timesofislamabad.com/30-Jan-2019/modern-ship-breaking-yard-to-be-built-in-kappar-zubaida>

THOUSANDS OF FISH DIE IN AUSTRALIA'S DARLING RIVER SYSTEM

1/29/2019 12:00:00 AM

SYDNEY: Thousands more fish have died in a key river system in drought-hit eastern Australia just weeks after up to a million were killed, authorities and locals said on Monday, sparking fears an ecological disaster is unfolding.

Fisheries officials said they were on their way to Menindee, a small outback town in far-west New South Wales state, after the third mass fish kill in the area in less than two months.

The town is near the Darling River, part of the Murray-Darling River system that stretches thousands of kilometres across several states and supplies the country's food bowl.

"There's lot of small (dead) fish... a lot of the larger fish have already perished in the last two kills," Menindee tourism operator Rob Gregory said, adding that he counted 380 dead fish in just a six-metre (20-foot) stretch of river.

Gregory said Menindee was renowned as having one of the best fisheries in the far-west region.

"This is a true environmental disaster that is equivalent to a lot of other things that are occurring like the bleaching of the coral in the Great Barrier Reef," he added.

While the federal government blames the deaths on a severe drought, experts and locals say they stem from the systemic depletion and pollution of the river.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries said the latest kills were likely linked to rains and a sharp drop in temperature after an extended period of hot weather that contributed to plummeting oxygen levels in the water.—AFP

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=29_01_2019_013_002

GOVERNMENT TO INSTALL WATER TREATMENT PLANTS AROUND KARACHI PORT: ZAIDI

RECORDER REPORT | JAN 28TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Syed Ali Haider Zaidi has said the federal government had a plan to set up water treatment plants around the Karachi Port and the treated water would be supplied to the industry. A big water treatment plant and many small ones would be installed under a phased program by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, which would help control dumping of industrial refuse in the sea, he said talking in an inclusive interview with a private news channel. He said the economic package announced by the federal government in the supplementary finance bill would promote the culture of industrialization in the country and bring more foreign investment that would ultimately boost the national economy and create more job opportunities.

The minister said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was working on a plan to connect the Karachi Port and Port Qasim through a 40-kilometre corridor, which would enhance their capacities to smoothen handling of cargo ships and avoid choking situation on both the ports, besides meeting the country's future requirements. A large number of national and international companies had shown their interest to invest in such projects and consultations were going on regarding the expansion of Karachi Port, he added.

There would be no need to seek financial assistance from the federal government as many foreign investors were waiting for a go-ahead to bid for the projects, he added.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/01/20190128442887/>

March 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 25TH TO MARCH 31ST 2019

EARTH HOUR MARKED ALL OVER THE COUNTRY

RECORDER REPORT | MAR 31ST, 2019 | KARACHI

On Saturday 8:30pm local time, WWF-Pakistan joined more than 180 nations around the world to celebrate Earth Hour, the global movement united by millions of people worldwide to show their commitment to protect the planet. Landmarks across the country switched off their lights in solidarity for the planet and joined WWF-Pakistan's call to combat climate change. As nature declines like never before, coupled with the ever-present challenge of climate change, Earth Hour 2019 focused on raising awareness on why nature matters and inspiring global action on conserving nature.

The main Earth Hour event in Karachi was observed at Sindh Assembly with members Sindh Assembly, senior management of WWF-Pakistan, Vice Chancellor NED University and students from University of Karachi; Institute of Business Management and representatives of different civil society organizations and media.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Babar Khan, Regional Head Sindh and Balochistan, WWF-Pakistan said that switching of unnecessary lights for an hour may seem like a small act, but collectively the magnitude of this gesture is unimaginable. Engr Dr Muhammad Amir Qureshi, Director Industrial Liaison NED University said that Earth Hour gives people an opportunity to go beyond the usual limitations and look at the bigger picture before them. On this Earth Hour, by joining WWF millions of people around the world have shown their commitment for the planet.

Earth Hour events were also celebrated at National Assembly of Pakistan in Islamabad, WAPDA House at Lahore as well as various offices of WWF-Pakistan including Bahawalpur and Khanewal; Faisalabad, Quetta, Peshawar, Nathiagali, and Sukkur where students, families, members of civil society organizations, corporates and representatives of government departments participated.

Other major landmarks across the country also participated in Earth Hour by switched off lights. These included Wazir Khan Mosque, HazoriBagh Supreme Court of Pakistan, Pakistan National Monument, Damn-e-Koh, Pak-China Friendship Centre, Shah Faisal Mosque, Convention Centre, D-Chowk, Lake View Park, 7th and 8th Avenues.-PR

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190331459985/>

80 LEOPARDS SHOT DEAD AS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS EXPAND IN GALIYAT

By Zubair Ayub Published: March 31, 2019

ABBOTTABAD: Human-leopard conflict is a challenge for people living near the leopard habitat. This problem is especially prevalent in Galiyat where as many as 80 common leopards were killed either in self-defence or retaliation. These incidences have been recurring during the last 25 years in areas having corridors connected to Murree, Kashmir, Thandiani and Kaghan Valley. Up to 12 humans mostly women were also killed by leopards in same period beside 32 others who sustained injuries. Similarly more than a 1,000 cattle was also killed.

This was disclosed by Wildlife District Forest Officer (DFO) Iftikhar Ahmed in an interactive session with the media in Abbottabad on Friday. He stated that the increased population from expansion of human settlements has been constricting the natural migration corridors of the leopards.

As large predators, leopards require extensive home ranges. Habitat fragmentation is forcing leopards to pass through human settlements, and while migrating they are more likely to come in contact with people. While showing two common leopards in the cages made in the Wildlife Office, he informed that due to weather severity they cannot be transported to Lalazar Zoo in Nathiagali.

Wildlife DFO stated that Abbottabad Wild Life Division comprises two districts and four wildlife departments with a total area of 3,694sq km, which has 22 blocks and 102 beats. Its activities include conservation, protected area management, habitat improvement interventions and hunting regulations and promotion of eco-tourism.

Regarding conservation education, he briefed the media that they have formed wildlife clubs in 16 schools where lectures and excursion were made for awareness raising campaigns for communities.

Similarly, community organisations and park management committees were formed in Balakot, Malach, Kundla and Mohra which he claims are unique feature of the wildlife department. He went on to add that the number of activities for promoting eco-tourism included development of tracks, biological interpretation board, information centre, Lalazar Wildlife Park, a souvenir shop, camping sites and tuck shops.

Replying to a query, he stated that the compensation of livestock killings were made to a number of people during the last three years and an Endowment Fund amounting to Rs66.770 million has been made for sustainable conservation based interventions. Replying to another query he accepted that the

department faced problems during the winter when shifting the zoo from Nathiagali and looking for alternative options besides a small set up established in the wild life office in Abbottabad.

Published in The Express Tribune, March 31st, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1940822/1-80-leopards-shot-dead-human-settlements-expand-galiyat/>

FLASH FLOODS KILL AT LEAST 35 IN AFGHANISTAN: OFFICIALS

AFP March 30, 2019

Flash floods caused by heavy rains have killed at least 35 people in Afghanistan, washing away houses and cutting off access to remote villages across parts of the country, officials said Saturday.

Heavy flooding that started early Friday killed at least 12 people in the northern province of Faryab and 10 people in the western province of Herat, said Hashmat Bahaduri, a spokesman for Afghanistan's National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA).

Eight people were killed in Badghis province in the west and five in Balkh province in the north, Bahaduri told AFP, adding that more than 3,000 houses had been destroyed.

In Herat, 10 districts and some parts of Herat city were impacted, said Jailani Farhad, spokesman for the province's governor.

"Hundreds of houses have been destroyed and thousands displaced," he said.

Mir Gulabuddin Miri, director of the Afghan Red Crescent in Herat, said access to some areas had been cut off, preventing teams from reaching affected people.

"The destruction is huge. Over 12 areas in the province have been badly hit, people have lost their houses. We've only been able to provide them with some food and blankets so far," he said.

Aid workers in the northern provinces of Faryab and Balkh have also been struggling to deliver humanitarian assistance to affected families.

"We have dispatched our food and non-food assistance for the affected families, but the scale of the disaster is massive. We need more humanitarian assistance," an ANDMA spokesman in northern Afghanistan told AFP.

Rescue and aid delivery efforts after disasters such as avalanches and flash floods — which often hit as snow melts in the spring — are frequently hampered by a lack of equipment in Afghanistan.

Poor infrastructure also makes it difficult for aid workers to reach isolated areas.

Earlier this month, at least 20 people were killed by flash floods caused by heavy rains that swept away thousands of homes and vehicles in southern Kandahar province.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1472860/flash-floods-kill-at-least-35-in-afghanistan-officials>

GOVT TO SPEND \$1BN ON ‘BILLION TREE TSUNAMI’ PROJECT

RECORDER REPORT 2019/03/30

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Climate Change is close to finalise a PC-I of the government’s flagship ‘Billion Tree Tsunami’ project in assistance of provincial governments and will spend around \$1 billion on the scheme.

Additional Secretary of the ministry Babar Hayat revealed this in an informal chat with a group of journalists here on Friday.

He told that all provincial governments are on board regarding the project and would contribute half of the cost as this would be a countrywide project. The secretary told that his ministry has also taken around 400 clerics on board who will share importance of Clean and Green Pakistan with the general public with help of teachings of Islam.

He said the ministry has decided to take help of the clerics as they are considered influential having large following in their respective areas.

The secretary said plantation will be done in the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the government intends to initiate some development projects in the area. The federal government is organising a ‘Plant for Pakistan’ programme on April 3 in Islamabad, adding that saplings will be planted across the federal capital on the day.

The secretary told that the government is planning to plant around 10,000 saplings on the six acres of land of Zoological Survey of Pakistan out of its total area of 725 acres.

He told that saplings collection points will be set up across the country, and indigenous varieties of the trees would be preferred to be planted in different areas to ensure biological diversity. The secretary said that his ministry along with district administration is planning to plant at least 100,000 plants in the federal capital on April 3, while another 100,000 saplings will be planted elsewhere.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/03/30/2-page/773551-news.html>

EXPERTS IN SINDH WARN AGAINST ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

By Our Correspondent Published: March 30, 2019

KARACHI: Sindh Madressatul Islam University’s (SMIU) environmental science department organised on Friday a day-long National Conference on the environment and sustainable development.

The varsity’s Vice-Chancellor Dr Muhammad Ali Shaikh said the environment was an important subject and, “we have to leave a legacy about solving environmental issues so that our children may live in a safe place”. He said that the university would establish a state-of-the-art facility at the Malir campus for environmental science.

Environmental Science Department In-charge Chairperson Dr Mohammad Hashim Zubairi said that when Nature is left alone, it has a tremendous ability to care for itself. However, when man enters the picture and uses many of the natural resources, things change.

National University of Sciences and Technology's (NUST) Prof Imran Hashmi said that 5,260m³ of water was available in the country in 1951 which decreased to 1,000m³ in 2016. He added that the expected drop in the available water was around 860m³ by 2025, which marks the transition of Pakistan from water-stressed country to a water scarce country.

Talking about surface water, he said that river flows were heavily dependent on glacial melt, 41%, snowmelt, 22%, and rainfall, 27%. He added that 50 MAF [Million. Acre-Feet] of groundwater extracted from the aquifers had already crossed the sustainable limit of safe yield. Furthermore, 84% of the population does not have access to safe drinking water. "Pakistan is among top ten countries with the greatest number of people living who lack access to clean drinking water".

NED University of Engineering and Technology's Dr Atif Mustafa speaking about the nature-based solutions (NBS) to existing environmental problems said that supporting the economic development in urban areas alongside sustainable urban planning with NBS provided opportunities for adaptation to climate change. This increases urban resilience to risks involving droughts, floods and heatwaves.

He said NBS can successfully remove pollutants from domestic and industrial wastewaters in the environmental setting of Karachi. They can be applied as a sustainable, low cost and low energy technology for solving the wastewater treatment problem with added multiple benefits.

Dr Samiuzzaman of Global Environmental Lab speaking about the various problems of Karachi said that the continuous increase in population due to urbanisation, the concentration of industries, lack of civic facilities and treatment plants for industrial and domestic wastes and the lack of implementation of environmental laws posed serious hazards to the country's largest city. "There is a continuous migration from other areas to Karachi due to which, town planning is not possible". Thus, all the resources are under heavy stress, and lack of responsibility in civic agencies.

Dr Aliya Rehman of Department of Botany at the University of Karachi made a presentation on the Red Seaweeds of Karachi coast. She was of the view the seaweeds could be an alternative food source in the country and can be used to make cosmetic products but we are still unaware of the proper use of seaweeds.

Published in The Express Tribune, March 30th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1940022/1-experts-sindh-warn-environmental-degradation/>

TRANSPORTATION OF ILLEGAL TIMBER NOT ALLOWED DESPITE END TO BAN, KP ASSEMBLY TOLD

Zulfiqar Ali Updated March 29, 2019

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly was informed on Thursday that despite the lifting of a ban by the previous government in 2016, the transportation of illegal timber from a remote valley of Chitral district hadn't been allowed causing losses to the exchequer and investors.

Through a calling attention notice, Pakistan Peoples Party MPA Sahibzada Sanaullah said the last PTI government in the province had authorised the transportation of illegally-cut timber from Arandu, Chitral, after imposing a fine at the rate of Rs1,100 per cubic foot (cft) on deodar and Rs600 per cft on kail.

Minister says cabinet to discuss matter, govt won't encourage illegal forest harvesting

The lawmaker said around 62,000cft wood was transported from Arandu to the market when the Pakistan Army in Malakand division stopped the movement of the illegal timber from Chitral.

He said the government had also authorised the transportation of 343,142cft illegal timber from Kohistan, while 22,106cft was reported in Torghar district.

Mr Sanaullah asked the government to implement the previous provincial cabinet's decision on ban lifting to prevent the destruction of the timber valuing billions of rupees.

The forest department had measured the timber dumped in Arandu area bordering Afghanistan to be 1,507,382cft.

In light of the cabinet's decision, a third-party validation committee comprising officials of the National Accountability Bureau, provincial inspection team, forest department and district administration was authorised to verify and validate the illegal timber.

Officials said the NAB relinquished the third-party validation due to unspecified reasons.

They said the Pakistan Army was not included in the third-party validation at that time but currently, the army would oversee the whole exercise.

In June 2018, the military authorities based in Swat had moved a letter, whose copy is with Dawn, showed that the Pakistan Army had framed a mechanism for the validation/verification for disposal of illegal timber stock in Kohistan, Torghar, and Arandu forests.

"Illicit timber will be retrieved from forests and placed at central point that is Chakdara Depot by forest department for validation by the army as third party," said the letter.

It said the validation procedure would begin when all illegal timber was placed in Chakdara and that validation at various locations was not feasible due to the limited number of troops available for the task and the inconvenience facing the forest department.

Responding to the calling attention notice, law and parliamentary affairs minister Sultan Mohammad Khan said the cabinet would discuss a summary regarding the transportation of illegal timber.

He said the government would not encourage illegal harvesting of forests and would take appropriate measures in that respect.

Responding to another calling attention notice moved by Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf MPA Fazal Shakoor Khan regarding the conversion of land of the defunct Charsadda Paper Mills into a housing society, the law minister said the conversion of industrial land for commercial or other purposes was illegal.

Special assistant to the chief minister on industries Abdul Karim Khan said the case was pending with the Supreme Court and the provincial government had directed the advocate general to pursue it.

He said legal commercial activities would not be allowed on the land of the paper mills.

The lawmakers held discussion on the constitution of National Finance Commission Award and delay in the payment of dues by the centre to the province on account of net hydel profit.

Opposition MPAs Khushdil Khan and Inayatullah Khan suggested that the provincial government ask the federal government to convene a meeting of the commission without delay.

They said KP's population had increased after former Fata was merged with it.

The MPAs insisted that KP would suffer financially if the award was delayed.

They said the provincial government should demand the continuation of one percent share of KP in the NFC Award on account of war against terrorism and three percent share for the merged tribal districts.

Minister Sultan Mohammad said the commission had been constituted and it had held several meetings on the matter.

He said Punjab and KP governments would create hurdles to the announcement of the NFC Award but the PPP in Sindh might create problems.

The minister sought the opposition's role in that respect.

Earlier, the opposition benches criticised the federal government for not giving a posthumous national award to ANP leader Barrister Haroon Bilour, who was martyred in the pre-2018 election suicide attack.

They said the sacrifices of Bilour's family couldn't be ignored and that the government should announce the award on Aug 14.

The assembly passed a resolution condemning the torture and detention of daily wagers from Dir district by the police in Chakwal under the Punjab Temporary Residential Act, 2015, and demanded of the federal government to take notice of such incidents.

Another resolution was moved by Dr Sumera Shams of the PTI for the inclusion of civic education in the curriculum of secondary schools or the promotion of co-curricular activities in secondary schools seeking the knowledge of political and democratic process for strengthening democratic society in the country.

The house passed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa urban Mass Transit (Amendment) Bill, 2019, after accommodating two amendments of Inayatullah Khan.

The law minister introduced the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

The chair later adjourned the sitting until 2pm today (Friday).

Published in Dawn, March 29th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1472479/transportation-of-illegal-timber-not-allowed-despite-end-to-ban-kp-assembly-told>

FORESTATION ON ONE ACRE AGAINST 12-ACRE HOLDING SUGGESTED

Amjad Mahmood March 27, 2019

LAHORE: A draft urban and peri-urban forest policy suggests binding owners of 12 acres or more to reserve one acre of their respective lands for forestation, while those owning less than 12 acres should grow at least 10 trees per acre.

The draft policy shared with the civil society recently recommends various steps for increasing the forest cover from the present three per cent in the province. It sets tree canopy target of 5pc for streets, 10pc for urban and 15pc for peri-urban areas. It calls for observing one tree per 10 metre rule in city streets, along roads, in housing societies, and other facilities of public and private sector.

The policy proposes that in line with best international practices every public or private sector owner having more than 12 acres of land should be made to reserve one acre for every 12 acres for forest. For smaller land owners, 10 trees per acre should be mandatory.

Draft policy envisages steps to increase forest cover

Similarly, every existing or new housing society, 2.5pc of its 7pc mandatory open space should be reserved for forestation with tree species to be set by the department concerned in line with the regional requirements.

Prepared by the Urban Unit of the Planning & Development Department, the draft policy asked horticulture authorities and forest department to incentivise and capacitate the existing nurseries and set up new ones supplying local species of saplings, promoting urban agriculture in a way that does not hurt local ecosystem, use of public buildings like schools, hospitals, canal banks, highways and railway tracks to harness the potential of urban trees.

It also prescribes incentives for rooftop vegetation like direct grants/subsidies, research and guidelines on waterproofing, lightweight growing medium, filter cloth, and setting their standards.

It recommends enacting a law covering urban forestry, which so far lacks any legal protection and thus public and private sector land developers continue to chop of trees with impunity, and preparing guidelines for plantation, conservation and removal of trees.

For protecting biodiversity, it identifies 10 base selection criterion for adaptability to urban conditions. These include species' ability to respond to drought, heat, wind and pollution, and the species' lifespan, pathogen and pest susceptibility and manageability, effect on community health and allergies, the degree and quality of shade cast, maintenance requirements and extent of tree litter produced.

The draft policy also underlines the need for developing a management information system for tracking the available trees inventory, allowing monitoring the tree planter driver and follows-up on the growth and well-being of the new plantations.

Published in Dawn, March 27th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1472127/forestation-on-one-acre-against-12-acre-holding-suggested>

TOWARDS A CLEAN AND GREEN PAKISTAN

Marcelo Acerbi | Philippe Ambrosi Updated March 25, 2019

Environmental degradation is not only threatening environmental sustainability, but also Pakistan's ability to tackle poverty, as well as its ability to generate a substantial share of its growth and employment. Similarly, while Pakistan needs to think for the long term with regard to environmental sustainability, many of the actions it could take to control and reverse environmental degradation and adapt to climate change would have immediate benefits and be particularly helpful to the poorest, who are most vulnerable.

Last year, the federal government launched the Clean Green Pakistan Programme. This is a first excellent step. Why? Because it is a people's movement and everyone's responsibility, and focuses on behavioural change to create demand for better environmental services.

With this measure, the government is making urban communities, including schoolchildren, more aware of the value of natural resources in urban settings and importance of protecting them.

Harnessing the power of public pressure by access to environmental data is a key measure to be achieved through: (i) disclosure of pollution data to engage citizens and encourage preventive action; (ii) effectively engaging with local communities and relevant stakeholders in the city development planning processes; and (iii) education and raising awareness to empower citizens.

Pakistan can strengthen its environmental protection departments' capacity to disclose environment information and engage citizens in environmental management through awareness campaigns on pollution and green development, as part of the Clean Green Pakistan initiative. Education on environment and its function in an urban setting is critical for effective citizen engagement. However, in the context of growing urbanisation, and to achieve healthy cities and productive citizens, Pakistan can focus on the following choices.

Environmental Protection Agencies' (EPA) and local governments' environmental monitoring capacity can be improved in a coordinated manner among the provinces and the federal government. Most of the data about high pollution levels in Pakistan come from global datasets and monitoring is currently weak and lacks granularity. A key mandate of EPAs is environmental monitoring.

The first step is to understand current pollution levels and sources by rebuilding the monitoring network, not only with equipment but also its protocols; analytical capacity; and technical, institutional, and financial sustainability. To plan an effective pollution reduction action plan, the authorities need to better understand the current pollution levels, concentration, trends, and sources. Addressing pollution cannot be done without these basic monitoring features.

Pakistan has an opportunity to enhance the devolution with environmental decentralisation, distinguishing between and revising federal, provincial, and local roles and responsibilities, which policy actions need to be taken by whom and how to coordinate it all, given boundary and efficiency issues.

This could start by focusing on the institutions with a core environmental mandate such as the provincial EPAs. These entities have pressing needs of reforms in areas such as: (i) restructuring and capacity building, including air and water quality management planning with appropriate labs and

models, along with protocols and technical/financial capacity; (ii) regulatory reform; and (iii) information disclosure and citizen engagement.

Provincial environmental entities can also play a key role beyond enforcement and contribute to the development agenda by improving their capacity to: (i) promote green financing, mainstreaming green investments in the public sector; and (ii) support the adoption of resource-efficient and clean production measures in polluting sectors.

In addition, the role of local governments needs to be clarified and optimised as they are crucial in the provision of environmental infrastructure and services, such as solid waste management, local transportation, or water and sanitation.

The environment is everyone's business and so the coordination mechanism among institutions needs to be effective and well-articulated. Air and water pollution are the result of multiple interventions and causes. The role of federal or provincial EPAs that were originally designed was to focus mainly on large point sources, but that is not enough.

Air quality, for example, is not only about regulating industry, energy, and vehicles. It is also about investment in public transport, street and construction dust control (managed by local governments), waste management (by local governments), and fuels/stoves used by households and small establishments, as well as agricultural emissions. Even with provincial EPAs strengthened, Pakistan is yet to develop the institutional coordination arrangements to manage the environmental challenges such as air or water quality at the airshed and watershed levels, and should do so.

When identifying growth opportunities for Pakistan, the poor state of environment and the looming climate change can be turned into an opportunity for growth too. The country needs massive and increased investments for growth and hence 'greening' investments are critical. The only way to reconcile investments with sustainability and avoid excessive social/health costs is to make them 'greener' from the beginning. For this, stronger regulation, enforcement, and EPAs are necessary, but these alone are not enough (and growth may even be stalled if these are not combined with other approaches).

Regulatory approaches must be complemented by incentives, economic tools, fiscal policies, and financing. Pakistan needs a tax reform for higher investment, which represents an opportunity to design a greener tax regime that includes, for example, pro-growth, pro-poor environmental and carbon taxes, and the elimination of environment damaging subsidies (removal of subsidies for fuels consumed by motor vehicles and industries).

It also needs to have a better financing regime for industries and small and medium enterprises. This is an opportunity to develop green financing that makes access easier for environmentally responsible enterprises/activities.

The authors are members of the World Bank staff.

Published in Dawn, March 25th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1471707/towards-a-clean-and-green-pakistan>

SINDH SEEKS SC GUIDELINES FOR ITS FOREST POLICY

Nasir Iqbal March 25, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Sindh government has sought guidelines from the Supreme Court in devising Agro Forestry Policy, 2019, by retrieving encroached forest lands in the province since a recent order of the Sindh High Court's Sukkur bench is coming in its way to develop the forest policy.

“The Supreme Court is requested to issue guidelines regarding the Sukkur bench order which has been found to be an impediment for the new policy,” explained a report furnished before the apex court that had taken up a petition moved by Qazi Ali Athar, an environment attorney.

The petition had sought a restraining order against the Sindh government from introducing any scheme in the forest cover / land for housing schemes, townships, land distribution or land reforms or any other schemes or policies which amounted to deforestation or land possession.

The court was also asked in the petition to declare all the forest lands of Sindh i.e. 2,858,748 acres as national assets and protected zone besides the forest cover should never be allowed to deplete in any circumstances. Therefore all the allotted or leased forest lands should be cancelled and vacated from all kinds of land grabbers through non-discriminated operation, the petition had pleaded.

Submitted by the office of chief conservator forests, Sindh, a fresh report explained that the new policy has also reached the office of the chief minister and has been delayed due to high court order.

A source told Dawn that the Sukkur bench order of Jan 30, 2019, had held that the forest lands in Sindh should remain forest and therefore could not be leased out for any agriculture purpose.

But the report explained that without involving the local community, which can only be done through agro farming or leasing out lands to locals, the forest development process was not possible.

After the last order of the apex court, the forest department has retrieved 16,421 acres after which the total area of the forest in its possession has become 399,343 acres.

The report contended that the forest land retrieval process for the remaining task contains areas of illegal allotment and encroachments. The retrieval activities is continuing but with almost bare hands as routine with very meager funds that still had to be received by the department.

Published in Dawn, March 25th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1471704/sindh-seeks-sc-guidelines-for-its-forest-policy>

KP TO ESTABLISH RIVERS FLOOD ALERT SYSTEM

RECORDER REPORT | MAR 25TH, 2019 | PESHAWAR

The provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decided to establish flood alert stations on rivers in the province. The decision has been taken in wake of anticipated devastated floods due to heavy snowfall. This year the hilly areas of the northern region of Pakistan had received about 60 feet snow as compared to 94 feet snowfall in 2005. The 94 feet snow that was registered in 2005 was higher than 6000 feet of the sea level The snow will start melting on low temperature that may trigger flood in plain areas.

First the people will face flood which would be followed by the heavy rains of monsoon multiplying the magnitude of flood and is likely to play havoc in Punjab and Sindh provinces. Districts Peshawar, Nowshera, Swabi, Charsadda and D I Khan will be vulnerable to flood as well.

To prevent losses particularly human beings and cattle, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority is going to install the flood alert system on all those rivers that are under the supervision of the Irrigation Department.

Out of these proposed stations one would be established on River Swat at Khawaza Khela and River Panjkora at Chakdara while two more such stations at Munda Head Works and Mardan Kalpani.

These alert stations would be equipped with the automated warning system indicating the flow of water. The installation of the warning system would enable all departments concerned to making contingency protective plans from floods. The project will be completed at the cost of Rs 590 million.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190325458333/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 18TH TO MARCH 24TH 2019

DISASTROUS POLICIES

Ali Shan Azhar March 24, 2019

Pakistan faces a host of political, economic, social and security challenges. Climate change is a leading issue with growing negative impact for Pakistan. It is a cross cutting challenge affecting the country's environment, economy, and security.

Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change is underlined by the increasingly erratic weather patterns, the growing threat of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) and prevailing drought-like conditions in parts of Sindh and Balochistan. The Global Climate Risk Index has ranked Pakistan as the 8th most affected country by extreme weather events.

According to a World Bank report, the economic costs from poor water and sanitation, floods and droughts are estimated at 4 percent of Pakistan's GDP — around \$12 billion per year. The bank has estimated that climate change can reduce the income of the bottom 40 percent in Pakistan by more than 8 percent by the year 2030.

Sadly, political will, capacity and coordination are lacking to address climate change, particularly with the devolution of environment matters to the provinces. There have been initial efforts, notably the articulation of a National Climate Change Policy (NCCP), to take stock of the emerging spectrum of challenges and determine measures and resources required. However, among other limitations, Pakistan has an inadequate institutional infrastructure to develop a timely response to the impacts of climate change.

Following the 18th Amendment to the Constitution in 2010, the responsibility for "environmental pollution and ecology", and hence climate change, was devolved to the provinces. The Federal Ministry of Climate Change (MoCC) has been designated as the national focal point for implementation of international agreements and treaties related to environment and climate change, and meeting international obligations. However, as such, the federal government cannot enforce its international climate change commitments. Implementation requires complex coordination with the provinces.

The split responsibilities between the federal and provincial governments continue to impede institutional clarity and the adoption of clear working protocols on climate change. Climate change considerations are driven by sectoral policies, with no credible institutions to deal with comprehensive climate change science, modeling, management, adaptation, mitigation, and policy issues.

Due to the institutional gap, Pakistan has low technical and financial capacity to adapt. For example, the NCCP was approved by the cabinet in 2012. However, the policy was not presented to the Parliament, and therefore parliamentary engagement and ownership are missing. An Inter-ministerial committee was also set up at the MoCC to steer and oversee implementation of the NCCP and its framework. To date the framework document has neither been used to prepare detailed local adaptation plans, nor utilised as a guiding document for decision-makers. This is in sync with our leadership's demonstrated inability or unwillingness to move past the announcement stage and into implementation, especially if there are no domestic votes to be gained.

The parliament also passed the Climate Change Act in March 2017. The legislation was labelled as "historic" and the government claimed that it would "fast-track measures needed to implement actions on the ground." The Climate Change Council (CCC), chaired by the prime minister, is to provide the highest level of strategic guidance to oversee the status of implementation of the NCCP across the federating units, and also spearhead the mainstreaming of climate change concerns into the decision-making of federal and provincial governments.

The council will receive recommendations from a Climate Change Authority, which will formulate policies, mitigation plans, legislation, and implementation standards needed for Pakistan to meet its climate change commitments. A Climate Change Fund will support the adaptation and mitigation schemes and related research. The legislation has received cautious backing from climate change experts, who say they welcome its potential but question whether the government should instead be offering more direct support to provinces to implement environmental projects.

To his credit, Prime Minister Imran Khan formed the CCC last October which includes the provincial chief ministers as well as the federal ministers for Planning and Development, Finance, Power, National Food Security and Water Resources. It is expected to meet at least twice a year. Since the responsibility for climate change is devolved to the provinces, leaving the federal government with more limited jurisdiction, there is a fear that the immediate next steps will be ceremonial (PM hosting inaugural meetings of the Council), lacking substantive follow-up to commitments and financing.

Under the PTI government, the MoCC has so far focused almost entirely on the implementation of the much-publicised "ten billion tree plantation project". The currently understaffed and underfunded ministry is working with the provincial Forestry and Wildlife Departments to achieve the target. The apprehension is that even a strengthened institutional role of the MoCC to lead and manage climate change programmes and concerns from a federal perspective along with line-ministries may not be enough to arrest and reverse the adverse impacts of climate change in Pakistan.

The NCCP does provide an overall framework but the provinces need to allocate more resources and mainstream climate change into their development policies. Integration of climate change and energy policy objectives is particularly important. There is an acute need for an institutional arrangement which is holistic, representative of relevant stakeholders, and able to simultaneously address policymaking, implementation and financing concerns.

Can the CCC fill the institutional void? While the CCC may well have the potential to support harmonisation between the federal and provincial institutions, the diversity of provincial institutional

setups makes the formulation of a consistent process for provincial-federal harmonisation very challenging. Hence the jury is out on whether it can serve as an effective institutional framework to mainstream climate change concerns into overall national planning and to promote climate compatible development with clear sets of roles and responsibilities at the federal and provincial levels.

At the very least, the PTI government needs to initiate policy dialogues with all stakeholders and ensure that programmes initiated by the CCC have regular capacity-building components. More specifically, the federal government needs to engage with the sectoral line ministries and provinces to jointly develop a comprehensive “whole of government” approach, inclusive of the private sector and civil society. Otherwise, the lack of policy leadership and institutional capacity gaps at the provincial level will continue to impede efforts by federal policy-making and regulatory bodies to coordinate/supervise Pakistan’s climate change efforts.

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/disastrous-policies/#.XJjLuFUzbc>

KWSB TO LAUNCH WB-SPONSORED PROJECT

The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter March 23, 2019

KARACHI: Preparations are under way to bring about fundamental changes in the overall institutional and governance structure and infrastructure of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) under a \$1.6 billion project to be signed with the World Bank in July.

This was stated by KWSB Managing Director Engineer Asadullah Khan during a consultative session held at the KWSB office with stakeholders to share details of a draft report on the project’s environmental and social framework.

First phase of ‘Karachi Water and Sewerage Services Improvement Project’ is estimated to cost \$100m. It is expected to commence soon after signing of the project. The government of Sindh would contribute 20 per cent of the total cost of the project spanning over 12 years.

Detailed presentations were given during the meeting to inform participants that the project would bring necessary reforms in the KWSB to turn it into a financially viable utility by adopting best international practices. The meeting concluded with a question-answer session.

It was attended by officials, including those representing Sindh Solid Waste Management Board, Sindh Environmental Protection Agency, Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry and district municipal corporations.

Published in Dawn, March 23rd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1471262/kwsb-to-launch-wb-sponsored-project>

TREE PLANTATION DRIVE LAUNCHED IN SAHIWAL

RECORDER REPORT | MAR 22ND, 2019 | LAHORE

Punjab Agriculture Minister Malik Nauman Ahmad Langrial while inaugurating tree plantation campaign under PHA in Sahiwal on Thursday has said that trees play very important role in making the environment pleasant and strengthening the national economy.

Each one of us should plant at least one tree as it is also our religious and national duty, he added. He said present government is extensively carrying on plantation over a large scale of land to increase the area under forest cover in the country. He claimed that all the government departments were playing important role in this regard. PHA Chairman Chaudhry Ali Shakoor Khan, former federal Minister Naurez Shakoor and others were also present on this occasion. DG PHA Sahiwal, Khalid Manzoor said that over 1,000 plants were being sown and arrangements have also been taken to ensure their grooming.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190322457662/>

PUNJAB GETS FUNDS FOR DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

From the Newspaper March 22, 2019

LAHORE: The Punjab government has secured development funding worth Rs1,353.171 million from the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) through efforts of the Planning and Development Board.

According to a handout, the funding by NDRMF is aimed at projects that improve the resilience to climate change and natural disasters which in turn result in sustainable socio-economic benefits.

Punjab Planning & Development Board Chairman Habibur Rehman Gillani said owing to limited fiscal space in the province, this development is a welcome news. This grant will support the people around these areas and result in prosperity and sustainable development.

The projects from Punjab that got funded are rehabilitation of Hajipur Gujran Flood Protection Bund, rehabilitation/restoration of Jalala Flood Protection Bund, protection of localities of of Shahpur, Chanjura, Fatehpur Gujran and Sukho Chak against erosive action of Bein Nullah and protection of infrastructure, abadis and agricultural land of villages Jagojil and Baryar from erosion of River Ravi downstream.

Published in Dawn, March 22nd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1471110/punjab-gets-funds-for-disaster-risk-management>

FLOOD FORECASTING STATIONS TO BE SET UP ON FIVE RIVERS

Bureau Report March 22, 2019

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to install flood forecasting stations on five major rivers across the province at the cost of Rs59 million to forewarn the residents of natural disasters and ensure better coordination among the relevant departments and agencies for rescue and relief operations.

The decision was made during a meeting of the relief, rehabilitation and settlement (RRS) department's departmental development working party (DDWP) here on Thursday.

RRS secretary Abid Majeed chaired the meeting, which was attended by representatives of the finance and planning and development departments.

Officials say initiative will help prevent damage to public life, property

Minutes of the meeting said the participants discussed the finalisation of modalities for the early installation of automatic telemetry system to establish five flood forecasting stations in the province.

The project director of the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre said the initiative's initial PC-I was made by the irrigation department at the cost of Rs59.328 million and was approved by the DDWP on April 9, 2018.

He said the flood warning system would be installed in Khawzakhela and Chakdarra on the River Swat, River Panjkora, River Kalpani, and Munda headworks.

The minutes said the project was meant to replace the existing manual gauges with the modern electronic gauges for quick reporting of water levels and speedy issuance of alarm signals for the early evacuation and safety of the residents.

They added that the system would be installed on two more sites afterward.

Officials of the finance and P&D departments said the approved project cost covered the two sites and therefore, they didn't object to them.

They said the irrigation department had issued order for the supply of the equipment specified in the revised PC-I.

An official told Dawn that the project would help provide early information regarding rains and floods and real-time updates about water levels in rivers and watercourses to prevent damage to public life and property.

He said the flood forecasting stations would also help minimise communication gaps among the relevant government agencies at district and provincial levels.

Published in Dawn, March 22nd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1471133/flood-forecasting-stations-to-be-set-up-on-five-rivers>

MINISTER CALLS FOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DEAL WITH FLOODS

By Our Correspondent Published: March 22, 2019

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Disaster Management Mian Khalid Mahmud has said keeping in view heavy rains and snowfalls this year, it is being preempted that there may be bad floods in Punjab and in those parts already hit in 2010, special arrangements should be completed.

During his visit to the warehouses of Punjab Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Thursday, the minister said that PDMA should determine requirements of each district in the rainy season and take measures to deal with any untoward situation.

He said that this year all the pre-monsoon arrangements be completed by April 30 and all the departments should also be kept in the loop for well-coordinated efforts.

The minister said that camping tents, blankets, boats, and other goods should be in good and working shape and available in sufficient quantity in each district of Punjab. Similarly, irrigation, livestock, agriculture, local government, urban unit, and other relevant departments should be on high alert.

He also asserted to ensure the maximum quantity of clean drinking water in the climate hit areas as it becomes a major reason for the outbreak of diseases in certain areas. He asked the PDMA authorities to remain in close contact with the federal government and army as there should be no vacuum in launching relief operation in flood-hit areas.

The minister directed officials to keep everything ready at the warehouses. “All the arrangements should be properly monitored and supervised.”

PDMA Director General Rashid Khan told the minister that apart from Lahore another warehouse is also functional in Muzaffargarh which would be an immediate source for South Punjab. He said that this year PDMA is completing all the arrangements one month before and in each district, sufficient relief goods would also be available.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1934628/1-minister-calls-arrangements-deal-floods/>

‘GREEN AND CLEAN PAKISTAN’: AROUND 150 MILLION SAPLINGS PLANTED: ADVISER

RECORDER REPORT | MAR 21ST, 2019 | KARACHI

Adviser to Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam said 150 million saplings have been planted in the entire country under the drive of the present government to do afforestation under the banner of Green and Clean Pakistan initiative.

The adviser said around two billion trees will be planted in Sindh in next five years under a recent greenery drive launched by Sindh Forests Department in collaboration with the like-minded NGOs including the National Forum for Environment and Health (NFEH).

Speaking at a tree plantation campaign here at PIA Township, he lauded the recent initiative of Sindh Forests Department to promote urban forestry in the province in line with the tree plantation campaign of the present government.

He said plantation drive would be done in the country with the help of the major national institutions and public sector organizations like the Pakistan International Airlines.

PIA CEO Air Marshal Arshad Malik said tree plantation campaign had been kicked off in the areas surroundings of PIA Township, roads, streets, and playgrounds in Karachi. Famous cricket legends Wasim Akram and Sarfaz Ahmed also attended the ceremony. While speaking on the occasion, they appealed the children and other people to wholeheartedly take part in the tree plantation campaign.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190321457184/>

PESHAWAR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY LAUNCHES TREE PLANTATION DRIVE

By Our Correspondent Published: March 21, 2019

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) on Wednesday launched a massive tree plantation drive and establishment of green belts on both sides on the Bus Rapid Transit corridor in the provincial metropolis after completion of the civil work of the project.

An official of the PDA has said that the authority has started the tree plantation and about 400,000 plants would be planted across the city on the sides of the BRT 27.4 kilometers long corridor.

Besides, he said the PDA has also started establishment of green belts on the sides of the BRT corridor. He said that about 570,000 square feet of grass would be planted for the green belts in which 6500 beautiful and precious plants would also be planted.

The official said that completion of green belts and tree plantation would further add in the beautification of the provincial metropolis.

As per the statement issued by the PDA, city's green belts and trees have been damaged. As per the direction of the Peshawar High Court in the case related to BRT, it said, the trees were safely removed from the roads sides and green belts for safer places and now the PDA is planting the same plants and trees on the roads sides and under the flyovers.

The PDA stated that the drive has started from Chamkani section of the BRT and would be extended up to Hayatabad and then Karkhano Market.

Published in The Express Tribune, March 21st, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1933729/1-peshawar-development-authority-launches-tree-plantation-drive/>

THREAT OF FLOODS Editorial March 21, 2019

PAKISTAN has seen many floods, the one that hit the country in 2010 being the most destructive in its history. Over 2,000 lives were lost and more than 20m people displaced as a third of the country's total area was submerged in floodwater. The damage to infrastructure, agriculture, livestock and homes was estimated to be \$10bn, with millions of people losing their savings and livelihoods. Many affected by the deluge have yet to recover from the trauma they had suffered; the painful memories of the devastation suffered nine years ago are still fresh. The warning by two senior government officials that the country could face a "major or super flood" this year, then, would have been cause for much alarm for them. The officials told a parliamentary panel on Tuesday that the higher-than-normal snowfall in the north caused by climate changes this winter had increased the chances of a major deluge during the next monsoon season.

Natural calamities such as floods and earthquakes cannot be averted. But steps can always be taken to minimise the damage to the life and property of the people, so that these calamities do not turn into human disasters. Sadly, successive governments have failed to plan and implement measures to avert loss of life, property and livelihoods. Little has been done to protect the flood-insecure areas of KP, Punjab and Sindh since the most devastating deluge hit the country. No movement has been made on

the fourth Flood Protection Programme approved by the CCI in 2017, involving a total cost of Rs326bn. Approval for flood-protection projects is still being awaited from Ecnec. Paltry funds are set aside in the budgets to meet the challenges of climate change; only a small portion of these allocations is actually spent on addressing environmental concerns, because such plans involve a longer gestation time and are not considered popular enough to win votes. The chances of the government releasing even a small slice of the funds — Rs15bn has been demanded by the officials for flood-protection activities — are minimal. With the monsoon season approaching fast and snow on the mountains about to melt in a few weeks, we might be in for another human disaster in the country — unless priority flood-protection projects are implemented on a war footing, especially in the highly flood-insecure areas. That is the minimum a government can do for those living in the danger zone.

Published in Dawn, March 21st, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1470979/threat-of-floods>

KARACHI'S CBC BANS USE OF POLYTHENE BAGS IN ITS JURISDICTION

By Aftab Khan Published: March 20, 2019

KARACHI: The Cantonment Board Clifton (CBC) has decided to impose a ban on the use of polythene bags in its jurisdiction. As part of this campaign, residents will be persuaded to use paper or cloth bags instead of polythene ones. Shopkeepers selling household groceries and other items have also been directed to stop the commercial use of polythene bags.

A special campaign will run for 15 days to raise awareness among residents and visitors to Sea View, which also falls under the CBC jurisdiction. After the 15-day campaign ending on April 4, the CBC will fine those found violating the ban.

The Sindh government has already banned the sale and use of plastic bags and products. Section 14(3) of the Sindh Environment Protection Act 2014 states that “no person shall import, manufacture, stockpile, trade, supply, distribute or sell any scheduled plastic product which is non-degradable”. At several times during the last couple of years, the Sindh government has made announcements to this effect. The last such move came in November last year, when the Sindh Cabinet decided to impose a phase-wise ban on the use of polythene and plastic bags in the province, with Sukkur being the first district. The ban would be enforced in Karachi in the next phase, the Cabinet had announced. However, it was hardly ever enforced.

According to the CBC administration, the decision to ban polythene bags has been taken due to their various negative effects on the environment. Over the last few years, the CBC has launched various drives such as plantation campaigns and other activities to improve the environment.

However, all these activities have been overshadowed by the unrestricted use of polythene bags, which have been found to be the single largest contributor to solid waste pollution. These polythene bags do not only increase the garbage spread in the streets but also affect the sewerage system when they get stuck in the drainage lines.

According to CBC representatives, between 320 and 350 metric tons of garbage is lifted from their jurisdiction on a daily basis. In the absence of a recycling mechanism, the plastic waste is disposed of in landfill sites in Surjani and Hub.

Polythene bags have also become a major threat to marine life. In turn, they are also dangerous for humans, who consume the same marine life that inadvertently swallows these plastics. Experts have warned that when these polythene bags find their way into the sea, they are broken down into micro plastic particles and are then consumed by marine life. This poison is included in human food through fish, prawns and other sea food.

Meanwhile, shopkeepers and vendors within the CBC's jurisdiction have been instructed to stop the use of polythene bags. These instructions would be announced repeatedly on mega-phones and in the form of written notices by CBC teams during the 15-day movement. Action against violators would then be initiated after April 5. Heavy penalties will be imposed on shopkeepers found violating the ban.

The CBC is also considering distributing paper or cloth bags among residents and shoppers to encourage the use of these alternative materials.

In response to a question regarding how the ban would be enforced on picnickers coming to Sea View, a spokesperson said that they had already placed garbage bins at short intervals along the promenade from McDonald's to Village Restaurant.

"People are unaware of the damage caused by polythene bags and so they don't throw the garbage in the bins although they are placed after every few steps," said the spokesperson.

The restriction would be imposed on the citizens coming for picnic as well as vendors running the stalls at Sea View, said the CBC spokesperson. Besides, banners are being put up at different locations to raise awareness among residents of Clifton and those coming for picnic.

Published in The Express Tribune, March 20th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1933085/1-cbc-bans-use-polythene-bags-jurisdiction/>

PAKISTAN CAN FACE 'SUPER FLOOD' THIS YEAR, NA BODY TOLD

Khaleeq Kiani Updated March 20, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan could face a 'major' to 'super flood' during the monsoon season owing to higher than normal snowfall and other climatic changes in the country this year, two senior government officials informed the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Water Resources on Tuesday.

They said more funds and effective preparedness would be required to minimise damage from possible flooding in the country.

The chances of a big flood were relatively higher this year due to higher than normal snow deposits on mountains and catchments of major rivers, Syed Mehr Ali Shah, acting secretary of water resources, informed the NA committee as he tried to make a case for the release of at least Rs15 billion for flood protection activities at the earliest.

Senior officials call for release of Rs15 billion for flood protection activities

Briefing the NA committee's meeting presided over by Nawab Yousuf Talpur, Mr Shah, who also holds the acting charge of Pakistan's Indus Water Commission, said that Pakistan had suffered losses worth \$19bn due to flooding over the past 60 years. The country suffered \$19bn direct losses since 2010 floods because of higher population and currency depreciation factor, he added.

He said funds spent on flood protection were very little when compared to damage caused by flooding in the country.

Seconding the opinion of Mr Shah, Federal Flood Commission chairman and chief engineering adviser Ahmad Kamal said that there was a chance of a "very high flood" this year. He was of the opinion that Pakistan appeared to be facing a high impact of climate change. Whenever two events — simultaneous monsoon rainfalls on northern parts of the country and the entry of westerly waves in Balochistan and southern parts of the country — occur at the same time, "we can have a super flood anytime".

He said snowfall continued in some parts of the country even in March — a rare phenomenon — and was indicative of greater chances of 'high to very high floods'.

Mr Kamal stressed the need for the release of Rs15bn at the very minimum for flood protection activities before the beginning of the monsoon season so that all high priority projects that have been finalised in consultation with provincial governments could be completed. He said the PC-1 for these projects was submitted to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) a few months ago and its approval was awaited.

Mr Shah said the fourth Flood Protection Programme was approved by the federal government and the provinces at the Council of Common Interests (CCI) level in 2017 with a total cost of Rs326bn for implementation in 10 years. The funds were to be contributed by all the five stakeholders depending on provincial needs and schemes. The then government, he added, had decided to implement the project in two phases of five-year each.

Former minister for water and power Khawaja Asif said that the floods in 2010 alone caused losses of \$10bn in direct damage to lives and properties. He said funds available for flood protection were ridiculously low in comparison. Funds could be made available with proper lobbying with development partners provided the federal and provincial governments were onboard and prepared good projects, he added.

He said the CCI believed the flood protection was a provincial subject and the provinces should finance more and more projects in their domains to protect lives, properties, agriculture and livelihood of their populations.

Mr Shah claimed that the ruling political parties in the country historically had not given due seriousness to water sector projects perhaps because their completion took longer time than the tenures of their governments.

Published in Dawn, March 20th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1470694/pakistan-can-face-super-flood-this-year-na-body-told>

NESTLÉ LAUNCHES COUNTRY-WIDE TREE PLANTATION DRIVE

RECORDER REPORT | MAR 19TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

With its commitment to Prime Minister's 'Clean Green Pakistan' initiative, Nestlé Pakistan is paving the way for a sustainable environment by launching a country wide tree plantation drive. Advancing the initiative, Nestlé Pakistan in partnership with Metropolitan Corporation of Islamabad (MCI), conducted a tree plantation activity in Rose and Jasmine Garden, Islamabad led by Mayor Sheikh Anser Azi, says a press release issued here on the other day.

Geared at fostering a culture of sustained cleanliness and environmental well-being, the drive sheds light on Nestlé's philosophy that revolves around striving towards zero environmental impact of their operations in a systematic and consistent manner.

Speaking at the occasion, Waqar Ahmad, Head of Corporate Affairs, Nestlé Pakistan said, "The country-wide tree plantation and cleanliness drive is the result of Nestlé's global and local commitments. We will be carrying out more cleaning and tree plantation drives in partnership with 'Clean Green Pakistan' as we pledge to plant 10,000 trees in the capital with partnership with MCI." He further added, "Under the initiative, the company will be focusing on key pillars of Sanitation and Hygiene, kicking-off tree plantation drives and providing access to clean drinking water for communities. This initiative is completely aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including Clean Water and Sanitation, and Life on Land."-PR

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190319456612/>

DRONES TO BE USED FOR AERIAL SEEDING ON MARGALLA HILLS

Ikram Junaidi Updated March 18, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Though aerial seeding is not a new phenomenon in the federal capital, it has been decided to use drones for forest densification on the Margalla Hills this time.

"We conducted an experiment a week ago and dropped some seed pods in the hills and we have now decided to conduct an aggressive aerial seeding to increase greenery in the Margalla Hills. Though it looks like the hills are all green and covered with dense forest, the fact is there are more shrubs than trees," the spokesperson for the chief commissioner's office, Nauman Shah told Dawn.

Aerial seeding was done in the 1960s in the federal capital, during which seeds of paper mulberry were also dropped. Paper Mulberry trees in the city have now become a reason for pollen allergies.

Aerial seeding was conducted in the Margalla Hills in the 1980s, but that time, seeds of local trees were dropped.

Mr Shah said that this time, it has been decided that seed balls of 15 approved species will be dropped.

"If the campaign is successful in Islamabad, it can be replicated across Pakistan, especially in the mountainous areas," he said.

Last year in July, a large number of residents of the federal capital and environmentalists took part in preparing seed balls and spread them in the hills.

The chances of a seed taking are just 10pc due to which seed balls are used across the world, which increased the chances of the seeds taking to 50pc.

A seed is covered with clay and fertilized to make a seed ball.

Mr Shah said there are so many shrubs on Margalla Hills that it is impossible or very difficult to get to most of the areas.

“It is very expensive to use planes for aerial plantation. When using planes, seed balls are thrown from a great height, increasing the chances of the balls breaking or not falling in the right place. Drones will be less expensive and they will also be able to drop the seeds from a lower height and in targeted areas,” he said.

He said that the step has been taken to ensure that the number of trees on Margalla Hills would be increased.

“Now technology is affordable and we have decided to use it. As seed balls are successful across the globe so we will also use them because they have a better survival rate. I am sure that in coming years residents of the federal capital will observe that the number of trees have increased on the hills,” Mr Shah said.

Published in Dawn, March 18th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1470265/drones-to-be-used-for-aerial-seeding-on-margalla-hills>

AIR POLLUTION RAISES DIABETES RISK IN CHINA

RECORDER REPORT | MAR 18TH, 2019 | HONG KONG

Long-term exposure to harmful smog particles increases the risk of diabetes, a new study in China has shown, providing evidence for a link between the country’s air pollution and the disease. China is facing the largest diabetes problem in the world with around 11 percent of its population suffering from the metabolic illness, according to a United States study published in 2017.

Increased prosperity has brought changing diets and lifestyles, along with an air pollution crisis that the World Health Organization estimates causes over a million premature deaths every year. The risk of diabetes rose by about 16 percent for an increase of 10 microgrammes per cubic metre in long-term PM2.5 particle exposure, researchers from Fuwai Hospital in Beijing and Emory University in the US found in a study published online by Environment International last week.

“Sustained improvement of air quality will help decrease the diabetes epidemic in China,” Lu Xiangfeng, one of the study’s authors, told AFP in an email. Researchers collected data from over 88,000 subjects across 15 provinces, estimating their exposure to PM2.5 based on satellite data from 2004 to 2015. PM2.5 includes toxins like sulfate and black carbon, which can penetrate deep into the lungs or cardiovascular system, and have been linked to higher rates of lung cancer, chronic bronchitis and heart disease. While similar studies in North America, Europe, Hong Kong and Taiwan have linked air pollution with diabetes, researchers say this is the largest study of its kind in mainland China.

“Due to high levels of PM2.5, different exposure pattern and population susceptibility, results from developed countries with low PM2.5 levels were not applicable in China,” Lu said. His team adjusted for factors such as age, body mass index, smoking status, family history of diabetes and work-related physical activity levels, but did not directly factor in dietary habits and other types of pollutants.

Ho Kin-fai, a professor at the Chinese University in Hong Kong who studies air pollutants and is not involved in the study, told AFP the study shows air pollution is a factor in the diabetes epidemic “that we cannot ignore”. But scientists still need to find evidence showing how PM2.5 particles work in the human body to increase risk of the disease,” Ho said.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190318456249/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 11TH TO MARCH 17TH 2019

ANOTHER US CITIZEN HUNTS HIGHEST-RATED ASTORE MARKHOR

A Correspondent Updated March 17, 2019

GILGIT: A fourth American hunted this season’s highest-rated Astore Markhor the other day, paying a whopping 100,000 US dollars as permit fee to the wildlife department.

According to a press release issued by the GB wildlife and parks department on Saturday, James Hascup hunted markhor in Doya wildlife conservation area.

This was the last permit of Astore markhor hunt in the region while the trophy hunting of blue sheep and ibex will continue till end of this month.

Speaking at a ceremony in Doya Astore, the American hunter said it was his dream to hunt markhor. I have been to Pakistan for quite some time and I enjoyed a lot here as people are wonderful, he added.

GB secretary forest and wildlife Asifullah Khan, conservator parks and wildlife Mahmood Ghazanvi and wildlife conservation and development committee members were also in attendance.

On Feb 4, American citizen Bryan Kinsel Harlan hunted a flared-horned markhor from Sassi-Harmosh community conservation area at a cost of 110,000 US dollars.

On Jan 21, another US citizen Dianda Christopher Anthony hunted the highest-rated Astore Markhor after paying 105,000 US dollars. On Jan 16, yet another American, John Amistoso, hunted the Astore Markhor in the community-controlled Bunji area of Gilgit, paying 100,000 US dollars permit fee.

In October last year, GB wildlife department issued licences for trophy hunting, including four Astore Markhors, 14 blue sheep and 95 ibexes for the hunting season of 2018-19.

Published in Dawn, March 17th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1470102/another-us-citizen-hunts-highest-rated-astore-markhor>

QUAKE JOLTS PARTS OF BALOCHISTAN

RECORDER REPORT | MAR 17TH, 2019 | QUETTA

An earthquake measuring magnitude 5 on the Richter scale shook parts of Balochistan on Saturday. According to National Seismic Monitoring Centre, the earthquake struck at the depth of 16 kilometers northwest of Sibi at 6:00 am. The tremors were felt in Quetta, Bolan, Sibbi, Mastung and other parts of Balochistan. The earthquake sent people scurrying into the streets but no loss of life and property was reported from the areas.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190317456023/>

CLEAN AND GREEN PAKISTAN VITAL TO ATTRACT TOURISTS: SPEAKERS

Our Correspondent March 17, 2019

LAHORE : A clean and green Pakistan will attract tourism – an avenue that largely remains untapped despite huge potential to bring valuable foreign exchange to strengthen the country’s economy.

“Pakistan is our country and home. Therefore, we must keep it clean, tidy and green, which will have great positive impact on our environment and health,” said speakers at a seminar on “Prime Minister’s Vision – Clean, Green Pakistan” held in connection with Cleanliness Day on March 29, 2019 by Mir Khalil-ur-Rehman Memorial Society (Jang Group of Newspapers) and Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) at a local hotel on Saturday.

Punjab Minister for Law, Parliamentary Affairs and Local Government Basharat Raja said the Clean and Green Pakistan drive across Punjab would commence from March 18 in order to create awareness among people to keep their surroundings and the entire country free of filth and pollution. “A whopping amount of Rs 13 billion is being spent on cleanliness only in Lahore, while not a single rupee contribution is being made by posh localities to keep their city clean,” he added.

He also slammed the previous governments’ tree plantation campaigns twice a year and said trees were nowhere to be seen around.

Punjab Minister for Irrigation Mohsin Khan Leghari lamented that the people had established jungles of concrete instead of tree forests proliferating industries at a fast pace without any planning to secure the environment from their hazards.

LWMC Managing Director Khalid Nazir stressed the need to ensure cleanliness in one’s life for the good of life in this world and hereafter. Filthy environment breeds diseases which increase the load of patients in hospitals, he added.

He said, “We will observe Cleanliness Day in Lahore on March 29, while Local Government Department has also announced observance of a cleanliness week all over Pakistan,” he added.

Jamia Naeemia Nazim-e-Aala Maulana Dr Raghil Naeemi said that Islam preaches cleanliness, therefore, people must inculcate habit of being neat and tidy in their children besides ensuring cleanliness of their surroundings, city and entire country.

King Edward Medical University (KEMU) Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Khalid Masood Gondal said, “Hand washing and over cleanliness of body, household and environment keeps the diseases away.

Punjab University College of Earth and Environmental Sciences Principal Prof Dr Sajid Rashid, Government College University Political Science Department Head Dr Khalid Mazoor Butt, KEMU Public Health Dean Dr Saira Afzal, SP Investigation Dr Anoosh Masood, Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Faiza Amjad, Medal Outstanding Services President Naeem Tahir, Geo programme “Khabarnaak” hosts Ayesha Jehanzeb and Ali Mir, dermatologist Dr Sehrish, Human Rights France Chairman Chaudhry Safdar Barnali, Aurat Foundation Provincial Manager Nabeela Shaheen, Humaira Mubarak Bhatti, Fatima Rizwan and Maulana Abdul Sattar Niazi also spoke on the occasion.

MKRMS Chairman Wasif Nagi hosted the seminar. LWMC Communication and Information Head Jamil Khawar gave a vote of thanks while Khaliq Hamid recited the verses of Holy Quran and Na’at-e-Rasool (SAW).

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/445075-clean-and-green-pakistan-vital-to-attract-tourists-speakers>

PAKISTAN REGISTERS COMPLAINT AGAINST INDIA IN UNEA FOR DESTROYING FOREST AREA

The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter March 16, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday registered a complaint with the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) regarding India’s unlawful incursion into the country and destroying forest areas recognised under the Global Bonn Challenge and are a worldwide valued natural asset, the Ministry of Climate Change said in a statement.

“A brazenly unlawful air incursion into our territory, while hastily fleeing, Indian air force dropped its entire payload onto a pristine reserve forest and an area protected for natural regeneration under our flagship ‘Billion Tree Tsunami’ initiative,” adviser to the prime minister on climate change, Malik Amin Aslam told UNEA.

In his speech before participants from around the world at the fourth UNEA session being held in Kenya, Malik Amin Aslam said that the deplorable “strike” was clearly a strike against nature.

The deplorable ‘strike’ was clearly a strike against nature, Malik Amin Aslam says

It has been duly booked under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial forest act in Pakistan and an independent natural resource damage assessment has already been carried out.

On Feb 26, a protected forest reserve and a globally significant carbon sink in Pakistan became the target of unprovoked aggression, he said.

He said that while Pakistan reserves the right for taking further legal action and for claiming compensation and retribution for this act, it is raising the matter at this forum to give a voice to the voiceless — the fallen trees of Jabba-Massar Forest Reserve — which became the silent victims of this shameful attack on nature.

“We also want the world to know that Pakistan values its nature, and especially values its trees and forests,” the advisor said in his statement.

He stressed on the need for strengthening international laws and commitments of the global community to take cognizance of such offences against nature.

In this regard, Pakistan welcomed the work done by the International Law Commission for defining the principles of environment in relation to armed conflicts, especially draft principles nine and 13 which extend to protected areas such as the affected Jabba-Massar Forest Reserve in Pakistan.

“We also intend to take it up at the UN (Sixth Committee) to urgently and clearly define the term ‘Eco-terrorism’ — especially as it relates to incidents such as this strike against nature. Furthermore, any person authorising such a strike is not a ‘champion’ of the earth but belongs to the earth’s ‘hall of shame’,” Malik Amin Aslam said.

Pakistan’s billion tree plantation was recognized worldwide and especially when the World Economic Forum urged other countries to follow the examples set by Pakistan of planting trees to counter the impact of global warming, said the Ministry of Climate in its statement.

Published in Dawn, March 16th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1469887/pakistan-registers-complaint-against-india-in-unea-for-destroying-forest-area>

SECY WANTS SC COMMISSION’S ORDERS ENFORCED

The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter March 16, 2019

KARACHI: The newly appointed environment secretary, Saeed Ahmed Mangnejo, has directed his department to ensure implementation of recommendations made by the Supreme Court-mandated judicial commission on water and sanitation in letter and spirit.

Chairing a meeting at the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) headquarters in Korangi on Thursday, Mr Mangnejo reviewed progress of the institution.

Sepa director general Naeem Ahmed Mughal gave a detailed presentation on the progress made so far and underscored the challenges being faced by the agency in implementing the environmental law.

The secretary emphasised the need for stricter implementation of the Sepa Act. He particularly focused on the adoption of modern technologies by industries to minimise environmental hazards.

Deputy secretary Junaid Rajput proposed gradual adoption of zigzag technology in the brick kiln sector. The technology, it was noted, not only significantly reduced consumption of coal for baking bricks but also helped produce better quality bricks in a bigger number.

Sepa’s director (technical) Waqar Phulpoto briefed the participants about a survey of industrial units being conducted by the department in Karachi.

Mr Mangnejo directed the department to ensure implementation of the judicial commission’s recommendations. He also asked the officials concerned to submit to him a climate change policy plan and prepare a new annual development plan.

Published in Dawn, March 16th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1469864/secy-wants-sc-commissions-orders-enforced>

WE WILL PLANT 14,000 SAPLINGS FOR EVERY TREE ENEMY DESTROYS, SAYS ZARTAJ GUL

By Wisal Yousafzai Published: March 16, 2019

PESHAWAR: Federal Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul has said that Pakistan will grow 14,000 trees for each tree that enemy destroys.

She was referring to the Indian aerial attack early in March at Balakot, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, in which few pine trees were damaged.

“We will highlight India’s environmental terrorism in the UN,” she said inaugurating 10 billion tree tsunami project at Pakistan Institute of Forest in Peshawar on Friday.

“If our enemy destroy our one tree we will grow more than 14,000 trees in reply, but will never compromise on the environment terrorism as UN and other international agencies working for environment should take notice of it,” Gul said.

She said that the tree tsunami project, an initiative of Prime Minister Imran Khan launched from K-P, was recognised and appreciated on international forums.

She said that tree plantation has borne fruit in shape of increased rain and snowfall, “if we keep growing trees at current speed, we will soon make Pakistan green again.”

Besides mitigating the adverse impacts of global warming and climate change, a greener landscape will attract more tourists to the country.

K-P Environment Minister Ishtiaq Urmar said billion tree tsunami project seemed impossible but he and his team did it.

He said that Pakistan was the seventh most vulnerable country to ill impact of climate change, adding that Pakistan and specially K-P was the most vulnerable province to see the flood and other natural disaster.

Sectary Environment Nazar Hussain said that Metrological Data during last 50 years (1951-2000) indicate 0.6 to 1 degree rise in temperature and 10 to 15 % reduction in rainfall in the southern part of Pakistan.

The project is in line with Vision 2025 of Ministry of Planning, Development & Reform aiming at increasing forest cover of Pakistan up to 25% of the total area.

He added that 10 billion trees project will be completed with an enthusiasm as they earlier did the billion tree tsunami project, adding that although they face tough challenges from the opposition parties, “but at the end we were successful in our aim.”

Published in The Express Tribune, March 15th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1930372/1-will-plant-14000-saplings-every-tree-enemy-destroys-says-zartaj-gul/>

CLEANLINESS, TREE PLANTATION DRIVE FROM 18TH

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter March 15, 2019

RAWALPINDI: The district administration will launch a cleanliness and tree plantation drive starting March 18, under the government's Clean and Green Pakistan programme.

The drive will focus on cleaning streets in rural and urban areas by involving people from all walks of life, raising awareness of hygiene through a public hand-washing campaign and tree plantation, a meeting of local officials was told.

The meeting was chaired by Deputy Commissioner Chaudhry Mohammad Ali Randhawa and attended by Parks and Horticulture Authority Chairman Asif Mehmood, the city traffic officer, additional deputy commissioners Maleeha Jamal, Nousheen Sarwar and Saima Younis, assistant commissioners from all tehsils and heads of allied departments.

Mr Randhawa said the duty of civic bodies was to keep streets and roads clean, adding that the cleanliness drive would not be successful if people were not participating in it.

He told the administration to inform people of the benefits of cleanliness and tree plantation and to involve them in the campaign.

Published in Dawn, March 15th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1469726/cleanliness-tree-plantation-drive-from-18th>

PAKISTAN ESTIMATED TO HAVE HIGH ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE LEVELS IN HEALTHY POPULATION

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated March 15, 2019

KARACHI: A comprehensive analysis of sewage collected from 74 cities in 60 countries — including Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Bangladesh — has yielded the first comparable global data on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in healthy population in these countries.

It's for the first time that scientists analysed genetic material in raw sewage samples to assess AMR levels.

Titled 'Global monitoring of antimicrobial resistance based on metagenomics analyses of urban sewage', the paper is published in the Nature Communications journal.

The research is led by the National Food Institute at the Technical University of Denmark and conducted by an international team of scientists including Drs Rumina Hasan and Sadia Shakoor from the department of pathology and laboratory medicine at the Aga Khan University (AKU).

The researchers found the countries participating in sampling in two groups; North America, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand, which generally have the lowest AMR levels whereas Asia, Africa and South America have the highest levels.

The researchers, taking help from the World Bank population density data, have also estimated the AMR levels in 259 countries and territories and drawn up a world map of resistance in healthy populations.

According to their estimates, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Sweden have the lowest levels of resistance, whereas Tanzania, Vietnam and Nigeria have the highest levels.

Other countries with highest estimated AMR levels include Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh in South Asia, and Kenya and Uganda in East Africa.

For standardisation, all genetic analysis of samples, including those of Karachi, was carried out at the Dutch partner university.

The analysis also found that high AMR gene abundance was related to poor sanitation and health in many of these countries.

“Findings of this study suggest that improving sanitation, health and education as part of the Sustainable Development Goals would be effective strategies for limiting the global burden of AMR,” Dr Hasan said.

Sharing her concerns over the increasing levels of antimicrobial resistance all over the world especially from developing countries, she said that this situation was threatening experts’ ability to treat common infectious diseases, aggravating sufferings of patients due to prolonged illnesses, disability and, in some cases, causing death.

“We need to take immediate actions to manage it. Governments, policymakers and other stakeholders have to come forward with country-specific plans to address the challenge of antimicrobial resistance. Those who have already developed them on paper need to put them into practice,” she said.

Dr Hasan, Dr Shakoor and their team had identified Pakistan’s first outbreak of extensively-drug resistant typhoid in 2016 and led the efforts to manage it with the government and other stakeholders.

“Now we know that poor quality drinking water and an inadequate sewage infrastructure contributed to the spread of a drug-resistant strain of typhoid fever in Pakistan. A functioning infrastructure and investment in civic facilities is essential to prevent such outbreaks in future,” Dr Shakoor said.

Urban sewage, according to the study, was used for analysis because it provides sampling material from a large and mostly healthy population.

“Analysing sewage samples does not require informed consent, thus limiting ethical concerns and has limited practical and logistical barriers for sampling. Additionally, sewage has proven useful for surveillance in the global polio eradication programme,” it says.

The researchers will use the experience gained from the project to develop a worldwide surveillance system that can continuously monitor the occurrence and spread of disease-causing microorganisms and antimicrobial resistance.

Published in Dawn, March 15th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1469634/pakistan-estimated-to-have-high-antimicrobial-resistance-levels-in-healthy-population>

PUNJAB GOVERNMENT ROLLS UP SLEEVES TO SAVE RAVI FROM POLLUTION

SAFDAR RASHEED | MAR 15TH, 2019 | LAHORE

The Punjab government has decided to save aquifer and River Ravi from further pollution and toxicity. The dual problems of clean water shortage and untreated wastewater overflow have been taken seriously by the government of Punjab to urgently find solutions to address them in a synchronized manner.

The sources in the planning and development department disclosed that the government is taking much-needed and timely measures to preserve the aquifer of Lahore which has gone down to dangerous levels due to ill-planned and environmentally ignorant policies of the past.

In this regard, a meeting of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) team working on the Lahore Water and Wastewater Management Project was held in P&D chaired by Habib Gillani, Chairman P&D Board.

According to data, in Lahore, having 11.1 million population, water is extracted through 576 tube wells before pumping into the distribution system. Currently, the groundwater extraction by its responsible agency “Lahore Water and Sanitation Authority, LWASA” is 540 million gallons per day (MGD), or equivalent to 2.45 million cubic meters per day. In addition, about 1.2 million cubic meters per day is extracted by private housing societies, cantonment boards, railway colonies and areas under the jurisdiction of local government.

In view of increasing demand due to ongoing urbanization and increased commercial activities, the numbers of tube wells is also increasing with every passing day. On the other hand, Lahore receives an average annual rainfall of about 715 mm, which does not contribute much in recharging the aquifer, as groundwater extraction is much higher than recharge.

Consequently, the groundwater table continues to deplete rapidly. The current decline rate is observed at an alarming rate of more than one meter per annum. As a consequence, several existing shallow tube wells have dried up and are no longer operational, and the city has started facing severe water shortages. As for wastewater, there is currently no wastewater treatment facility in Lahore.

All the untreated domestic and industrial wastewater is discharged directly in the nearby River Ravi and thus, heavily polluting the river. It is estimated that River Ravi receives nearly 640 MGD wastewater as if converting a river into a sewage drain. On the other hand, River Ravi plays a major role in replenishing Lahore’s groundwater by up to 82 percent. Due to mass contamination of the river, polluted water seeps down making the groundwater unfit for drinking purpose, and affecting soil fertility. The pollution of groundwater has been causing diseases like diarrhoea, typhoid, intestinal worms and hepatitis in several areas of the city.

Several environmentalists have hailed the urgency with which the government has taken action to prevent Lahore from becoming a water-stressed and ultimately water depressed city

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190315455499/>

SINDH GOVERNMENT URGED TO TAKE NOTICE OF HEAPS OF GARBAGE IN SITE

RECORDER REPORT | MAR 14TH, 2019 | KARACHI

SITE Association of Industry (SAI) president Saleem Parekh has urged the Sindh Government to take notice of over garbage accumulation and lack of cleaning in SITE area and instruct the concerned departments to perform their duties. Showing his grievances over garbage accumulation and lack of cleaning in SITE – the largest industrial area, he said that due to non-performance of SITE Limited, Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) and Chinese contractor company Hangzhou Jinjiang, heaps of garbage are increasing day by day in SITE Area.

It seems that they are planning to convert SITE area into garbage dumping area, stated Saleem Parekh who was chairing a meeting convened to discuss single point agenda of solid waste lifting from SITE area. Speaking at a meeting with SSWMB and Chinese Contractor Company, he said several meetings have been held with SSWMB and Chinese Contractor Company but the result is zero as there is no system to lift the garbage on regular basis.

SITE Limited has also failed to lift debris of nala due to which industrialists are facing difficulties and on the basis of nala waste dumped outside the industries SEPA (Sindh Environment Protection Agency) is issuing notices to industries that if industrial wastes are not cleaned their factories would be closed down. Parekh asked the stakeholders why industries are being penalized while the concerned departments are not performing their duties?

He also urged SEPA to withdraw their notices and remarked that we fail to understand whether to run industries or reply notices issued on daily basis. Parekh requested SSWMB to clear the present junk at GCT College (Koyla Kanta Street) which has not been lifted since Jan 2019.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190314455205/>

CAA BEGINS SPRING TREE PLANTATION CAMPAIGN

By Press Release Published: March 13, 2019

KARACHI: Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) started on Tuesday its spring tree plantation campaign in the aviation sector under the theme of ‘one employee one tree’.

CAA Additional Director General Air Vice Marshal Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti formally initiated the plantation campaign by planting a sapling at the intersection of Jinnah Terminal and Sharae Faisal.

An awareness walk was also organised on the occasion. A large number of employees from organisations related to the aviation sector including the CAA, airlines, ground handling companies and food vendors participated in the walk.

Bhatti said that it was not only important to plant a sapling but also necessary to nurture it till it reached its full growth as a tree.

On the directives of Federal Aviation Minister Muhammed Mian Soomro, instructions were issued to all airports to do massive tree plantation and implement the ‘Clean and Green Pakistan Programme’ of Prime Minister Imran Khan in the aviation sector.

Squadron leader (R) Shahrukh Nusrat, who is the aviation secretary and CAA Board chairperson, inaugurated this plantation campaign last month by planting a sapling at Jinnah Terminal.

Employees of CAA, airlines, ground handlers, food vendors as well as students and teachers of various schools are taking part in this spring plantation campaign of the aviation sector.

Published in The Express Tribune, March 13th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1928189/1-cao-begins-spring-tree-plantation-campaign/>

THREE KILLED AS HOUSES COLLAPSE IN KP DUE TO HEAVY RAIN

Bureau Report Updated March 12, 2019

PESHAWAR: Three people, including two minor sisters, were killed and four suffered injuries in different parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday as houses collapsed due to heavy rains.

The Provincial Disaster Management Authority said Mehnaz and her two daughters, including seven-year-old Wafa Bibi and four-year-old Madena Bibi, died when their house collapsed in Karbogha Sharif area of Hangu district before dawn.

Also, a man suffered injuries in Pandu Chowk of Peshawar when the roof of a veranda caved in due to heavy rains.

Three houses collapsed in Hangu, Peshawar and Karak.

Heavy rain turned Peshawar's roads and streets into streams paralysing life.

Residential quarters were inundated in different parts of the provincial capital.

A house collapsed in Samer Bagh area of Lower Dir district injuring two women.

CM asks authorities to remain vigilant to protect public life and property

Motorists and commuters suffered due to water logging on main roads of Peshawar. Long queues of vehicles were seen there.

The overflowing drains turned the University Road, Grand Trunk Road, Ring Road, Kohat Road and Hayatabad and cantonment area streets into rivulets.

The main roads saw bumper-to-bumper traffic. Vehicles remained stuck in traffic jams.

The rainfall began in Peshawar before dawn and continued throughout the day.

The Met Office recorded 52 millimeters rainfall in the city, the heaviest in the recent weeks.

The sewage flooded roads and streets with the situation being worst in Hayatabad, University Road and some cantonment areas.

An official said the sewerage lanes built recently along the Bus Rapid Transit tracks were insufficient and therefore, they overflowed during heavy rain.

The rainwater and sewage submerged roads and streets.

The situation deteriorated on the University Road when rainwater accumulated under the BRT underpasses was pumped out on the main road.

The police diverted traffic to the BRT track in different areas to ease the flow of traffic.

“The newly-constructed sewerage lanes are faulty and inadequate to accommodate rainwater and sewage,” said the official.

He also said the main sewerage lanes along the Ring Road were choked, while the rainwater began to flow on the road causing traffic jam.

The Water Sanitation Services Peshawar called its staff to duty at 3am to open choked drains on the University Road and other localities.

Spokesman for WSSP Hassan Ali said the existing sewerage system didn't have the capacity to stand heavy rainwater.

Heavy rains also lashed other parts of the province.

Malam Jabba and Cherat received 39mm rain, Lower Dir 32mm, Upper Dir 22mm, Saidu Sharif 23mm, Bannu 20mm, Bannu 18mm, Parachinar 16mm, Mirkhani 15mm, Dera Ismail Khan 13mm and Balakot 10mm.

Also, moderate snowfall was reported in parts of Shangla, Battagram, Mansehra and Kurram districts.

The PDMA said three roads were closed to traffic in Abbottabad due to bad weather.

The roads in the jurisdiction of Galiyat Development Authority were also closed. Heavy machinery reached the roads for their reopening.

Also, heavy rain and snowfall dropped the mercury in Bajaur tribal district.

The residents said the rain in plains and snow on mountains began late on Sunday and continued all through Monday.

They said the inclement weather forced them to stay indoors besides causing suspension of electric supply in most parts of the district.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mahmood Khan directed the relevant authorities to remain vigilant to protect public life and property during the rainy season, reported APP.

In a statement issued here, the chief minister also ordered the immediate clearing of the calamity-hit roads and clearing of choked drains.

He said the relief departments, Rescue 1122 and other related departments should be on a high alert for meeting any emergency without delay, while the damages caused by rains should be properly assessed for speedy provision of relief to the affected people.

Mr Mahmood also said hospitals and other health facilities should take appropriate measures to provide quality services to the people injured by natural calamities.

“The early redressal of the people’s grievances is the prime responsibility of the departments concerned,” he said.

Published in Dawn, March 12th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1469090/three-killed-as-houses-collapse-in-kp-due-to-heavy-rain>

SINDH GOVT DOESN’T WANT TO ACT AGAINST POLYTHENE BAG MAKERS, PA TOLD

The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter Updated March 12, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly was told on Monday that the provincial government did not intend to take such an action against manufacturers of polythene shopping bags that could lead to the shutdown of their industry and render thousands of people jobless.

Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Coastal Development Mohammad Taimur Talpur said in answer to lawmakers’ queries during Question Hour in the provincial assembly that the Pakistan Peoples Party-led provincial government would not render anyone jobless.

However, he said, efforts were being made to persuade plastic bag manufacturers to use biodegradable material. The idea of replacing polythene bags with paper bags was not practical, he said. He conceded that the decision to impose complete ban on manufacturing, sale and use of polythene bags in Sukkur could not be implemented for various reasons.

He replied to a written question by Grand Democratic Alliance member Arif Mustafa Jatoi that the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency had verified that no cement factory in the province was burning solid waste as fuel.

In answer to another question by Mr Jatoi, the minister said that Sepa had two air quality monitoring laboratories — one fixed at the rooftop of Sepa head office and the other installed in the office of deputy commissioner of district South (Karachi).

In addition, he said, Sepa had one mobile air quality monitoring van for assessing air pollution in urban areas.

To a question by opposition member Rana Ansar, the minister said that the provincial government had initiated work on certain development projects to protect environment.

Three schemes were under way, which were; Environmental Monitoring System in Sepa, study of environmental and health impacts of pesticides and chemical fertiliser and awareness of environment and education for conservation and protection of natural and ecological resources, he said.

Published in Dawn, March 12th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1469091/sindh-govt-doesnt-want-to-act-against-polythene-bag-makers-pa-told>

‘SINDH HAS NO MECHANISM TO CHECK AIR QUALITY’

By Hafeez Tunio Published: March 12, 2019

KARACHI: At a time when the global community is obsessing over environmental degradation and pollution, the Sindh Environment Minister Taimur Talpur confessed on Monday that “there are only two air quality monitoring apparatuses” in Karachi, and they too are unable to properly determine the air quality in the teeming metropolis.

The admission came during the question-answer session in the Sindh Assembly, when Talpur said that one monitor was fixed atop the Sindh Environment Protection Agency’s head office and the other in the office of the District Central deputy commissioner. “In addition, we have one mobile van that has the capability of assessing air pollution in urban areas of Karachi,” he said, adding that besides Karachi, there was no monitoring unit in the rest of the province. SEPA dispatches the mobile van to the area wherefrom complaints of poor air quality and breathing difficulties are received.

The minister’s response astonished many in the House, half of which was empty due to the Opposition’s walkout. “This is so serious. How can you tackle the issue given the prevalent circumstances?” asked Pakistan Peoples Party MPA Marvi Faseh.

Talpur informed the House that the department had prepared a feasibility report to get new equipment and revamp the labs. “This scheme will cost around Rs1 billion and we will set up the main labs and its units at the district level across the province,” he said. “I also request the federal government to help and allocate some funds so that we can jointly resolve this issue,” he added.

Karachi is one of the largest cities in the world and is said to be among the 10 most-polluted cities in terms of air quality. “I have submitted a report to the court and also requested the chief minister to approve the scheme.”

To a question regarding cement factories and other industrial units causing pollution in the province, the minister said there are six cement factories that run on coal. “We have directed all factories to install modern technology to minimise the pollution,” said Talpur. “Lucky Cement and Power Cement Factory have made efforts to curtail air pollution by trapping the harmful substances before they are released into the air.”

With regard to untreated water and industrial waste being released into the sea, rivers and canals, the minister referred to the directives of the judicial commission on water and sanitation. “We took action and sealed many factories, but their owners went to court and got stay orders,” he explained, adding that the courts had given limited time to all factories and industries to install the treatment plants.

Talpur said that his department was keeping an eye on the issue and will take action if the orders were not implemented. Asked about the penalty, he said, “We impose Rs5 million on those who violate the law. But I think this is a meager amount, so we are going to make an amendment to the ‘Sindh Environment Protection Act’ to increase the penalty to Rs50 million for those operating large scale industries.”

During the session, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal’s Abdul Rashid asked about the progress on Greater Karachi Sewerage Plan, also known as the S-III project. The minister replied that one plant had been constructed, while two others were still under construction and would likely be finalised by 2019.

“Around 470 MGD of sewerage water will be treated per day,” he said, adding that the court has also ordered the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) and Karachi Port Trust (KPT) to install their treatment plants too. “We are also going to install combined treatment plants with 50% funding from the federal

government,” he said. “It will treat 100 MGD of sewerage per day, but unfortunately the federal government is not cooperating and releasing funds,” he said.

Rashid, however, expressed concern over the slow pace of work on the S-III and said, “Lyari River is one of the major components of the S-III, but I don’t see any progress on it.” The minister asked him to arrange a joint visit to review the ongoing work.

Earlier, as the session started with Deputy Speaker Rehana Leghari in the chair, Opposition members from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Muttahida Qaumi Movement and Grand Democratic Alliance started their protest, demanding the chairmanship of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

Leghari warned them to be seated and take part in the Assembly proceedings, but they did not heed her. The Speaker continued the Assembly proceedings by starting the question-answer session. After a few minutes of protest, the Opposition members walked out of the session.

The Assembly also adopted a resolution, felicitating the Sindh Assembly on completing 80 years of its existence. The resolution was moved by PPP MPA Ghazala Siyal. Later, the Speaker adjourned the session till today (Tuesday).

Published in The Express Tribune, March 12th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1927480/1-sindh-no-mechanism-check-air-quality/>

FOREST COVER IN KP EXPANDED BY 4PC, SAYS IMRAN

Syed Irfan Raza Updated March 11, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Terming the government’s Billion Tree Tsunami campaign a successful endeavour, Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Sunday it had led to increase the forest cover of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by four per cent while contributing to the fight against climate change.

“From nurseries to full forest areas, the success of Billion Tree Tsunami has been unprecedented with public & pvt involvement,” the prime minister said in a tweet.

He said that the success of the campaign gave the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf-led government at the centre confidence to replicate the drive across the country with a target of planting 10bn trees.

The prime minister also shared four images, including his selfie with some grown trees in the backdrop. Other images showed a dense green forest, schoolchildren holding saplings for plantation and some students cheering and jumping.

Prime Minister Khan had launched the countrywide tree plantation drive in Sept 2018 inviting everyone to participate in the campaign to counter the twin threats of climate change and pollution.

Initially the campaign was started at 200 locations and the prime minister hoped that it would be spread throughout the country in the next five years.

The prime minister had said that growing trees was not the job of the government or one person but of the whole nation. “If we don’t start planting trees now, the whole country can become a desert,” he had warned while emphasising the need to tackle pollution and smog through this plantation.

Published in Dawn, March 11th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1468921/forest-cover-in-kp-expanded-by-4pc-says-imran>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 4TH TO MARCH 10TH 2019

PIPE FACTORY CHIEF, SEPA DG INDICTED FOR CAUSING HEALTH HAZARD

Naeem Sahoutara Updated March 10, 2019

KARACHI: The environmental protection tribunal has indicted a pipe manufacturing factory chairman for causing health and environmental pollution and the director general of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency for failing to act against it.

The accused has been charged with committing offences punishable under Sections 11 (prohibition of certain discharges or emissions), 12 (initial environmental examination and environmental impact assessment), 13 (prohibition of import of hazardous waste) and 14 (handling of hazardous substances) of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act, 1997.

Mohammad Naeem Mughal, the director general of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency, has also been charged with committing an offence punishable under Section 16 (environmental protection order) of the PEPA, 1997.

The three-member tribunal headed by retired Justice Sadiq Hussain Bhatti formally framed the charges against the accused factory chairman and provincial environmental protection regulatory body's chief in the case, which was filed in 2010.

Complainant says the factory was engaged in manufacturing asbestos pipes

The other members included Mohammad Arif Khan (legal) and Abdul Rauf Memon (technical).

The chairman read out the charges to the accused. However, they pleaded not guilty and opted to contest the trial. The tribunal summoned witnesses on the next date and adjourned the hearing.

Syed Haroon Ahmed, a resident of Gulistan-i-Jauhar, had filed a complaint against the accused alleging that he was running a factory located in a Manghopir locality.

He claimed that the factory was engaged in manufacturing asbestos pipes and sheets produced from raw material chrysotile, which was "highly dangerous and cause of cancer" as the "use of chrysotile asbestos is highly sensitive and critical".

He further alleged that the maintenance manager of the factory, now deceased, had repeatedly made several oral complaints to the chairman about the method of manufacturing asbestos and disposal of its waste materials in a manner which was causing many serious diseases in the vicinity and among the employees.

However, the complainant said all requests and complaints made by the deceased went unheeded as a result of which manger Syed Farid Ahmed himself fell victim to mouth cancer and died.

Therefore, the complainant, who is the brother of the deceased, filed a complaint with the tribunal naming the factory chairman and Sepa DG as accused.

The tribunal was told that the junk of broken and cut pieces of pipes and sheets was lying scattered within the radius of about 15 miles, but the same were not cleaned and cleared up from the area despite repeated requests were made to the factory chairman.

The tribunal's head noted that the complainant had submitted an application to the federal secretary, therefore, the accused Sepa DG was asked to take necessary action against the factory and forward its report to the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency at Islamabad, but "he failed to do so and did not comply with such directions".

The tribunal had also directed Sepa to conduct an inquiry into the matter and submit its report, but a report of inquiry, submitted by the DG, was not satisfactory. Subsequently, the tribunal had constituted a commission, comprising technical persons, who visited the sites and reported that occupational health and safety conditions within the factory premises and dumping sites were inadequate.

The tribunal concluded that the overall analytical data verified the presence of inhalable, airborne asbestos (chrysotile) fibres in the occupational environment and dumping sites, thus both the accused committed the offences under Sections 11, 12, 13, 14 and 16, which were punishable under Section 17 of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act, 1997 and within the cognisance of the tribunal.

Published in Dawn, March 10th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1468610/pipe-factory-chief-sepa-dg-indicted-for-causing-health-hazard>

‘FOREST COVER RISES BY 6%’

By Shabbir Hussain Published: March 10, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The implementation of the 'Green Pakistan' programme including the billion tree tsunami is in progress in full swing to increase the number of trees. However, there is no authentic data available about the increase in forest areas in the country.

The previous government led by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) had started a survey under the Red Plus programme in 2017 to prepare reliable data on the number of jungles. The programme was implemented with the cooperation of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), a Finnish company, and all the provincial governments.

Sources said a recent survey shows a six per cent increase in forest areas across the country. However, the statistics have not been approved as the facts and figures remain unverified. Sources said the facts and figures of the survey have been sent to provinces for review and will be made public after final approval.

Sources said the recent survey shows the rate of forests is 5.7 per cent of the total land of the country while surveys done in 2004 and 2011 had shown the same as 5.1 per cent. However, surveys done during the former governments are not accepted at international levels. On the other hand, according to a report of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation a total of 1,617,000 hectares of land is covered by forests which are 2.2 per cent of the total land.

On the contrary, according to the situation of jungles in 2011 as mentioned in the Atlas of Pakistan compiled by Pakistan Forest Institute, Peshawar, a total of 507 hectares of land is covered by forests which amount to 5.1 per cent.

According to this survey, most of the forest area is in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and it is 435,138 hectares which are 36.9 per cent of the total land of AJK. In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) 1,508,604 hectares of land is covered by forests which are 20.3 per cent of the total land of the province.

In Islamabad, forests cover around 20,343 hectares of land which is 22.6 per cent of the total land. Similarly, in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) 534,579 hectares of land is covered by forests, forming 19.5 per cent of the total land.

According to a World Bank report, Pakistan stands at 113 among 143 countries for the lowest rate of forests.

On the other hand, a WWF report says Pakistan has lost 43,000 hectares of land every year from 2000 to 2010. This is half the size of the total land of Islamabad and is the highest rate of deforestation in Asia.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1926478/1-forest-cover-rises-6/>

PPDWP APPROVES UPLIFT SCHEME OF WILDLIFE SECTOR

RECORDER REPORT | MAR 9TH, 2019 | LAHORE

The Punjab government on Friday approved a development scheme of wildlife sector with an estimated cost of Rs 6.016 billion. The scheme was approved in the 19th meeting of Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP) of current fiscal year 2018-19, which was presided over Planning and Development Chairman Habibur Rehman Gilani. All Members of the Planning and Development Board, provincial secretaries of concerned departments and other senior representatives of the relevant provincial departments attended the meeting.

The approved development scheme included Green Pakistan Programme-Revival of Wildlife Resources in Punjab (Revised).

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190309452717/>

TWO OF FOUR PLANNED WASTE TREATMENT PLANTS MAY BE BUILT

By Shabbir Hussain Published: March 8, 2019

ISLAMABAD: After much delay, the government has decided to build two waste treatment plants for filtering contaminated waters falling into the Korang River and Rawal Dam in the federal capital.

The approval seems to have been granted by the federal government ahead of deliberations on the projects in a high-level body of the federal government on economic projects and in light of directions from the top court.

Government sources have disclosed that despite initial plans to set up four treatment plants in the federal capital, they now intend to set up just two plants in Dhoke Jillani and Shahdara.

Last month, the Supreme Court had directed the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to secure approval for these four treatment plants and submit a report to the court within 10 days.

Subsequently, the projects were taken up in a meeting of the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) on February 19 under the physical planning category. The project costs a total of Rs3.518 billion.

Since this amount was higher than CDWP's limit of Rs3 billion to approve projects, the project was referred to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) — the government's highest decision-making body for development projects — for review and approval.

However, now, the government has decided to partially approve the project, building only two of the plants at a cost of Rs1.6 billion. These plants will be built in Dhok Jillani and Shahdara.

The CDA had initially planned to build five Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) in the catchment areas of the federal capital. However, the project has been facing bureaucratic hiccups while the presence of illegal settlements in and around the designated project sites was making the task even harder.

According to the Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation (IMC), the plants were to be installed in the catchment areas of Bari Imam, Lower and Upper Shahdra and Simly dam. Officials had estimated that it may take up to half a year to get its PC-I approved from the Planning Commission due to some technical issues.

A project concept-I (PC-I) for the treatment plants had been prepared by the government in 2012 with an estimated cost of Rs2 billion at the time. The project, though faced delays owing to bureaucratic hiccups and the government's desire that two of these plants are built and run in some form of public-private partnership.

After the apex court took a suo moto notice of the pollution in the Rawal Lake, the issue of the treatment plants cropped up and the court directed the CDA, Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) and the Islamabad Commissioner to install the plants.

A revision of the PC-I last year ballooned its cost to Rs3.5 billion.

Last year, an EPA report submitted to the top court suggested immediate, short-term and long-term measures to protect the water in the dam.

The report called for raising an enforcement force which would monitor the quality of the water in the dam at regular intervals apart from building a boundary around the dam to discourage encroachment.

It was also suggested placement of new sewerage lines in catchment area near the dam while it also urged legal actions against the citizens involved in littering and polluting the dam, adding that some 25 housing societies and other adjoining areas are being affected due to non-installation of plants.

Published in The Express Tribune, March 8th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1925228/1-two-four-planned-waste-treatment-plants-may-built/>

CHINESE FIRMS SEND RELIEF GOODS TO FLOOD-HIT PEOPLE

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent Updated March 07, 2019

QUETTA: A Chinese company working on Saindak Copper- cum-Gold Project and the China Power Hubco Generation Company (CPHGC) have sent a huge consignment of relief goods to flood-affected people of Lasbela district of Balochistan.

The Deputy Director of Saindak Project, Masood Hassan, and Manager of the CHGC Mohammad Atif handed over relief goods to the government officials running a relief camp.

They said that China would not leave the flood-affected people of Lasbela alone during this hard time when they had suffered losses of human lives and properties.

Later, the relief goods' consignment was sent to the affected area for distribution among the flood-hit people.

Published in Dawn, March 7th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1468074/chinese-firms-send-relief-goods-to-flood-hit-people>

FLOODING AFTER DYKE BREACH HITS HUNDREDS OF HOUSES, FARMLAND

The Newspaper's Correspondent Updated March 07, 2019

DADU: Spillage from Khudabad branch (irrigation channel) washed away many houses in five villages and inundated around 5,000 acres of farmland some 25 kilometres from here on Tuesday, affected villagers told local reporters on Wednesday.

They said the spillage was caused by a 100-foot wide breach in the weak dyke of the channel near Khudabad town. They said that around 500 thatched houses and domestic articles as well as other belongings of the inmates were badly affected by the flooding.

Besides, they said, around 5,000 acres of land was inundated and three fish farms were washed away.

The affected villages were identified as Ishaq Magnejo, Iqbal Arain, Bakhsho Chandio, Gul Hassan Panhwar, Paro Jo Koh.

The villagers said that they immediately started the breach plugging work and approached the local irrigation officials for help but neither any official and labour force turned up nor the required machinery and stones were sent to the breach site.

They said that the deluge swept away their standing wheat and vegetable crops.

On his part, Dadu circle superintendent engineer of irrigation department Sajid Ali Bhutto told Dawn that water level at 123 regulators of Dadu Canal had increased following heavy rains in the district and neighbouring areas. "The doors of Pakha Shakh had to be opened to prevent an overflow that may have posed a threat of flooding to a wider area and its population," he said. However, he added

farmers closed their watercourses causing water level in Khudabad branch to go up. The increased pressure resulted in the breach, he said.

He claimed that upon receiving the villagers' complaint, the officials concerned controlled the flow at the tail-end of Pakha Shakh. He noted that the tail-end area received water after 36 years.

Published in Dawn, March 7th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1468011/flooding-after-dyke-breach-hits-hundreds-of-houses-farmland>

HEAVY RAINS CLAIM 17 LIVES AND INJURE 13 IN BALUCHISTAN

Madiha Shakeel March 5, 2019

QUETTA: At least 17 people were killed and 13 others injured in flash floods triggered by heavy rains in different areas of Baluchistan on Tuesday.

An official of Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Baluchistan said, "Heavy rainfall in the province triggered damage to life and property.

The sources said at least 28000 people had affected in the first phase of the torrential rains in Quetta while the loss of second phase is being reviewing.

"The current rains and snow falling damaged 25000 houses of the province",the sources added.

The sources further said 2000 hoses were collapsed in District Qilla Abdullah, Harnai and Khuzdar,however 50 animals were flooded away.

Government had declared the area red alert and had sent rescue teams to the flood affected areas to continue rescue operations,official said.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/03/05/478834/heavy-rains-claim-17-lives-and-injure-13-in-baluchistan/>

HEAVY RAINS CAUSE LARGE DESTRUCTION IN BALOCHISTAN

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent Updated March 05, 2019

QUETTA: Balochistan Minister for Information Zahoor Ahmed Buledi said on Monday that the second spell of heavy rains, flash floods and snowfall in different parts of Balochistan had caused destruction on large scale.

Addressing a press conference here, he said that a total of 13 people were killed and 12 others injured in rain-related incidents.

According to him, the local administration and security forces have between them rescued 28,000 stranded people.

He said that relief operations were in progress and that army helicopters were helping in distributing relief goods.

Minister says relief work being carried out with army, PDMA and FC cooperation

“The provincial government and all its departments relevant in this regard are fully functional and taking part in the rescue and relief operations, along with the Pakistan Army,” he said. The Director-General of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Imran Zarkoon, and Director-General Public Relations of the provincial government Naeem Bazai accompanied the minister.

Mr Buledi informed attendees that the recent heavy rains, snowfall and floods had affected nine districts of the province, and explained that in the first phase [of response] the provincial government has provided tents, food sachets, and other necessary edibles. He added that the authorities had issued early warnings about the new spell of rain and snowfall across the province, but even so major damage has been reported.

“The spell of rain and snowfall that began on March 2 hit large parts of the province, killing 13 and injuring 12,” he explained. Referring to the relief and rescue operation that has been under way since Friday, according to the minister the Balochistan government has distributed 5,000 tents, food items, and other necessary goods amongst the people affected. “The Pakistan Army, the Frontier Corps Balochistan, and the PDMA participated in the relief operations,” he informed, “while the army rescued people stranded in floods in Turbat,” adding that the highways that were blocked by snow in Kan Mehtarzai, Zarghoon Ghar and Ziarat had been cleared and are now operational.

The minister said that all provincial departments are on board [the rescue operations] and officers remain on call, while all stranded people have been evacuated.

Published in Dawn, March 5th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1467667/heavy-rains-cause-large-destruction-in-balochistan>

NESTLÉ PAKISTAN KICKS-OFF COUNTRY-WIDE TREE PLANTATION DRIVE

RECORDER REPORT | MAR 5TH, 2019 | LAHORE

Nestlé Pakistan commits to planting 50,000 trees across its operational areas in Pakistan as part of the Prime Minister’s Clean Green Pakistan initiative. Nestlé Pakistan’s commitment is also part of the ten billion trees tsunami campaign launched by the Prime Minister last year. To mark this commitment, a tree plantation and clean up activity was held in Jallo Park, Lahore, led by Malik Amin Aslam, Advisor to Prime Minister on Climate Change. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Nestlé Pakistan and Ministry of Climate Change last week whereby, Nestlé Pakistan will be focusing on key pillars of Sanitation and Hygiene, kicking-off tree plantation drive and providing access to clean drinking water for communities.

Speaking at the occasion, Freda Duplan, CEO, Nestlé Pakistan, said, “Nestlé Pakistan, as part of its global and local commitments, is striving towards zero environmental impact of our operations. We appreciate Advisor’s and Prime Minister’s efforts towards a Clean Green Pakistan. Today we are starting our journey for 2019 with the first Cleaning and Tree Plantation Activity under our Employee Volunteer Program. This initiative shall be followed by more cleaning and tree plantation drives

across our operational areas where we plan to plant 50,000 trees across our sites in partnership with ‘Clean and Green Pakistan’. This initiative is completely aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including Clean Water and Sanitation, and Life on Land.”

Whilst, addressing the MoU ceremony, Malik Amin Aslam, Adviser to Prime Minister on Climate Change, added, “Clean Green Pakistan is a behavioral change movement which involves rethinking our relationship with nature, by caring and protecting for this natural resource. ”

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/03/20190305451728/>

RAINS KILL EIGHT IN KP; HUNDREDS RESCUED IN BALOCHISTAN

Dawn Report Updated March 04, 2019

PESHAWAR/QUETTA: Heavy rainfall continued in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the third day on Sunday with eight deaths reported from parts of the province and more than a dozen injured, officials said.

Rescuers from the paramilitary forces were helping hundreds of survivors stranded in Balochistan which was facing the brunt of flash floods on Sunday.

Four deaths were reported in South Waziristan and two from the Shewa area, adjacent to North Waziristan. Bordering Afghanistan, South Waziristan and North Waziristan tribal districts were earlier part of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) and merged with KP province in May 2018.

Two died in Charsadda and Tank districts, said Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA). Eight were injured, added the PDMA statement to the press. The incessant rain also damaged 31 houses in the province stated the PDMA.

Rain and snow-related landslides were reported in the mountainous regions of Hazara and Malakand. Rescue and relief operations by the local administration and paramilitary forces continued in flood-hit Balochistan where one more death was reported. Fateh Mohammad was killed in Ahmedwal, Nushki, when an electric wire fell on his house because of heavy rains. His 25 goats also perished with him.

But the situation of several hundreds of flood survivors was dreadful who were left stranded and had to be rescued by army and local administration officials. According to an ISPR press release, 1,500 families were rescued from Dureji in Lasbela and Qila Abdullah district.

The rescuing of the families happened with the help of army helicopters, according to officials. Relief camps have also been set up in Makran, Lasbela and other parts of northern Balochistan. Rations supplies and essential items had also been provided to 3,500 families in flood-hit areas, said an ISPR statement. “Pakistan Army doctors and paramedical personnel were also providing medical assistance,” said ISPR.

A bus carrying 45 pilgrims from Punjab was also caught up in flash floods. The bus was heading towards Shah Noorani shrine in Khuzdar district but the road leading to the shrine had been washed away. Security officials and local administration were called in to rescue the pilgrims.

“After four hours they were rescued. They are safe and sound and have been shifted to a safe place,” said Deputy Commissioner Lasbela Shabbir Ahmed Mengal.

Flash flooding was reported in villages of Nushki district. The floodwaters carried by the seasonal river stream Bor Nallah rushed into villages Nasirabad, Annam Bostan and Killi Sultan forcing the residents to abandon their homes. Security forces and local administration were reported to have started rescue operation in the affected villages.

Rivers Kech and Nihing were heavily flooded and a bridge over River Kech was closed for traffic, said officials. Also, in Kech small dams were washed away and security forces were busy rescuing hundreds of stranded survivors.

Irrigation officials put out a warning that the water level of Mirani Dam had reached dangerous levels with the entering of floodwaters in its reservoir.

—Behram Baloch in Gwadar also contributed to this report

Published in Dawn, March 4th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1467519/rains-kill-eight-in-kp-hundreds-rescued-in-balochistan>

April 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 1ST TO APRIL 7TH 2019

PAKISTAN'S FIRST ECO-FRIENDLY FOOD FEST SENDS A POWERFUL MESSAGE ABOUT WASTAGE

IMAGES STAFF DESK REPORT April 07,2019

A number of people, especially schoolchildren, thronged the eco-friendly food festival on Saturday, its second day at the Beach View Park in Clifton.

Described as Pakistan's "first environment friendly food festival", the event titled 'ReFest' is being organised by the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWF-P)

A total of 70 food stalls have been set up at the festival where visitors have the opportunity to enjoy good food and music as well as learn about some simple steps that could help ensure sustainable food consumption and environmental safety.

"The concept behind this event is to revisit the idea of organising food festivals and share key messages on reducing food wastage, recycling and reusing creatively. Right now, our lifestyle poses serious threat to the nature," said Hammad Naqi Khan, director general of WWF-P.

Often we don't even eat all the food that's produced as around one third of it was lost in the supply chain or thrown away, he added, while emphasising that creation of sustainable food systems were important to protect diversity of life on earth.

In an effort to make zero waste to landfills, only eco-friendly cutlery is available at the festival. Single-use plastic containers and straws are either not available or properly being collected for recycling, if some stalls are using them.

Moreover, the festival tickets are made from recycled paper and a tree plantation has been organised after the festival, also hosting art exhibition in which creativity is demonstrated using recycled material.

“The surplus food not sold at the end of each day at the festival is being collected by the Robin Hood Army and distributed to less privileged people in the city,” said Asif Sandeelo representing the WWF.

According to the Global Hunger Index 2016 report, Pakistan ranks as a country with a serious hunger level. Approximately 40 per cent of food in the country is wasted, which amounts to close to 36 million tonnes of food waste per year in the country.

This level of wastage is alarming when compared to the figure that 43pc of the country’s citizens remain food insecure with 18pc facing severe shortages.

The festival ends today (Sunday).

Originally published in Dawn, April 7th, 2019

<https://images.dawn.com/news/1182305/pakistans-first-eco-friendly-food-fest-sends-a-powerful-message-about-wastage>

CBC TO START THREE-DAY CAMPAIGN AGAINST USE OF PLASTIC BAGS

By Our Correspondent Published: April 7, 2019

KARACHI: Following the ban on plastic bags by the Cantonment Board Clifton (CBC), banners have been placed outside shops in various markets in the area. Starting from Monday, a three-day awareness campaign will also be carried out, after which implementation will begin. Shop owners will be facing heavy fines along with having their shops sealed if they failed to comply with the ban.

Banners and posters were placed outside all commercial markets within the area including supermarkets. Through the banners, shop owners are being advised to use paper instead of plastic bags. Banners on awareness against the use of plastic bags are also placed in all residential areas within CBC jurisdiction including Sea View as, according to officials, shop owners and residents have to come together to make this possible.

According to CBC officials, announcements will be made in the residential and commercial areas through megaphone during the campaign while pamphlets will also be distributed. The campaign will continue till April 10. In its second phase, implementation will be ensured through vigilance teams. The penalties can range from Rs1,000 to Rs20,000 and strict action will include sealing shops that continue to use plastic bags.

Published in The Express Tribune, April 7th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1945080/1-cbc-start-three-day-campaign-use-plastic-bags/>

THE LONG SHOT OF ‘BLACK GOLD’

Sohaib R. Malik April 06, 2019

At a recent rally in Thar, Prime Minister Imran Khan thundered that the desert region's abundant coal reserves — its 'black gold' — would bring prosperity to the people there. Coming from a self-proclaimed environmentalist, these words are not only disappointing, but potentially dangerous. In fact, they may pose an existential threat to not only the people of Thar and Sindh, but the entire nation.

When the prime minister launched the Clean Green Pakistan initiative last October and promoted the idea of the '10 Billion Tree Tsunami', it triggered a sense of optimism among those who care deeply about the nation's sustainable future. Perhaps for the first time, it appeared as if the reins of the state were finally taken over by someone who was driven by a vision that encompassed the long-term well-being of the people and not just his own re-election. That optimism seems to be eroding now.

It is a fact that the people of Thar are devoid of economic opportunities. With a population of 1.7 million — 75 per cent live below the poverty line, which shoots up with every drought — the region's welfare should be our policymakers' top priority. The available choices, however, should be evaluated on the basis of a criterion that ensures multidimensional development. In this regard, coal is possibly the least potent means of all.

What plans are in place to offset the looming damage of coal-related commercial activities for Thar?

To start with, Thar's coal deposits comprise inferior quality lignite and sub-bituminous characteristics. The Geological Survey of Pakistan analysis proves that these are among our least-valued coal grades due to the high moisture content and low heating value. Furthermore, of the oft-purported 'reserves' of 175bn tonnes, less than 5pc are measured and the rest are theoretical estimates. The proven reserves of 7bn tonnes are not fully recoverable either.

The PML-N administration built an entire case on the massive coal power buildout on the basis that the fleet will provide cheap electricity and improve the balance of payment. If the present government believes in a fraction of that narrative, it must realise that it is misled. The operational and permitted plants vividly indicate why tariffs shouldn't be accorded for coal power producers in the future.

Between 2015 and 2016, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority granted tariffs to developers for about 9,500MW of coal capacity. Over 60pc of that capacity will burn imported fuel because policymakers agreed that it is a better alternative to Thar's lignite. Moreover, coal power producers were guaranteed an overly lucrative rate of return, which could be higher than the rates offered for other technologies during that period and was awarded at the behest of the federal government.

Since imported fuel cost is over half the total tariff, these plants could worsen our trade imbalance through 2050 and generate expensive electricity. A case in point is the 1,320MW Sahiwal plant, which produced power for Rs11.25/kWh in February 2019, compared to the originally estimated tariff of 8.2 Rs/kWh. The cost for the consumer soars if the equity and loan repayments are repatriated in a foreign currency since the rupee has depreciated substantially.

On the technical front, coal power plants offer some merits which are overvalued by bureaucrats who usually run the show in ministries. With uninterrupted fuel supply, coal plants can provide electricity without varying generation and load. The so-called baseload characteristic of these plants causes inflexibility because they should keep running regardless of the electricity demand. Notwithstanding the fact that our power demand is highly seasonal ranging between 25,000MW to 10,000MW,

depending on the weather— the politicians and bureaucrats professed the need for baseload generation and permitted an excessive capacity of coal-fired power projects.

The coal power value chain emits large amounts of pollutants and clean water is among the key input requirements for thermal power stations. If employed, the Tharis will be paid poorly to ensure “commercial viability” of the mines. While at work, the miners will be exposed to chemical substances and coal dust that cause a host of lung and respiratory diseases. For those who escape these miseries, the stacks of power stations will emit enough sulphur, nitrogen, carbon dioxide and mercury that they will be worse off by not leaving their ancestral lands.

On behalf of the Tharis, it is worth asking the provincial and federal authorities: when coal projects are building infrastructure to consume trillions of litres of water every year, why do the locals not have access to clean drinking water? What mitigation plans are in place to offset the looming damage of coal-related commercial activities for the Thar region and for the rest of the country? The pitiful irony is that the functionaries and politicians who are wrestling to take the ‘credit’ for Thar’s recently built coal power project blame each other for the region’s destitution, and its starving children.

Surely, the people of Thar deserve better. They would be better served not by earning a few thousand rupees while mining for some billionaire corporates of Karachi and Beijing, but by economic opportunities that do not jeopardise their health and environment — and are identified in consultation with them.

Interestingly, at the same rally, the prime minister lauded Thar’s solar energy endowment. He rightly noted that instead of constructing a miles-long grid, solar power is a cost-effective technology for the region’s power needs. I wish someone in the audience had asked that since such a commendable realisation exists, why are the policymakers in Karachi and Islamabad drawing up plans for the local villages’ displacement. Why is the rest of the country being deprived of this ‘yellow gold’ (solar energy), which is available through the length and breadth of the country? Arguably, Clean Green Pakistan and massive coal mining in Thar cannot go hand in hand. We will have to choose one or the other.

The writer is an analyst specialising in energy policy and political economy.

Published in Dawn, April 6th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1474242/the-long-shot-of-black-gold>

8M TONNES OF PLASTIC PRODUCTS DISPOSED OF INTO SEA

RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: Experts on Friday said that the entire world dumps nearly one trillion tonnes of plastic products each year, killing animals, hampering rivers’ streams and pollute oceans and alarmed that Pakistan’s share is 8 million tonnes which is thrown into the sea.

They also called for a judicious consumption of food, warning that the one third of the total production is lost in the supply chain or thrown away. A total of 50 billion plastic bottles of water are bought annually and 80 percent are dumped.

Nearly 8 million tonnes of plastic products slip away into the oceans annually. An estimate shows that Pakistan's 80 percent of the total litter is single use plastic.

"The food system is posing one of the key threats to the nature today. It uses most of our natural resources with 69 per cent of our water and 34 percent of our land," Hammad Naqi Khan, Director General, WWF-Pakistan said on the first day of the environmental friendly food festival, ReFest being held in the city.

Not even all the food that is produced is consumed as around one third of it is lost in the supply chains or thrown away. The WWF-Pakistan works to improve food production and help change consumption modes besides ensure to conserve more for the human use than its wastage. The WWF-Pakistan's goal is also focused to create sustainable systems to safeguard the variety of life on earth while ensuring food security for the future as well, he added.

In a bid to discourage the single-use plastics and promote sustainable food consumption, the WWF-Pakistan and Brand Logics partnered to organise the country's first environmental-friendly food festival in the metropolis. The event aims to reduce food waste and raise awareness about eating food in a responsible way as well as adopting sustainable practices such as use of paper plates and cups. The WWF believes that if food is produced more sustainably, distributed fairly and consumed more responsibly, humans and planetary health can be improved.

A total of 70 food stalls were set up at the festival, which attracted a large number of Karachiites. The participants not only enjoyed food but music as well. The concept behind this event is to revisit the idea of organising food festivals, reduce food wastage, recycle what we can and reuse creatively. In an effort to make zero waste to landfills, a number of steps are being taken at the venue.

Only eco-friendly cutlery is available during the festival. Single-use plastic containers and straws are discouraged, however, if any food stall uses them they are being collected for recycling. WWF-Pakistan encourages people to use paper plates and cups as well as aluminium plates and packaging. Moreover, tickets used during the event were made from recycled paper. To reduce carbon emissions, carpooling is encouraged and tree plantations will be carried out after the festival.

As part of the eco-friendly festival, ReFest teams incentivise consumers to collect bottles at the venue. Further, all waste generated during the event is properly collected and segregated for recycling. The festival also hosted a recycled art exhibition. Finally, all surplus food not sold at the end of each day at the festival was collected by Robin Hood Army and distributed to less privileged people in the city.

Talking about the festival, Asma Ezdi, Head of Communications and Marketing, WWF-Pakistan said that we need to increase people's awareness of where food comes from, and change our behaviours to ensure the proper functioning of our food system. As part of this festival, WWF-Pakistan in collaboration with different partners is also organising clean up drives across key public places in city. "The event will help create awareness about how people can change their ways to eat and reduce plastics that damage our environment and biodiversity," she added.

Ali Hassan, CEO, BrandLogics said, "Through this partnership with WWF-Pakistan, we are demonstrating our commitment to changing the event management space in the country. The ReFest food festival aims to showcase that it is possible to have fun while being responsible and promote environment friendly habits in our daily lives."

According to the Global Hunger Index 2016 report, Pakistan ranks as a country with a serious hunger level. Approximately 40 percent of food in the country is wasted, which amounts to close to 36 million tonnes of food waste per year in the country. This level of wastage is alarming when compared to the figure that 43 percent of the country's citizens remain food insecure with 18 percent facing severe shortages. This three-day event will be open for general public at Beach View Park, Clifton till Sunday, April 7.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/04/06/3-page/775341-news.html>

FROM GREEN BELTS TO DENSE FORESTS

By Rameez Khan Published: April 6, 2019

LAHORE: In a bid to revive the famed garden city reputation of Lahore, social activists have joined hands with the district administration to start a new campaign for the afforestation and beautification of the city.

Designed by the Lahore commissioner, the campaign has been initiated in line with Prime Minister Imran Khan's 'Clean and Green Pakistan' drive, launched last October. Although various government departments in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa have been planting more and more trees under the drive, the Lahore division administration is working on a slightly different model.

It plans to take social activists on board to lead the plantation campaign instead of accepting donations and sowing the saplings themselves. The project aims to give ownership to the civil society and subsequently, the people of Lahore, while staying within the confines of available government resources.

Several nature conservationist groups, including the Lahore Biennale Foundation and the Lahore Conservation Society (Lahore Bachao Tehreek), have already stepped forward to support the afforestation project.

Under this initiative, the Lahore Commissioner Office will identify sites like parks and vacant plots which are owned by the provincial and federal government. These spots will then be assigned to conservationist groups for plantation and cleanliness. The project has been stipulated for a period of three to five or five years for design, plantation and maintenance.

Three related meetings have already taken place in which 22 sites have been earmarked for the first phase in Lahore. The areas identified so far include 13 community parks which run under the Parks and Horticulture Authority. The other nine sites mainly include the 27-km green belt along Canal Road, the 16-km long belt of National Highway between Kala Shah Kaku and Mehmood Booti

Interchange, the Niazi and Sagian Interchange of Lahore Right Road Authority, the Cantt Railway Crossing of Pakistan Railways, as well as parks in Harbanspura and Model Town J Block.

According to conservation groups, Lahore has lost 75 per cent of its tree cover in the last two decades and this has impacted overall air quality.

They further stated that Lahore needs close to nine million trees to bring the air quality back to normal. The main reason for deforestation in Lahore was the expansion and development of new infrastructure projects for which several hundred trees were chopped down, despite strong opposition

from conservation groups. In some such cases, matters were even taken to the court to stop the then-government from destroying the flora and fauna of the metropolis.

The Shehbaz Sharif-led governments in Punjab were more focused on beautification and less on environment-friendly plantation. The result is beautifully trimmed lawns, manicured gardens with designed flower beds, and ornamental plantation that has almost no impact on the environment.

There have been several attempts made by conservationists to push the idea of creating breathing zones in big cities, but the previous government did not seem interested.

According to members of these groups, their plan is not to undo the landscaping, but to gradually change the manicured lawns to maintained green areas with pockets of dense forestation, which will take several years, if not decades. Lahore Banale Foundation's office has been made the secretariat for this project by the commissioner's office.

Attiya Noon from LCS is relieved that there is finally a government that has changed the direction from a policy of optics and election stunts to one of securing future generations of the country.

She claims that the previous government destroyed the green cover of the city in the name of development projects and that their 'efforts' to plant trees were nothing more than stunts.

"Without any study, Conocarpus and palm trees, both alien species, were extensively planted in the city." She says that Conocarpus has been damaging the ecosystem and is recommended for urban plantation, whereas palm trees are not suited to the city's environment.

"Even imported flowers were given preference due to their cosmetic beauty." She says with the change in the policy, the plan is to plant indigenous trees on sites identified by the government.

She says these sites will be converted into green areas with pockets of thick forestation, adding they will not only design these sites, but also plant trees and maintain them for a given period.

She says it is a huge and an expensive project, but "luckily many individuals and groups are ready to come forward to secure their future generations." She reveals that there is a need to plant 8.7 million trees in total across the city.

Naeem Bajwa, another conservationist from LCS, who is heading the pilot project for the Saghian and Niazi Interchanges of Lahore Ring Road, says they will not be destroying the landscaping on the interchange, but develop pockets of forestation instead.

He says the type of trees they are planning to plant at these two sites are Gul-e-Nishter, Jacaranda, bottle brush, gab, and other indigenous trees such as Neem and Jamun.

He says the advantage of growing indigenous trees is their suitability to the environment and lower cost. He adds that with the clean and green campaign on full throttle, even the prices of these tree saplings have increased.

He quotes a popular saying that the best time to grow a tree is 20 years ago, whereas the second best time is now. He says it will take several years, if not decades, to reap the benefits of this drive, but it is the need of the current hour.

Lahore Commissioner Muhammad Mujtaba Piracha tells The Express Tribune that the concept of the project is to give people ownership of the clean and green drive. He says that without the involvement

of people and mobilisation of social activists, such projects cannot succeed. “The issue with trees is survivability.”

He says the role of his office is to mobilise social activists to come forward and take ownership of the Prime Minister’s campaign. Paracha says that his office will coordinate with provincial and federal government departments to get permission to use their vacant plots for afforestation. Bajwa confirms that 22 sites had already been identified.

His office is also working to prepare a master plan for the year 2050 to ensure green areas in the city. PHA has already started its own project under the clean and green campaign, planting 100,000 trees along the entire belt of Ring Road with the donations from different groups.

The types of tree planted alongside LRR were Pilkhan, Neem, Molseri, Amaltas, Jamun, Sukh Chain and Arjan. This project is expected to be completed this month.

Published in The Express Tribune, April 6th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1944584/1-green-belts-dense-forests/>

WHALE FOUND WASHED ASHORE ON GWADAR BEACH

Faiza Ilyas | Behram Baloch Updated April 04, 2019

A 34-FOOT-LONG whale that washed ashore dead on the beach in Gwadar two days ago was quietly buried by municipality workers on Tuesday afternoon before its body could be examined by experts, sources told Dawn.

“Perhaps the efficiency shown in burying the foul-smelling decomposed body was due to close proximity of the carcass to a security check-post,” they said.

There were conflicting claims about the whale’s identity: the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWF-P) reported it as the calf of a blue whale while a marine biologist working with the Gwadar Development Authority identified it as a Bryde’s whale.

Body quietly buried by municipal workers before it could be examined by experts

The assessment was based on different pictures of the whale apparently taken by security personnel. Reportedly, no fisheries department official has visited the site despite getting information about the incident.

“We confirmed that it’s a calf of the blue whale after sharing its picture with other experts,” said Mohammad Moazzam Khan, a representative of the WWF-P and also the president of the Pakistan Whales and Dolphins Society.

The cetacean, he said, was already buried before the WWF-P team could reach there.

“There are different speculations about how it died. I believe that it died after getting entangled in a fishing net,” Mr Khan said, arguing that there was no evidence of a ship strike.

The WWF-P team, he said, had dug the burial site and took some meat samples which would be shared with international experts for DNA analysis.

He said that fishermen searching for ambergris in the whale's stomach damaged the carcass but couldn't find any since the precious solid waxy substance was only found in the intestines of a sperm whale.

A dead specimen of the same species, according to Mr Khan, was found floating in 2014 in the Khuddi creek, about 39 kilometres southeast of Karachi.

"A giant blue whale was spotted along with its baby off Churna Island, Balochistan, last year. That was the first live sighting of the blue whale," Mr Khan said.

The species is listed as endangered in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List and its global population today stands at around 10,000 to 25,000.

However, Abdur Rahim, assistant director environment of the GDA and also a marine biologist, was of the opinion that it was an adult Bryde's whale.

"I confirmed this identification with my foreign colleagues. Both blue whale and Bryde's whale belong to the family of baleen whales, also called toothless whales, and there are minor differences in their features," he explained. He said he didn't get any information about fishermen damaging the carcass.

"The carcass was old, perhaps three days to a week. It apparently washed ashore on Monday night and was spotted on Tuesday morning. Nothing could be said conclusively about the whale's death," he said, adding that a Bryde's whale was found dead two years ago in Gwadar.

All cetacean species are protected under Sindh and Balochistan laws and all whales fall in the Appendix 1 category of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

According to experts, cetaceans are significant since these mammals are key species in the ecosystem. They reflect the number and diversity of fish stocks and are indicators of a healthy ecosystem.

The first-ever baseline study on the marine cetaceans found in Pakistan's waters was made public in 2008. The whales recorded during this study included Bryde's whale, Cuvier's beaked whale, the fin whale, the sperm whale and the well-known hump-backed whale.

Published in Dawn, April 4th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1473796/whale-found-washed-ashore-on-gwadar-beach>

PAKISTAN ONLY BEHIND CHINA, INDIA IN AIR POLLUTION DEATHS: STUDY

The Newspaper's Correspondent April 04, 2019

WASHINGTON: Pakistan is the second on a list of 10 countries with the highest mortality rate due to air pollution, while India ties with China for the first place, says a report released on Wednesday.

A total of 2.4 million people (1.2m each) died of air pollution in China and India in 2017, when a survey was conducted.

India, however, was ahead of China in the percentage of population exposed to household air pollution. In India 60 per cent people were exposed to household air pollution, 32 per cent in China, 79 per cent in Bangladesh and 52 per cent in Pakistan.

Polluted air cited as the fifth leading cause of early death worldwide

In Pakistan 128,000 deaths were attributed to air pollution, 124,000 in Indonesia, 123,000 in Bangladesh, 114,000 in Nigeria, 108,000 in the United States, 99,000 in Russia, 66,000 in Brazil, and 64,000 in the Philippines.

The report — “State of Global Air” — by the US-based Health Effects Institute and the University of British Columbia identifies air pollution as the fifth leading cause of early death worldwide, responsible for more deaths than malaria, road accidents, malnutrition or alcoholism. Only dietary risks, high blood pressure, tobacco and high fasting-plasma glucose are more injurious than air pollution.

The World Health Organisation’s Air Quality Guideline sets 2.5 pollutants per micrometre (PM) as the upper limit for humans. PM2.5 pollution contributed to nearly 3m early deaths in 2017.

More than half of this disease’s burden fell on people living in China and India.

Exposure to PM2.5 was found to be the third leading risk factor globally for type 2 diabetes deaths, after high blood sugar and excessive body weight.

The study includes hypothetical increases in life expectancy among the 11 most populous countries if PM2.5 concentrations were limited to the WHO Air Quality Guideline. Bangladesh would have the highest expected gain of nearly 1.3 years, followed by India, Nigeria and Pakistan with gains of about one year of life expectancy.

The percentages of population living in areas above the guideline ranged from 92 per cent in Russia to 100 per cent in China, India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Children in South Asia would have their lives cut short by 30 months because of a combination of outdoor air pollution and dirty indoor air.

A study last October from the WHO found that exposure to toxic air both indoors and out kills some 600,000 children under the age of 15 each year. It found that children are often more vulnerable to the impact of air pollution since they breath more rapidly than adults, and thus absorb more pollutants at a time when their brains and bodies are still developing.

Published in Dawn, April 4th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1473780/pakistan-only-behind-china-india-in-air-pollution-deaths-study>

INDUSTRIALISTS ASKED TO SHOW PROGRESS ON TREATMENT PLANTS

The Newspaper’s Staff Reporter April 04, 2019

KARACHI: Representatives of various industries and trade organisations were asked on Tuesday to ensure speedy progress on the installation of waste-water treatment plants in their industrial units.

Sindh Minister for Environment and Climate Change Taimur Talpur said at a meeting attended by representatives of industrial associations of Sindh, Karachi Port Trust, cantonment boards, Sindh Solid Waste Management Board and Sindh Building Control Authority that all stakeholders should play their part in the improvement of environment.

He said that effluent treatment plants were need of the hour and a process should be initiated on a war-footing to make progress on this issue.

The meeting was held to discuss implementation of the recommendations of Supreme Court-mandated commission on water, particularly those pertaining to the installation of waste-water treatment plants/septic tanks at all industrial units.

The minister also spoke about government's commitment on this issue and the meeting's objectives. "We are here today not to confront but to facilitate each other and all the stakeholders concerned including all the government departments to comply with the directives of honourable commission pertaining to the construction of combined effluent plants in industrial zones and all other areas under the administrative control of different organisations," he said.

President of North Karachi Industrial Association Zubair Motiwala said that people were ready to implement the commission's directives not under any compulsion but because of the fact that it was a legal binding on industrialists to fulfil export requirements.

Published in Dawn, April 4th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1473679/industrialists-asked-to-show-progress-on-treatment-plants>

CHICKEN FEED, WATER SAMPLES IN CITY FOUND CONTAMINATED WITH HEAVY METALS

Faiza Ilyas Updated April 02, 2019

KARACHI: A large number of samples of chicken feed and water collected from poultry markets and shops in the city were found contaminated with various heavy metals, a Karachi University (KU) study shows.

The study — Distribution & occurrence of heavy metals in poultry feed and water in Karachi — was conducted at KU's Institute of Environmental Studies (IES) by Dr Aamir Alamgir, Prof Moazzam Ali Khan and Maiza Javed.

Samples of chicken feed and water given to birds for drinking were collected from various spots including Nazimabad, North Karachi, Nagan Chowrangi, Orangi Town, Gulistan-i-Jauhar, Saudabad, Liaquat Market, Khoso Goth, Malir Halt, Jinnah Square, Quaidabad, Korangi, Dawood Chowrangi, Landhi, Rehri Goth, Bagh-i-Korangi, Saddar, Shadman Town, Shah Faisal Colony and Green Town.

"We collected a total of 68 samples and found none free of contamination from heavy metals," said Dr Alamgir, an assistant professor at the IES.

The ingredients used for preparing feed were possibly tainted with raw industrial waste

He added that the level of these metals in water and feed samples were compared with the guidelines of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Asked about the sources of contamination, he explained that the presence of metals, especially lead, nickel and chromium, in chicken feed indicated that the ingredients used for preparing feed were possibly tainted with raw industrial waste.

“While there might be multiple sources of contamination, I did not find the findings surprising given the fact that we have been using our sea and even freshwater sources as gutter for all kinds of raw waste.

“I believe that this extremely harmful practice, which has played havoc with marine life, has contaminated the food chain,” he said, adding that small-sized fish and poultry waste were used as a protein source in raising chicken.

The second major contamination source, in his opinion, might be city’s water.

“Multiple studies have found city’s water unsafe for consumption. One important reason behind it is the mixing of sewerage lines with water lines at many places,” he said.

On health hazards posed by food contaminated with heavy metals, he said that studies had linked prolonged exposure and short-term overexposure to heavy metals to various illnesses including damage to lungs, kidneys, central nervous system, respiratory and cardiovascular systems and reproductive system.

Ninety-one per cent of feed samples had lead values above the WHO 2011 guidelines (0.2mg/kg) whereas they all crossed safe limits for nickel. The maximum level of lead was found in the Quaidabad sample.

Samples collected from Shadman, Shah Faisal Colony and Malir contained lead within the guideline value.

Copper was observed above the guideline values in 67pc samples of poultry feed. Its maximum value was found in the sample collected from Nazimabad.

Eighty-two per cent of samples showed iron above the guideline value. Samples from Malir, Kala Board, Jinnah Square, Nazimabad and Shah Faisal (one sample) were within the safe limit.

Seventy-nine per cent samples had chromium concentration above the guideline limit (0.5mg/kg). Its highest concentration was found in Saddar.

All samples had nickel above the guideline limit.

Arsenic contamination was detected in samples collected from Jauhar Chowrangi, Saudabad, Liaquat Market, Malir RCD and Khoso Goth.

All water samples had iron, lead and nickel above the WHO 2011 guidelines. Their highest concentration was recorded in Korangi, Saddar and Quaidabad, respectively.

Copper, however, was found within safe limits in all water samples. Fifty-five per cent of water samples were above the WHO guideline for chromium (0.05mg/L). The maximum concentration of chromium was found in the Dawood Chowrangi sample.

According to the study, arsenic in water is a major concern in Pakistan because it is also found naturally in water reservoirs and can originate from pollution by industrial activities or specific feed additives.

Thirty-four per cent of all samples had arsenic values above the WHO guideline and the highest arsenic concentration was found in Korangi 2 1/2.

Last year, a study published in the International Journal of Community Health Sciences had found samples of lentils, potatoes and chicken meat brought from the open market in Karachi, both in raw and cooked form, tainted with metals known to cause human poisoning.

The study was conducted by the department of community health sciences at the Aga Khan University in collaboration with the department of environmental and preventive medicine of Jichi Medical University in Japan.

The chicken meat was uniformly contaminated with high arsenic levels irrespective of the utensil material used for cooking.

Published in Dawn, April 2nd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1473317/chicken-feed-water-samples-in-city-found-contaminated-with-heavy-metals>

PTI GOVT RELAXES ARMS POLICY FOR FOREIGN HUNTERS

By Zafar Bhutta Published: April 1, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The government has amended a policy to ease restrictions for temporary import and export of arms and ammunition in a bid to attract foreign hunters and tourists to the country, with the role of the commerce division excluded.

Prime Minister Imran Khan had taken keen interest to remove restrictions for foreign hunters carrying arms and ammunition to promote tourism in Pakistan, which would help generate revenue.

A senior government official told Express Tribune that the commerce division had informed the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) in a recent meeting that hunting and sporting activity coupled with improved law and order situation in Gilgit-Baltistan had huge potential to attract foreign hunters and tourists, which would contribute to the government's efforts for revenue generation and earning much needed foreign exchange for the country.

However, a lengthy and cumbersome procedure for getting a No-Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Ministry of Interior for carrying arms and ammunition for hunting on receipt of a request from the Gilgit-Baltistan Council and another NOC from commerce division for temporary import-cum-export of arms and ammunition had discouraged the growth of such tourism.

The Gilgit-Baltistan Council forwarded the cases to the commerce division for issuance of NOC for temporary import-cum-export of arms and ammunition.

The commerce division issued the required NOC following approval of the cabinet under para 20 of the Import Policy Order 2016 wherein the existing prohibition and restrictions for import of arms and

ammunition were relaxed in favour of foreign hunters for temporary import-cum-export of hunting arms and ammunition.

In order to make the process easy, the prime minister approved the proposal of the interior ministry suggesting that NOC from the ministry for carrying arms and ammunition by foreign hunters may be considered sufficient for temporary import-cum-export of hunting arms and, hence, the requirement of another NOC from commerce division for temporary import-cum-export of arms and ammunition may be done away with.

The commerce division said that the proposal of interior ministry necessitated an amendment to the Import Policy Order. Section 3(1) of the Imports and Exports (control) Act 1950 empowers the federal government to prohibit, restrict or otherwise control the import and export of goods of any specified description subject to such conditions and exceptions as may be stipulated for such import and or export.

The commerce division proposed that after clause (q) of para 12 of the order, a clause might be inserted to allow temporary import-cum-export of arms and ammunition by the foreign hunters. It proposed that 'temporary import-cum-export of arms and ammunition by foreign hunters shall be allowed subject to NOC from Ministry of Interior'.

The ECC considered the proposal and allowed the foreign hunters temporary import-cum-export of arms and ammunition subject to NOC from the Ministry of Interior.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1941723/1-govt-relaxes-arms-policy-foreign-hunters/>

BILLION TREE TSUNAMI ON ALTAR OF SACRIFICE

By Ahtisham Khan Published: April 1, 2019

PESHAWAR: The billion tree tsunami took a backseat to infrastructure development, as 25,000 saplings planted from Chamkani to Hayatabad and numerous precious fully-grown trees have been felled to make way for the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government's flagship project.

Along the 27-kilometre route from Chamkani to Hayatabad, not only has the infrastructure in Hayatabad, University Road, Saddar, Gulbahar, and Chamkani been destroyed, but the millions invested in placing green belts in these areas have also been wasted due to the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. Poor planning and negligence have led to the government incurring losses of millions.

Documents available with The Express Tribune show that before starting the BRT project, the government had begun work on the Clean and Green Pakistan project in which saplings were planted from Chamkani to Pir Zakori flyover at a cost of Rs96 million, Rs19 million were invested on renovation and planting saplings along Gulbahar flyover, while Rs38 million was spent on beautification and plantation on the green belt from Ring Road to Charsaddah Road flyover, Rs29 million on beautification of parks, and from Jamrod Road to GT Road, planting seasonal saplings cost the taxpayer Rs2.73 million.

Similarly, according to the documents, Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) spent millions on beautification, which involved planting saplings in dozens of areas and installing LED streetlights, while millions were spent to widen footpaths and carve out sewerage lines.

The big question remains that why the government invested in such short-sighted beautification projects after it had already green-lighted the BRT project in 2017, under which these areas would all have to be cleared and reworked.

Former provincial minister and JUI leader Maulana Amanullah Hifazati, who challenged the BRT project in the Peshawar High Court over its environmental aspects, told The Express Tribune that as per the Asian Development Bank report, “the BRT project survey was done in 2014, so why did the government spent millions on the Clean and Green project and beautification of Peshawar project?”

“In the very next year (2017), work on the BRT project started and the Clean and Green Project was ravaged,” he added, while estimating that nearly 25,000 plants and trees were removed due to the BRT project from areas including University Road, Islamia College, Hayatabad, Jamrud Road, GT Road, and Gulbahar Road.

He said 7,000 plants were removed from Qila Hisar to Chamkani, 1,500 big and small plants from Bala Hisar to Gora Kabristan, while 15,000 big small trees from Gora Kabristan to Hayatabad and saplings planted just before the BRT project were also removed.

According to PDA sources, from Hayatabad, Jamrud Road, University Road, and some interchanges, just before work on the BRT began, 100-year-old old banyan trees and 200-year-old sheesham (Indian Rosewood) trees were uprooted. “These are still lying in Hayatabad’s Shalman Park, while countless other trees have been stolen by people from the park. The brutality with which these ancient trees were pulled out, Peshawar mourns the loss,” he said.

The BRT has had a significant impact on the environment in Peshawar, as pollution has increased, said sources in the environment department. “Due to BRT, there has been an increase of 2.5 per cent in Peshawar’s pollution levels. Nitrogen dioxide has increased by 25 per cent, and due to the traffic jams caused by BRT work, air pollution in the area has increased,” said the sources.

K-P Environment Minister Ishtiaq Urmar told The Express Tribune that “it is true that pollution has increased due to the BRT project, air pollution and noise has also increased.” He also admitted that trees were felled for the project, but “we will try, through the Billion Tree Tsunami project, to curb the pollution in Peshawar”.

He said that after the 18th Amendment, provinces have the right to legislate on the environment, and “for the first time we made an environmental act through which any factory or industrial unit will be charged a penalty of Rs50,00 to Rs50 million for polluting. He said that once the BRT project is up and running, the pollution situation will get much better.

Due to the increase in pollution in the wake of the BRT project, reported cases of heart and lung ailments, along with other diseases have increased in Peshawar. Numerous citizens are falling ill while traffic police personnel deployed along the BRT route seem the worst affected.

According to Peshawar Traffic SSP Kashif Zulfiqar, traffic wardens on duty around the BRT have seen increased rates of heart disease and hepatitis. “To help with their treatment, we have written to PDA and the provincial government.”

In addition, Due to the BRT project, the route from the tribal Khyber District has been cut and the construction of a station in Hayatabad has affected the flow of the Bara River. Hayatabad resident Malik Kashif said that in 2008 and 2010, the floods in K-P from Bara wreaked havoc along the same

route, while adding that old sewerage lines and drains running along the route have also been affected, due to which future floods could damage the BRT station and line.

Due to BRT work in Saddar, the historically important and eye-catching Sunehri Mosque has been damaged. The mosque and its minarets, which used to be visible from most surrounding areas, is now hidden behind the BRT flyover. The approach road has also become narrower.

Peshawar's old markets and parks have also been affected. A question mark has been placed Jinnah Park, which, during its past life as Cunningham Park, was the location where the 1947 referendum on the province's future was decided. The vote was in favour of joining Pakistan.

The park has been cut through to accommodate the flyover.

Meanwhile, GT Road has been narrowed further, which has affected the accessibility of the historical Khyber market and other historic areas.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1941426/1-billion-tree-tsunami-altar-sacrifice/>

WWF OBSERVES EARTH HOUR

By Our Correspondent Published: April 1, 2019

KARACHI : The Earth Hour 2019 was observed on Saturday, to promote environment-friendly activities and save the earth from global warming, in the Sindh Assembly building on International Earth Hour Day. The slogan of the event organised by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) was 'Connect to Earth'.

Vice chancellors, teachers and students from different varsities participated in the event. The lights at the Sindh Assembly building were symbolically turned off from 8:30pm to 9:30 pm. The participants lit candles to express the determination to make the world pollution free.

According to the speakers, the power demand is rising, which is the reason that the world is being pushed towards problems of natural catastrophes like floods and storms that are increasing due to global warming. The participants vowed to avert threats posed to the environment and to conserve energy.

The speakers also urged everyone to play their roles in making the environment pollution free.

The Earth Hour was observed by 180 countries, including Pakistan. The aim of observing the day is to conserve energy, limit the environmental changes, and increasing of land heat, which are all factors negatively impacting the natural resources as well as living beings. Through this one hour, we can disseminate the message of a better environment to the world.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1941120/1-wwf-observes-earth-hour/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 8TH TO APRIL 14TH 2019

‘WE NEED TO THINK HOW WE CAN REPLENISH THE PLANET’

Shazia Hasan Updated April 14, 2019

KARACHI: Awareness of issues regarding the earth and the environment were at the forefront of all the discussions that took place at the day-long Earth Day Symposium organised as a part of the Dhanani School of Science and Engineering’s ‘Public lecture series’ at the Habib University (HU) here on Saturday.

Environmental lawyer Ahmed Rafay Alam spoke on ‘Can our environmental law meet environmental challenges?’ “When I first started environmental law, I thought of how planting more trees could help the environment, but really, it is so much more than that,” he said.

He admitted that regulating and protecting the environment could be costly. “The pollution-based principle cannot be applied here due to it being too expensive,” he said.

Providing a bit of background about environmental law in Pakistan, he said that talk of environmental rights actually started in Pakistan with the Shehla Zia case, which raised two main questions — whether any government agency has a right to endanger the life of citizens by its actions without the latter’s consent; and secondly, whether zoning laws vest rights in citizens which cannot be withdrawn or altered without the citizens’ consent.

Experts discuss how to curb impacts of pollution, climate change on earth

He also shared some important judicial decisions that have been taken in Pakistan regarding the environment such as the right to a clean and healthy environment, principles of sustainable development and precautionary principle, which came about as a result of the Shehla Zia case of 1994, the right to clean drinking water due to the Salt Miner’s case also of 1994, duty cast on state institutions as a result of the case brought up by the Pakistan Chest Foundation in 1997 for showing cigarette advertisements on state television, the Doctrine of Public Trust (Lahore Canal Road Widening of 2012), Climate Change Justice (Asghar Leghari case of 2015) and the Right to Cultural Heritage (Orange Line) case of 2016.

With these decisions of the Supreme Court, Alam came to the environmental protection council and the various regulatory bodies of the government that have their own responsibilities. He also discussed how the 18th Amendment has prompted each province and the federal capital of the country to come up with their own environment protection acts.

Jawed Ali Khan, programme manager of UN-Habitat Pakistan spoke about the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to which Pakistan is also a signatory. “The institutional arrangement for moving forward towards achieving the goals have been completed. However, there is a need to further strengthen and streamline coordination between various levels of institutions from the local to national level,” he said.

“The formulation of strategies, particularly at the provincial level, needs to be developed keeping in view the National SDGs Framework as well as the respective challenges and opportunities in the provinces.”

Sharing his views, Tofiq Pasha, of Pasha Farms, said that people constantly talked about the environment without even realising what the earth and its environment [required] as they sit in air-conditioned rooms. “But we are all part and parcel of the environment. We are a tiny speck on this Mother Earth, which also breathes. Her lungs are the trees. Just like we have blood flowing through our veins, water is like blood for Mother Earth,” he said, adding that one must be blind to not be able to see the environment issues being faced by Pakistan.

“This land of ours, this environment in which we live and breathe is so sick. It is time that we woke up and opened our eyes to look around us and take notice of what is happening here. Each and every one of us has a negative impact on the environment so we need to think how we can replenish the planet. Act and find new and innovative ways to heal Mother Earth,” he said.

Urban planner and teacher Farhan Anwar talked about linking climate change to urban planning. “In the coming years, more than 75 per cent of the global population will be living in urban cities and most activities causing greenhouse gases are happening in the cities,” he said.

“When we talk about urban mobility and transportation, we are thinking of getting people from ‘Point A’ to ‘Point B’. But it involves so much more. You need to think about urban mobility in sustainable terms and for sustainable cities,” he said while also explaining a bit about sustainable cities. “They are inclusive cities that are at ease with themselves unlike our cities, which are adding to our environmental problems,” he added.

He also said that there was no data generation taking place in our cities so the aspect of monitoring the things hurting the environment and at what lengths was also not there. “Still, we know that we are in trouble. We need to come up with a good vision for our cities,” he said.

Mohammad Islahuddin from Hubco Power Company Limited, meanwhile, said that their coal plants came about as a part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as more sustainable energy was needed for their projects. “Still, Hubco didn’t compromise with quality and has installed up-to-date, state of the art instruments and are using the best technology,” he said.

Dr Aqduz Afzal, a teacher of economics at HU, said that economic growth led to fossil fuel emissions. “We can cut back on economic growth,” he said. “But, in a country like ours, economic growth is required to create jobs.”

It was also pointed out that using dirty fuels such as coal added to the poor air quality here. “Air quality is a very serious issue in Pakistan. There is social cost of having poor air quality with so many people getting sick and even dying, which in turn leads to productivity issues,” he said.

“We have two solutions for this,” he said. “Implementing a carbon tax to see who is polluting the air and how and with what to tax them. And we would also have to move towards the Green New Deal, a proposed stimulus programme that aims to address climate change and economic inequality, to prevent further environmental degradation.”

Published in Dawn, April 14th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1475899/we-need-to-think-how-we-can-replenish-the-planet>

RAPIDLY DECREASING FORESTS BADLY AFFECTING ENVIRONMENT: SURI

RECORDER REPORT | APR 14TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

Deputy Speaker National Assembly Qasim Khan Suri has said that forests are decreasing rapidly in the country, which is badly affecting the environment. “We have to pay attention to tree plantation for better future of coming generations,” the deputy speaker further said while addressing a function organised in connection with “Islamabad Tree Tsunami 2019” drive on Saturday.

He said that a project for tree plantation launched by Prime Minister Imran Khan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remained successful and the international community appreciated it. He said that tree plantation is very necessary for better environment and beauty of the country.

The deputy speaker said that parliamentarians are taking part in tree plantation in their constituencies. He said that people should also start tree plantation in their areas.

Suri strongly condemned Quetta bomb blast in which 20 people were martyred. He said that such terrorist acts cannot lower the courage and determination of the nation against terrorism.

He said that steps are being taken under National Action Plan (NAP) to curb terrorism and extremism in the country. He said that the people of the country, especially of Balochistan, and law enforcement agencies have rendered great sacrifices in the war against terrorism.

He said that important projects have been started in Quetta including establishment of a hospital for cancer and heart diseases and National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), besides projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He said, “We are making efforts to provide maximum facilities of health, education and employment to the people of Balochistan.”

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190414464433/>

SURVEY FINDS INCREASE IN INDUS DOLPHIN POPULATION DESPITE MULTIPLE THREATS

Faiza Ilyas April 13, 2019

KARACHI: The Indus dolphin population assessment survey covering an area of 194km from Guddu Barrage to Sukkur Barrage concluded on Thursday with a total count of 1,419 specimens during the four-day expedition.

Initially planned for five days, the survey led by the Sindh wildlife department (SWD) and carried out by 22 experts, including officials of the irrigation department and two female zoologists, was conducted after a gap of seven years. The last survey had found the population of the endemic species to be 918 in year 2011.

“We are happy to find that the population of this rare and endangered species has increased despite facing multiple threats,” said Mir Akhtar Hussain Talpur, SWD field officer and the team leader while speaking to Dawn.

The assessment concluded prior to its scheduled time because “stable but hot weather conditions helped the team achieve its goal and survey the specific area in less time,” he explained.

“Thankfully, the expedition concluded without any mishap, though this time around we had two women with us. The journey beginning in the morning used to end at sunset and the team camped at night along the river’s banks,” he shared.

When asked why the team didn’t opt for staying at some safe place at night, Mr Talpur, who has been part of such surveys for 24 years, said that dolphin population surveys had always been carried out in this manner.

Describing her experience as “amazing”, Dr Zaibunnisa, an assistant professor at the Shah Abdul Latif University’s department of zoology, Khairpur, said the journey was not just a great learning opportunity, but also removed misconceptions about katcha areas often considered to be dangerous.

“Villagers gave us so much respect everywhere. I will encourage my students to opt for fieldwork and explore Sindh’s wildlife,” she said, adding that though females were not allowed by their families to go on such trips, her family had no problem with her decision of joining the team.

Responding to another question, she said that apart from other factors, water shortage was a major threat to the Indus dolphin population.

Komal Hingoro, an MPhil student of Sindh University’s zoology department, the other female team member, was also fortunate to have a supportive family.

“I have a passion for seeing wildlife and I feel that I am lucky to get this chance,” she said, explaining that she had applied for a job at the wildlife department which contacted her for the survey.

The survey concluded with a press conference in the afternoon at Dolphin Conservation Centre in Sukkur where the team was received by Minister for Forest and Wildlife Syed Nasir Hussain Shah and other officials and presented with bouquets.

Journalists were briefed about the threats the Indus dolphin faced and the objectives of the survey during which samples of water and vegetation along the river’s banks were also collected.

Published in Dawn, April 13th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1475698/survey-finds-increase-in-indus-dolphin-population-despite-multiple-threats>

WE BREATHE TOXIC AIR

RECORDER REPORT | APR 13TH, 2019 | EDITORIAL

Health brings more happiness than wealth. Wealth can buy external world and factors to supplement our desired life. But it does not create internal locus of control and intrinsic happiness that has to come from within. And, uninterrupted access to clean air is a critical determinant in this health versus wealth equation. Though over a billion South Asians have yet to smell real wealth they are already poor and very sick, essentially because they breathe polluted air. According to a report titled State of Global Air 2019, released by the US-based Health Effects Institute, in Pakistan in 2017, there were 128,000 deaths attributed to polluted air, with children being prime victims. Pakistan’s entire population lives in areas that exceed WHO’s air quality guidelines. Even when it is not the first time

disclosure about the poor quality of air we in Pakistan breathe still what this report says is stunning – all the more for our colossal failure to fight back this marauding menace. In fact, as a government and a people we spare no effort to promote air pollution. Only last month Pakistan, jubilantly, linked the first major coal-fired power station. Of course a debate how to improve quality of air does erupt at governmental and non-governmental platforms when winter smog takes over, paralyzing inter-city traffic in some parts of the country. But what follows is anybody's guess. The truth is that air pollution despite being so hurtful to national health doesn't receive the kind of attention and counter-action it duly warrants. India too is equally inefficient: twenty-two of the top 30 most polluted cities are in India. But we do know that China, a country that only recently topped the WHO list for deadly outdoor pollution, has aggressively moved against this calamity by strictly implementing emission regulations and adopting clean-energy technology. In fact, we as a people not only breathe toxic air we as a country also run the risk of growing dim on our international commitments under the SDG's specific environmental targets.

According to the State of Global Air 2019, 'just breathing air in our cities is equivalent to being a heavy smoker'. The question how to give up on this heavy-smoking addiction has no easy answer, but given national resolve and official mindset it is quite possible. The people need to be educated in pollution-free disposal of garbage, shun post-harvested stubble burning and discourage the use of kiln-baked bricks. Equally important is that the people keep an eye on elements that set forests on fire in areas otherwise inaccessible to government fire-fighters. However, much more is expected of the government – by ensuring that people get clean air and don't die of toxic pollution. We don't know if there is tangible follow-up on the pleadings made by the advocacy group Air Quality Asia to the parliamentarians last month. Pity, an action clearly the responsibility of national legislators was to be driven home by an NGO. The challenge of increasing growing air pollution is so massive that by now a lot of thinking and concrete action should have gone into it. Introduction of clean-energy technology in the industrial sector and smoke-free vehicles on roads are the two inescapably tasks already cut out for the government. The options to harness solar and wind powers are also there to be exploited. All of that should have been done long ago, but the second best time for accomplishing this task is right now. Singapore did it long ago by thinning out traffic on roads. China too didn't take long to control the particulate matter in air. It may take Pakistan many decades to catch up with the materially rich countries, but to become green and pollution-free is within its reach. What we need is consciousness of this problem and a committed mind to go after it.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190413464122/>

DO NOT WASTE NATURE'S 'CAPITAL': ATTENBOROUGH

AFP April 12, 2019

WASHINGTON: Overconsumption of the world's natural resources is unsustainably cutting into its ecological "capital," revered British naturalist David Attenborough warned on Thursday.

"Financial systems have a lot in common with natural world systems. Both are economies," Attenborough said during the spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

"If you deal with your investment... it's fine if you can take the profit, you take the investment, but you wouldn't be so silly as to eat into the capital. But that is what we're doing with the natural world all the time." The BAFTA winner and long-time presenter of BBC wildlife documentaries spoke with IMF chief Christine Lagarde.

He said human beings and their domesticated animals now accounted for 96 percent of the global mass of all mammals.

“We’ve eliminated the rest,” he said. “Seventy percent of all bird species have gone. We are in terrible, terrible trouble.” “I find it difficult to exaggerate the peril that we are in. We are in the process of a new fresh extinction which we know all about from geological time,” said Attenborough.

“This is the new extinction — and we’re halfway through it.” Early colonists in North America did not understand how their consumption of one species affected populations of others, he added.

Published in Dawn, April 12th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1475580/do-not-waste-natures-capital-attenborough>

PUNJAB TO TAKE STRICTER WILDLIFE PROTECTION MEASURES THROUGH A NEW DRAFT LAW

By Rizwan Asif Published: April 12, 2019

LAHORE: Owing to the ever-growing population in Punjab and the accompanying problems of urbanisation, wild animals and creatures in the province are being adversely affected. Problems like the overuse of fertilisers and chemicals for agricultural and industrial purposes, decline of trees in towns, the undue destruction of animals’ natural habitat and illegal hunting, among others, have worsened the situation.

In order to tackle the problems and save animals and other creatures from falling prey to extinction, the Punjab Wildlife Department has submitted a draft law to the government wherein it has recommended stricter punishments and fines against illegal hunting.

Taking note of several prevalent discrepancies and nepotism, the wildlife authorities have also proposed a drastic increase in reserve prices for the auction of surplus animals and birds in national parks, safari parks and zoos. According to sources, the United Arab Emirates has announced that it will give 18 lions and tigers, worth Rs100 million, as a gift to the wildlife department of Punjab for the purpose of breeding.

Within a few days, the ‘wild gift’ will reach Lahore in a special C-130 plane. It is learnt that the UAE will also bear the customs duty and CAA charges for the wild animals. With support from the UAE government, the wildlife department is also expected to kick-start a breeding programme in Cholistan’s area of Chankara. In return, the wildlife department has offered the allotment of a 25-acre land to the UAE in Murree as a breeding farm for falcons. Previously, the UAE had asked Pakistan to allot land for the purpose in Abbottabad.

Per a report prepared by the department, the depletion of the natural environment and general living conditions in Punjab has taken its toll on various species of animals and birds while illegal hunting over the years has also caused a remarkable decline in wildlife.

Considering the gravity of the situation, the wildlife department – through an amendment in section 21 of the Punjab Wildlife Act 2007 – has proposed that the period of maximum imprisonment for illegal hunting should be increased from two to five years, while the minimum imprisonment should be set at three years.

Akin to that, the department suggested the minimum fine to be increased to Rs50,000 from the previous Rs10,000, while the maximum penalty is proposed to be set at Rs100,000. In addition, hunters engaging in violations will have their weapon licenses suspended for a period of up to ten years. The department has also suggested an increase in punishments under section 16 of the Act.

Per the current rules, the minimum and the maximum periods of imprisonment are one and three years, respectively, which are proposed to be increased to three and seven years, respectively. Likewise, the minimum and the maximum fines which currently stand at Rs20,000 and Rs30,000 are proposed to be increased to Rs100,000 and Rs200,000.

Crimes that are not comprehensively covered under the current law may be punished with the maximum imprisonment of ten months and the maximum fine of Rs10,000. The amendment also proposes the increase of the imprisonment period to three months and the maximum fine to Rs50,000.

Sources also revealed that in the past, a few government officers allegedly misused their authorities by selling surplus animals and birds to their favourites on an individual basis. The current government – while restricting sales of surplus animals and birds on an individual basis – has decided to go for open auction with a marked increase in reserve prices, according to which a lion cub up to the age of four months will be initially priced at Rs500,000 instead of Rs100,000. Similarly, the reserve price for a male lion aged over a year will be increased from Rs150,000 to Rs1 million. On the other hand, a female lion of the same age, which was previously auctioned at a price of Rs150,000, will now be increased to Rs1.5 million.

The reserve price for a male tiger is proposed at Rs4.5 million while that of a female tiger will be set at Rs5 million. The black male deer, which is currently being auctioned at a reserve price of Rs40,000, will be set at Rs10,000, while the price for a female black deer will be increased from Rs60,000 to Rs200,000. Male Chankara, currently going at a reserve price of Rs100,000, will be set at Rs150,000.

Likewise, reserve prices of various wild birds have also been increased between 100 per cent and 300 per cent. The open auction will now start with the new reserve prices.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1948888/1-punjab-take-strict-wildlife-protection-measures-new-draft-law/>

28 HELD FOR ILLEGAL FOREST CUTTING IN DIAMER

The Newspaper's Correspondent April 11, 2019

GILGIT: The authorities arrested 28 persons allegedly involved in illegal forest cutting during a search operation in Diamer here on Tuesday.

According to forest officials, a raid on the people involved in illegal timber cutting was conducted in Khambari area of Tangir valley in Diamer. Backed by local police, the operation was led by DFO Mohammad Iftikhar.

They said that the raiding team arrested 28 persons involved in illegal forest cutting in the area.

The arrested persons were presented before a forest magistrate court.

The court sentenced 19 persons to three-month imprisonment under Forest Act, 1927. They were shifted to district jail in Diamer. However, nine were released for being underage.

According to a notification issued by forest department, the operation against the people involved in illegal forest cutting was completed successfully.

Range officer Roman Ghayas, other forest officials including Shah Jahangir, Ghulamullah, Sher Ayaz, conservator Ijlal Hussain and deputy commissioner were monitoring the operation.

Published in Dawn, April 11th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1475331/28-held-for-illegal-forest-cutting-in-diamer>

RAIN-RELATED INCIDENTS CLAIM 26 LIVES IN KP

RECORDER REPORT | APR 11TH, 2019 | PESHAWAR

At least six people, including a child, were killed, 26 injured in rain-related incidents in various areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In Peshawar, three persons were killed and 19 others injured due to thunder storm and torrential rains while three houses were damaged, said a report of Provincial Disaster Management Authority relating to recent torrential rains and thunder storm in the province issued here on Wednesday.

In Swabi, at least two persons were killed and two injured

Similarly, the report said that a man was killed in Kohat while four people in Mardan district and one person in DI Kahn injured.

Six houses damaged in the heavy downpour, coupled with thunder and lightning that was lashed the province.

PDMA has issued directives to district administration to ensure assistance under relief fund in rain-hit areas of the province.

Meanwhile, the bad weather also ripped off the ceiling of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project stations – identified as Station No.26 in Tajabad.

However, Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) spokesperson Umair Afridi said no other BRT stations were affected despite the harsh weather.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190411463073/>

SEVEN DISTRICTS OF SINDH TO FACE MODERATE DROUGHT: MET OFFICE

RECORDER REPORT | APR 9TH, 2019 | KARACHI

The Met Office has warned that seven districts of Sindh will face a moderate drought, saying that no rainfall expected in the province. The drought plagued districts that include Badin, Hyderabad, Sajawal, Sanghar, Thatta, Umerkot and Tharparkar will continue to witness a dry spell with no rains is in sight, the Met said that “no rainfall is expected in the drought prone areas”. The northern half of the country is likely to see a normal weather conditions, it said.

Heat wave: Temperature in Karachi is expected to drop to maximum 35 degree Celsius in the next 48 hours namely on Tuesday and Wednesday with humidity ranging up to 80 percent. Weather in the city is likely to remain warm and humid, Met said.

In the next 24 hours: Mainly hot and dry weather is expected in the most parts of the country but very hot in South Punjab and Sindh. Isolated dust-thunderstorm-rain is expected in Malakand, Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Mardan, Bannu, D. I. Khan, Quetta, Zhob, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Sargodha and D. G. Khan Divisions, besides Islamabad and Kashmir

In the last 24 hours: Maximum temperature was recorded in Shaheed Benazirabad as 44 degrees Celsius, Mithi 43 and Padidan and Chhor 42, each. Bahawalpur received 10 mm of rainfall, Noorpurthal, Sahiwal and Narowal 9 mm, each, Chakwal 6 mm and Joharabad 5 mm, as hot weather gripped the most parts of the country with a light rainfall in different parts.

“Continental air is prevailing over most parts of the country. A fresh westerly wave is likely to affect western & upper parts of the country tomorrow [Tuesday],” according to the Met Office.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190409462496/>

OFF-BEAT: IS COW DUNG THE ANSWER TO SINDH’S GAS WOES?

By Razzak Abro Published: April 9, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh Energy Department is going to introduce biogas plants in areas that still lack access to piped natural gas. The project will initially be launched in selected areas within a month.

Environmentalists have welcomed the government’s initiative, saying that it will ultimately save natural resources from rapid exhaustion. At the same time, they say, the alternative energy solutions cannot come into common use until the government is fully involved.

The Alternative Energy section of the Sindh’s Energy Department initially selected three districts of the province – Karachi, Larkana, and Shikarpur – for ‘pilot demonstrations’ of the biogas project. The biogas plants will be installed in areas where people have no access to natural gas and must use firewood for domestic heating and cooking.

According to the plans, 150 biogas plants will be installed in the first stage. In Karachi, suburban areas that lack natural gas facilities will be picked. These areas are mostly in districts Malir, East and West. Farmers and people who have domestic cattle will be given priority.

Biogas is produced using the dung of animals, mostly cattle. The manure is not only a source of alternative energy but is also a good natural fertiliser for agricultural purposes. The manure used for generating biogas will still be usable as fertiliser.

Biogas plants were first introduced in Pakistan in 1974, but usage did not gain traction due to lack of government support, although some state bodies have worked on them.

One such body is the Pakistan Council for Renewable Energy Technologies (PCRET). According to a PCRET report, around 4,000 biogas plants have been installed in the country since its introduction.

According to environmentalists, the expedited installation of biogas plants is necessary in rural areas to save our climate from rapid destruction.

Most of the rural population burns wood for cooking and heating, which they chop from trees in nearby forests. This has left a destructive impact on our climate as forests are rapidly vanishing.

Besides the government, several non-governmental organisations are also involved in installing biogas plants in rural areas of the country, including the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

Altaf Shaikh, the conservation manager at WWF's Sindh office, told The Express Tribune that his organisation has installed biogas plants in Thatta and Sanghar districts. He said that the government needs to promote alternative energy sources. According to him, most of the population living in rural Sindh use firewood for their domestic needs. "Different non-government organisations have been working on alternative energy for many years, but it is not enough for the conservation of the environment." For this, he added, the government's role is very much important.

He said that the WWF has also installed biogas plants near Keenjhar Lake, which are functional and facilitating local residents. "But it is a small contribution," he said, adding that the government can spread this technology using its resources.

WWF spokesperson Asif Sandilo said that biogas is an alternative energy source and its increased use will reduce pressure on natural resources. The merciless cutting of trees has wreaked havoc on our environment and it should be stopped immediately, he said. He said the introduction of biogas in rural areas is not only environment-friendly but also better for women. Women in rural areas do most of the firewood collection and cooking. The smoke from burning wood and leaves has a severe impact on their health, especially their eyes and lungs. Sandilo said most common citizens are willing to adopt biogas as an alternative energy source, but they cannot afford it. For this, he suggested, the government can come forward with subsidies that make biogas plants more affordable.

Published in The Express Tribune, April 9th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1946335/1-off-beat-cow-dung-answer-sindhs-gas-woes/>

CHILDREN AND AIR POLLUTION

BR Research April 8, 2019

Look no further than South Asia for a region that will have its children's' life shortened the most due to air pollution. The new report, State of Global Air, 2019 has daunting revelations that should sound alarm bells in Pakistan, a key country in the region.

The annual release has explored new dimension this time, gauging the effects of air pollution on mortality rates. The 2019 State of Global Air features an analysis of how much air pollution reduces life expectancy in countries around the world; and South Asia is the most effected primarily because of India. However, the situation in Pakistan is escalating adversely every year as well as PM2.5 levels keep rising in rural as well as urban centres.

The report highlights that the top five countries with the highest mortality rate due to air pollution belonged mostly South Asia. These countries include India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Bangladesh, while China from South East Asia tops the damage. Moreover, it goes on to show that air pollution is

the fifth leading cause of premature death across the globe – leading to more deaths than those caused by malaria, road accidents, malnutrition or alcohol abuse.

How does air pollution reduce life expectancy? It leads to poorer health with respiratory diseases and many more. The study shows that air pollution accounts for 41 percent of global deaths from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), 20 percent of deaths from type 2 diabetes, 19 percent deaths from lung cancer, 16 and 11 percent from ischemic heart disease, and stroke, respectively. Besides, it also contributes to communicable disease like respiratory infections.

Current levels of air pollution have reduced life expectancy by 20 months on average worldwide, which means a child born today will die 1 year 8 months earlier than in the absence of air pollution.

Data for Pakistan shows that the country's entire population has remained exposed to PM2.5 levels above the threshold of 35µg/m³ since 1990, which is why the mortality rates are high for children. If the three categories of pollution highlighted in the report – ambient PM2.5, ozone and household pollution are clubbed together, the cocktail has resulted in 128000 deaths in the country, which is among the top ten countries with the highest mortality burden in 2017.

The stats are big and scary, what's being done at the policy level is peanuts in comparison. And tackling the issue might remain low on the priority ladder for those at the helm who have the excuse of much bigger issues at hand. But let us remind them that life expectancy is an important measure of the health of a society.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/04/08/486792/children-and-air-pollution/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 15TH TO APRIL 21ST 2019

RS10BN SOUGHT FROM CENTRE FOR FLOOD-HIT PEOPLE, SAYS LANGOVE

Ali Jan Mangi April 21, 2019

DERA MURAD JAMALI: Baloch-istan Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langove has said that Rs10 billion has been requested from the federal government for the rehabilitation of people affected by recent rains and flood.

Talking to reporters on Saturday, Mr Langove said 11 people had lost their lives in the floods, which had caused heavy losses in the province.

Earlier, Mr Langove along with Provincial Minister for Labour and Manpower Sarfaraz Khan Domki visited flood-affected areas of Sibi, Lehri and Kachhi.

They carried out an aerial survey of the area by helicopter and observed that standing crops of wheat and vegetables were badly damaged. Hundreds of houses were destroyed and thousands of people rendered homeless, they said.

Adviser to the Chief Minister on Education Mohammad Khan Lehri, officials of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) and the district management accompanied the ministers.

The PDMA provided relief goods and other items to flood-affected people.

Mr Langove said that Prime Minister Imran Khan was expected to announce a package of Rs10bn for rehabilitation of flood-affected people.

A final and detailed report will be submitted to Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani.

On the basis of that report flood affected areas will be declared disaster-hit.

Nasirabad Deputy Commissioner Zafar Baloch informed the ministers that rescue and rehabilitation work was in process in affected areas. Demand for food items had already been sent to the PDMA. He said the people trapped in the district had been rescued.

A survey to assess agriculture and land losses will be initiated soon. The district administration has been taking measures to provide quick relief to the people.

Published in Dawn, April 21st, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1477464/rs10bn-sought-from-centre-for-flood-hit-people-says-langove>

ENVIRONMENT: HOW PLASTIC IS KILLING US

Afia Mansoor April 21, 2019

When Leo Hendrik Baekeland invented the first fully synthetic plastic in 1907, he probably didn't realise the impact his invention was going to have on the planet and its inhabitants. Plastic has changed the way we live, buy and consume.

Plastic is unavoidable for us today. It is found in literally everything we use; our vehicles, electronic goods, furniture; even our clothes, food and dental sealants! However, the irony is that what was created for its strength and durability is now mostly preferred for its convenience and disposability.

In the span of a little more than 100 years, we have created and disposed enough synthetic plastic for it to have become a part of earth's layer itself and be called 'techno fossil' according to Dr Ceri Lewis from the University of Exeter. As per the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the world produces around 450 million tonnes of plastic every year; 40 percent of which is disposed of after single use. According to the National Geographic Society, 18 billion pounds of plastic waste flows into the ocean every year, not counting nano particles and micro beads. In fact, we are soon approaching a time where plastic will outnumber marine life itself. A staggering 180 million tonnes of plastic trash comes from single-use items such as shopping bags, straws, cutlery, bottles and packaging.

Washed up on our beaches and ever present in rubbish heaps scattered across our urban and rural spaces is plastic. But the undegradable monster is also killing our marine life and entering our bodies

Plastic takes anywhere from 100 to 1,000 years to break down into the earth's structure and yet we continue to consume recklessly with complete disregard to our planet's eco balance. Of all the plastic produced between 1950 and 2015, only nine percent has been recycled! The rest is being burned, releasing toxic fumes as a result, or dumped in the oceans or in landfills, and comes back to us like bad karma.

Pakistan is not among the top plastic waste-producing countries such as China, Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam. However, owing to rapid urbanisation, a booming population and an increase in consumerism, we are dumping an alarming amount of plastic waste into our land and rivers leading to the Arabian Sea. A conservative estimate by the Environmental Protection Agency suggests that around 55 billion disposable plastic bags are used by Pakistanis in a year. This does not account for single-use cutlery, crockery and packaging material.

Owing to the increasing amounts of this almost-immortal debris, we've ended up choking our waterways, contaminating ecological habitats and killing precious marine life. What makes the situation even more precarious is that, since plastic takes hundreds of years to biodegrade, it keeps breaking down into smaller particles which we call microplastics. This microplastic is now entering our bodies through the water, food and even the salt we consume.

I am surprised at the lack of data and research on the consumption and wastage patterns of single-use plastic in Pakistan. People like Bushra Ahmed Rizvi, a senior volunteer at the Citizens for a Cleaner Karachi, have been engaged in awareness and advocacy for some years now. She feels that the lack of data for serious research and policy planning shows that the issue is not even on the radar of the government and circles concerned.

Ironically, this area has not been a priority for either the governments or the people at large. However, there seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel.

Junaid Rajput, Deputy Director Environment, Climate Change and Coastal Development Department, Sindh is passionate about environmental literacy. He has a degree in Environmental Governance from Germany and is highly accessible to discuss his department's work on plastic pollution.

Replying to a query about the key goals and actions of the government to reduce plastic pollution by 2025 and beyond, he says, "As far as the Sindh government is concerned, our scope is beyond plastic pollution and includes ensuring that climate action is mainstreamed in development planning, particularly for the economically and socially vulnerable sectors of the economy — including consumer plastic industry — to steer Sindh towards economic growth and climate compatible development. As an action step, the Sindh government has recently introduced a phase-wise ban against non-biodegradable polythene plastic bags, initially in Sukkur district and then the rest of Sindh. Besides, further encouragement of the industry to switch to oxo-biodegradable plastic for all commercial purposes is our focus right now."

However, there are hurdles to this. "There is reluctance from manufacturers for procurement of degradable additives due to increase in cost of manufacturing," Junaid reveals. "Our department, however, is in contact with the manufacturers and industry representatives who are reluctant to change but there are fair chances that some agreement will be reached later on to make the industry sustainable in line with environment-friendly policy and practices. We have assured them of full support through the transition towards degradable packaging."

He further adds, "There are difficulties in sampling and monitoring, in addition to low will of the concerned administration to the enforcement of law."

However, the key area that requires attention and a broad-based response is the difficulty Sindh faces due to transportation from other provinces and the shifting of manufacturing sector to other provinces. Junaid feels that this needs to be addressed urgently at the federal level with the promulgation of step-wise ban with inter-provincial coordination.

An example of this is the packaged beverage bottles coming from industrial zones in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) to Sindh. Since the ban has not been enforced in Punjab and KP, plastic packaging continues unabated and still affects the areas which have promulgated the ban.

Though only 40 at the moment, the number of countries banning single-use plastics, especially plastic bags, is increasing rapidly. However, we, in Pakistan, are going too slow on this.

Bushra Rizvi describes how an effective ban of plastic bags in Rwanda since 2008 has helped the country become cleaner, attract more tourists, save up on petrodollars and reduce seasonal diseases such as dengue fever. She says, “If a poor country like Rwanda can do it, why can’t we?”

Some of the best practices from around the world — be it developed countries such as the UK or developing ones such as Bangladesh and Rwanda — have been due to stringent policies by the government. For instance, in the UK last year, heavy taxes were imposed on plastic packaging with less than 30 percent recyclable polymers. In Rwanda, carrying a plastic bag can land you in jail with a heavy fine. People coming into Rwanda have to leave all plastic bags at the immigration.

A ban on single-use plastics in Pakistan requires concerted and consistent government effort. The government needs to draft a clear stance on making alternatives available for the people associated with single-use plastic manufacturing and retail.

An estimated 300,000 people are employed in this sector in Sindh, including Karachi, while the national figure is beyond one million. The government would need to look at the numbers before implementing the ban to avoid economic losses and grievances.

The monitoring and implementation of bans already in place also needs to be effective. The governments of KP and Sindh have promulgated the plastic bag ban since some time but the implementation and monitoring are completely missing. The only exception is the cantonment areas of all major cities, where the plastic bag ban is being implemented effectively.

An overlooked issue is the sale of plastic bags according to product weight rather than quantity. In the UK, each plastic bag is taxed at five pence by the government and plans are to take it up to 10 pence per bag, whereas in Pakistan, owing to cheap raw materials, plastic bags are not only cheap but also abundantly available to retailers in packaging according to weight.

The Fast Moving Consumer Good Companies (FMCGs) are a major source of plastic waste creation with beverage and snack manufacturers topping the list. It is time that these giants step in to take the responsibility of curbing the enormous trash they’re producing for the planet. Among the biggest single-use plastic polluters according to the Greenpeace are food and beverage giants. Owing to increased environmental activism internationally, they have been forced to pledge recyclable, reusable or biodegradable packaging by 2030.

A similar activism is needed in Pakistan to get companies like these to reduce their plastic waste with innovative techniques, such as the milk-man’s model being planned abroad where companies will refill product containers such as shampoos and detergents rather than produce more plastic packaging. There needs to be a bigger commitment and action from them than corporate social activities which, in fact, drive up sales.

Hina Faheem Siddiqui, a physicist with a keen interest in environment, quotes how setting up eco-industrial estates, which primarily rely on a loop of RRR (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), can help to reduce plastic waste. These industrial set-ups, such as those in the Scandinavian countries as well as

in Canada, South Korea and even India, are planned in a way to use the waste of one industry to power the other — for instance, using single-use plastic as fodder for the pharmaceutical industry after putting it through treatment corrective procedures.

With CPEC and other foreign investment expected, this is the perfect time for the government to plan eco-industrial parks because it makes good business sense in addition to helping the environment.

With the present government's priority towards the environment, one hopes that effective policy and action is taken soon. But we're running out of time as the environmental clock ticks fast.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1477373/environment-how-plastic-is-killing-us>

PAKISTAN ASKED TO TURN FLOODS INTO OPPORTUNITIES

By Zafar Bhutta Published: April 21, 2019

ISLAMABAD: As torrential rains lash different parts of the country, the Federal Flood Commission has issued warnings of flash floods.

The ongoing harsh weather may pose a serious threat to the wheat crop, which can impact food security in the country.

The Senate Standing Committee on Water Resources was informed by meeting participants that the country had received heavy snowfall during the winter season, therefore, it was expected that it would face flash floods in summer due to the melting of glaciers.

According to the water resources secretary, the country had suffered losses of \$19 billion on account of heavy floods and rains in the past year. He warned that the country would face further loss if an amount of Rs15 billion was not allocated for a flood protection project.

As per latest reports, heavy rains and floods have damaged wheat, gram and maize crops in Punjab. The Punjab Agriculture Department is working to gauge the impact and come up with an estimate of losses in all rain-hit areas.

The Ministry of National Food Security and Research, however, said in a recent statement that there was no likelihood of food insecurity or emergency situation.

While reviewing the performance of Rabi crops (2018-19), the Federal Committee on Agriculture noted that wheat production was estimated as on April 7, 2019 at 25.16 million tons from an area of 8.83 million hectares. This, coupled with last year's leftover stock, means that wheat availability is well above the total national requirement.

Pakistan has witnessed devastating floods in the past, with the one in 2010 being the worst ever in the country's history. The flood caused over 1,985 deaths and affected 20 million people. It destroyed 17,553 villages and impacted around 160,000 sq km of land area. During the previous government of PML-N, the Council of Common Interests (CCI) approved the proposed National Flood Protection Plan-IV (2015-25) and decided that the financing for NFPP-IV would be made by the federal and provincial governments at a ratio of 50:50.

Provinces will decide their respective share of contribution amongst themselves and report to the federal government. It was decided to spend Rs332.2 billion in different phases, however, finances were a major issue in implementing the plan.

Despite a series of floods, there seems to be no flood mitigation policy in place. In 2012, the Ramsar Advisory Mission (RAM), a group of experts under the Ramsar International Convention on Wetlands, visited Pakistan and submitted a report. They suggested a cost-effective strategy to use flood water wisely and identify wetlands for restoration. The experts identified some sites like the Lal Suhanra National Park as well as those along Guddu and Sukkur Barrages in Sindh.

They also suggested that Pakistan should study China's Yangtze River Basin management plan developed after massive floods in 1998 that killed more than 4,000 people and resulted in an economic loss of \$25 billion.

The Chinese government decided to reclaim floodplains and restore wetlands. It also decided to set up a single river water management authority.

Pakistan should also follow the Chinese model to turn floods into an opportunity. Pakistan also lacks water storages and needs more dams to store water in times of floods to save human lives and crops.

Published in The Express Tribune, April 21st, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1955431/2-pakistan-asked-turn-floods-opportunities/>

REQUESTS TO INCREASE MARKHOR'S TROPHY HUNTING PERMITS DECLINED

Jamal Shahid Updated April 20, 2019

ISLAMABAD: A parliamentary body on Friday was informed that despite pressure to increase the number of permits to trophy hunt Markhor the requests have been declined.

“The numbers of Markhor in the wild are possibly on the rise. However, unless there is a fresh census to ascertain their numbers, permits will not be increased. Surveys in the past are too old and incorrect,” an official from the Ministry of Climate Change told the National Assembly Standing Committee on Climate Change.

The committee at a meeting took up several issues, including the case of endangered species and measures taken by the ministry to protect them.

Unless there is a fresh survey to ascertain population of wild goats, more permits will not be granted, NA body told

The meeting was informed that the request to increase permits from 12 to 16 every year came mostly from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Licences are granted for species of Markhor found across Astore, Suleman and Kashmir regions. The members were informed that one permit could fetch more than \$80,000 to \$100,000 plus at auctions. The highest price at a recent auction was \$110,000.

“No standardised procedure was followed in the last survey conducted in 2017-18. Most surveys, including by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and other non-government organisations (NGOs), are not reliable,” the official explained.

Responding to questions about conservation, the official said there was only one successful model worldwide to protect endangered species, which was trophy hunting. According to a formula approved by the cabinet, 80 per cent of the money generated from auctions went to community development, conservation of forests, vocational training, education and healthcare and protection of the endangered species from illegal hunting and poaching.

The meeting was told that Markhor was enlisted in appendix 1 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species as a threatened animal.

“There is pressure to enlist Markhor in Appendix 2 so that its hunting permits can be increased and the price of the licence to hunt it would reduce to roughly \$25,000. But that will have to wait until the government is satisfied that the Markhor population is growing,” he said.

The committee also discussed the issue of banning plastic bags in the country. Chairperson Munaza Hassan of the PTI prohibited the use of documents for members in an effort to save trees.

The decision was taken after PPP MNA Shazia Marri objected literature printed for members on several copies.

“In this modern age, why is paper being used when information can be shared through emails,” Ms Marri complained. She asserted that the same should be introduced in the Senate and the National Assembly.

Taking note, the chairperson directed the ministry to share all information with members through emails immediately.

Welcoming the direction, Secretary Climate Change Hassan Nasir Jamy informed the members that plastic water bottles had already been banned in the ministry.

He also informed the meeting that planning was underway to completely ban plastic bags in the federal capital from Aug 14.

Manufacturers of plastic bags and other items have would use this time to switch to environment-friendly alternatives such as paper and bags made from cloth. He said the ministry was particularly banning oxy-biodegradable which was as harmful as an ordinary plastic bag.

Published in Dawn, April 20th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1477239/requests-to-increase-markhors-trophy-hunting-permits-declined>

ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION A THREAT TO COASTAL AREA OF KARACHI: PARLIAMENTARY PANEL INFORMED

RECORDER REPORT | APR 18TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

A parliamentary panel was informed on Wednesday that environmental pollution around the coastal area of Karachi is a serious threat to the area’s biodiversity.

In a briefing to the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Maritime Affairs, Minister of Maritime Affairs Syed Ali Haider Zaidi said that that 5.5 million tonnes of sewage containing inorganic and organic contaminants is thrown into the sea. Recently due to an accident, 40 tonnes of sludge was dumped into the sea and an inquiry is being conducted. He further said that Sindh government in collaboration with KPT and Port Qasim authorities can play an important role in resolving the issues of waste dumping and the uplift of economy of Karachi and Sindh. Boards of KPT and Port Qasim have been completed and made functional, he said.

The meeting of the committee was held here at Parliament House under the chairmanship of Mir Amer Ali Khan Magsi. The committee was further informed that Gwadar is going to be the commercial hub in future but issues such as connectivity through rail and supply of water and energy need to be resolved.

The committee was also informed that fishermen have also been taken care of by bringing changes in the East Bay Expressway in Gwadar. Brotherly countries Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar have shown interest in setting oil refinery and related industry in Gwadar. The committee also asked the ministry to direct KPT to resolve the issue of traffic jam under Karimabad Flyover, Karachi, by seeking help from the government of Sindh.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190418465502/>

SIX MORE DIE AS RAINS CONTINUE ACROSS COUNTRY

Saleem Shahid | Intikhab Hanif Updated April 17, 2019

QUETTA/LAHORE: Six more people were killed following heavy rains for the second consecutive day in Balochistan and Punjab, according to government officials.

The four persons who died in Balochistan on Tuesday in weather-related incidents happened to be children. Two of them lived in Bhaag where the roof of their mud house collapsed on them, taking their lives and injuring their parents. The other two children were from Qila Abdullah district who also passed away because the roof of their mud house buckled under the strain of the torrential downpour.

Many towns and villages were cut off from Quetta and other district headquarters in Balochistan as link roads were washed away. The death toll in the province has reached 14 in two days and 25 people have been injured.

The PDMA declared a state of emergency and Section 144 (banning of assembly of four or more people) was imposed in Balochistan to avoid losses of human lives at picnic spots.

“We have declared emergency in all divisional headquarters following predicted downpours across the province,” said PDMA director general Imran Zarkoon.

The situation is so dire that according to reports, many villages in Sibi and Duki have disappeared after flash floods hit the area and agricultural farms have been swept away.

Three people who were injured in Shadbagh, Lahore, after the wall of a wedding hall fell on them on Monday night, died on Tuesday at a local hospital.

In Toba Tek Singh, a villager died and his two female relatives injured when the roof of a roadside tea stall fell on them on Tuesday near the River Ravi's Head Sidhnai bridge located on Faisalabad-Multan road in Pir Mahal.

As many as 11 people, including women and children, were seriously injured as the roof of a house collapsed on them in Bahawalpur where crops over vast areas of land were damaged, according to Dawn correspondent.

Farmers in different parts of central and southern Punjab complained of damage to their wheat crop. Hailstorms particularly affected wheat crop in Khanewal, Larki, Shujaabad Basti Malook and Hasilpur. Farmers in Faisalabad and Jhang areas also complained of damage to their wheat crop because of hail and windstorms.

Agriculture Director Extension Dr Anjum Buttar said the unusual weather had affected wheat crop but the damage was not alarming. "We have started assessing condition of the wheat crop which has been affected due to hailstorms in limited areas like in Jhang, Faisalabad and Multan regions," he said.

He said one could not say that the levelled crop had been totally damaged. "The grain could remain safe even if the crop is levelled. The exact situation would be known after a few days," he said. Dr Anjum advised farmers to protect their crop while harvesting it.

Reports were pouring in from different parts of the country indicated heavy rains that were coupled with severe wind and hail storms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

According to the National Disaster Management Authority the past three-day spell of freak rains has claimed 39 lives across the country, injuring 135 people and damaging 80 houses.

Meanwhile, the Met department has forecast more rain in most parts of the country for Tuesday night and Wednesday. Hailstorm is also expected at few places during the period. Isolated heavy falls are expected in Malakand, Hazara divisions and Kashmir.

Published in Dawn, April 17th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1476619/six-more-die-as-rains-continue-across-country>

NAVY LAUNCHES MANGROVES PLANTATION CAMPAIGN

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated April 16, 2019

KARACHI: The Pakistan Navy on Monday launched its 'Mangroves Plantation Campaign 2019' by planting saplings at the Bin Qasim port.

Commander Coast Vice Admiral Fayyaz Gillani, chief guest on the occasion, inaugurated the campaign, which entails an effort to plant two million mangroves in the coastal areas of Sindh and Balochistan in line with the government's vision of a 'Clean and Green Pakistan'.

During his address, Vice Admiral Fayyaz Gillani highlighted that the campaign offered a tremendous opportunity to strengthen the people's unique relationship with nature. "Mangroves have been instrumental in fending off adverse effects of coastal hazards spurred by climatic changes," he said.

“As a national responsibility for contribution towards a healthy environment and being a major stakeholder for the protection of the maritime domain, Pakistan Navy, which has already planted four million mangroves in the coastal belt of Sindh and Balochistan in the last three years, has embarked upon a major initiative to preserve and revive mangrove forests all along the coastal belt,” he added.

Vice Admiral Gillani said that deforestation of mangroves had not only distorted the biodiversity of Pakistan’s coastal areas but it had also adversely affected the livelihoods of coastal communities. “It is, therefore, imperative to forestall deforestation through integrated institutionalised measures to ensure sustainable development,” he said.

He underscored that the plantation campaign was being launched with the expectation that it would not only increase the mangroves forest cover but also play a key role in creating awareness among the masses about the importance of preservation and revival of mangroves.

The Commander Coast also urged the federal and provincial departments, industrial community and individuals to join hands with Pakistan Navy in this noble cause of protecting marine ecology. He said that the whole nation should stand together in its resolve to make the ‘Mangroves Plantation Campaign’ a success and preserve this precious gift of nature for sustainable development of our today and especially for future generations.

Country Representative of International Union for Conservation of Nature Mahmood Akhtar Cheema and a large number of senior military and civil officials, including World Wildlife Fund, Fisher Folk Society and officials from the forest department, also attended the ceremony.

Published in Dawn, April 16th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1476381/navy-launches-mangroves-plantation-campaign>

USE OF PLASTIC BAGS BANNED IN HUNZA

A Correspondent Updated April 16, 2019

GILGIT: The use of plastic shopping bags has been banned in Hunza in order to prevent environmental degradation.

According to a notice issued by Hunza district administration on Monday, Gilgit-Baltistan Environmental Protection Agency (GBEPA) and Hunza district administration decided to impose ban on use of plastic bags in the district.

The decision was taken in light of implications of plastic bags usage on environmental and human health, it said.

The notice warned shopkeepers and people dealing in plastic bags to end already existing stock of such bags till April 20, as after the date, manufacture, sale, purchase and their usage would be considered a crime, the notice said.

The district administration advised people and businesses community to use bags made from paper and clothing.

Meanwhile, the district administration has also started an awareness campaign in this regard by displaying notices at various points with the messages ‘say no to plastic bags, avoid use of plastic bags to save future coming generations’.

Meanwhile, GB chief secretary Mohammad Khurram Agha inaugurated Kharfaq Irrigation and Land Development (ILD) Project in Ganche district on Monday.

Published in Dawn, April 16th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1476430/use-of-plastic-bags-banned-in-hunza>

WINDSTORM CLAIMS FIVE LIVES IN KARACHI

MUHAMMAD SHAFI | Apr 16th, 2019 | KARACHI

At least five persons were killed and over 50 injured after an intense windstorm struck Karachi on Monday, prompting civic authorities to declare emergency to avoid any untoward situation. Also, winds caused massive harm to civic infrastructure with uprooting trees, and electricity poles causing traffic blockages at different city thoroughfares.

Make-shift rooftops of a number of houses in various parts of city also collapsed. The storm hit power infrastructure of K-Electric, with many areas including Malir, Kaemari, Korangi, and Liaqatabad, Landhi, Orangi Town, North Nazimabad etc experienced hours-long power outage.

Rescue sources said a girl was killed when the roof of a house in Haji Ibrahim Goth collapsed. Another child was killed near People's Chowrangi near Mazar-i-Quaid where a tree fell on her. Two people were injured in Landhi No-3 in a wall collapse. A cleric was injured in Fish Harbour where a make-shift roof of a mosque caved in. Incidents of wall and roof collapses were reported in Malir, Korangi, Lyari PECHS, and Surjani areas as well. The victims were moved to different hospitals.

As many as 39 people with different injuries were brought to Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) for medical assistance, the officials said.

A seminary located in Chakiwara collapsed. Five children received minor injuries as roof of their school located in Tipu Sultan Road collapsed. Three people were reportedly died in a traffic accident on Karachi-Quetta highway while several people got injured in different overnight traffic accidents.

Singer and programme host Fakhr-e-Alam took to twitter saying "Garden furniture in one of my neighbors' house flew like a projectile and crashed into his vehicles windscreen breaking it. Plz ensure there are no free moving objects around you." Five passenger coaches, a truck, and a police mobile also overturned due to strong winds.

Meanwhile, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah ordered all divisional commissioners to take care of the vulnerable residents of the city. He asked those who lived in sheds to be alert and cautious as the city experiences extreme weather. CM directed municipal authorities to take all necessary steps required to handle the situation and asked deputy commissioners to help them.

The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC)-run hospitals have also declared emergency to deal with any situation ahead of forecast of heavy rains and dust storm in the city. Mayor Waseem Akhtar has directed the municipal services, fire brigade, health and medical, parks and engineering department to remain alert and. He also directed the parks department to remove all fallen trees from main thoroughfares.

He also appealed to citizens to take all precautionary measures during present weather and avoid going out unnecessarily or standing under hoardings or beneath trees. The civic body has set up a desk

for redressal of complaints as well. Inspector General of Police Sindh Dr Kaleem Imam has also asked police to be ready to deal with possible rain emergency in the province, including Karachi.

Meanwhile, a KE spokesman said some localized faults emerged in some parts of Malir, Korangi, Shah Faisal, a few blocks in Gulistan-e-Johar and Gulshan-e-Iqbal, which were rectified by KE teams.

He said Power supply to strategic installations including key hospitals, KWSB's water pumping stations, and airport remained uninterrupted during this period. Obstructions to electricity infrastructure caused by trees uprooted by strong winds were also removed by on-ground teams. Power supply in the city remained at routine levels. However, despite the intensity of the storm, K-Electric's rapid response teams maintained vigilance as the city experienced strong winds along with light rain.

“During the windstorm, We urge public to stay away from broken wires, refrain from taking shelter under transformers or standing near electricity poles during rainy and windy weather to avoid accidents,” he said. The power utility also maintains close coordination with the National Disaster Management Authority, the Pakistan Meteorological Department and the city administration to extend effective support. KE also urges public to avoid using illegal means (kundas).

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190416464818/>

MINISTER WRITES TO PM'S ADVISER SEEKING ASSESSMENT OF ISLAMABAD'S AIR QUALITY

Ikram Junaidi Updated April 15, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The minister for national health services (NHS) has written to the prime minister's adviser on climate change seeking help with an assessment of Islamabad's air quality so necessary measures can be taken to protect the health of residents of the city.

NHS Minister Aamer Mehmood Kiani said in a letter to climate change adviser Malik Amin Aslam that “declining quality of air is the biggest environmental issue in Islamabad.”

“Particulate matter in smoke causes respiratory and cardiovascular diseases in the country. Urban air pollution in terms of particulate matter is estimated to cause around 22,000 premature deaths among adults and 700 deaths among young children annually. Indoor air pollution causes the deaths of more than 30,000 children per year across the country,” he added.

Says deteriorating air quality has significant impact on human health

Mr Kiani said global climate change and the deteriorating quality of urban air have a significant impact on human health. He said health effects caused by air pollution can include difficulty breathing, wheezing, coughing, asthma and aggravation of existing respiratory and cardiac conditions. The effects of poor air quality on human health are far-reaching but principally affect the respiratory and cardiovascular systems, he wrote.

Speaking to Dawn, he said international surveys have continuously shown that environmental pollution is rising across the country.

“We want to make Islamabad a model city, so other cities and provinces follow it. Apart from that we have decided to facilitate residents of the federal capital to remain healthy. We will also give them awareness so that they also play a role in keeping the city pollution-free,” he said.

In response to a question, Mr Kiani said some companies are being involved to hire physical exercise trainers as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) activity, who will be deputed in parks and walking tracks where they will assist people with exercise and inform them of how to remain healthy and avoid cardiovascular disease.

He said that four decades ago there were just a few slums in the capital, which have now increased significantly.

“Once the population of the federal capital was 400,000, but now it has reached to 2.2 million. One should understand that pollution increases with the increase in population. So there is need to take steps to reduce environmental pollution,” he said.

He said by next year “every deserving resident of the federal capital” will receive health cards so they can avail healthcare facilities.

According to the letter, a rapid assessment of particulate matter may be measured in various locations in the high industrial zones of I-9 and I-10 to address the situation.

Particulate matter in industries will be measured using Environmental Particulate Air Monitor-5000 (EPAM-5000), which is available with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The letter added: “EPAM-5000 is portable instrument best for measuring the indoor environmental and ambient air monitoring. We don’t have any available funding to cover the expenses [or to hire] the staff and this instrument from EPA. However, your kind support for this assessment project is required to help us in measurement of this PM level in different areas of Islamabad.”

The minister said in the letter that he wished to inform the prime minister of the health effects of industrial pollution in Islamabad and asked the adviser on climate change to “direct the EPA to extend their full support to the investigators the Health Services Academy, Islamabad.”

Published in Dawn, April 15th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1476110/minister-writes-to-pms-adviser-seeking-assessment-of-islamabads-air-quality>

CLUES EMERGE IN ‘MISSING’ OCEAN PLASTICS CONUNDRUM

RECORDER REPORT | Apr 15th, 2019 | VIENNA

It’s a puzzle that has perplexed scientists for years: humanity dumps millions of tonnes of plastics into the world’s oceans annually, yet only a tiny fraction remains visible on the surface. Now an international team of researchers believe they may be closer to determining where Earth’s “missing plastics” end up, using an unprecedented global effort to track and draw down one of the most polluting materials ever invented.

As images of plastic-clogged beaches and swirling gyres of detritus bobbing on the high seas are prompting governments and cities to curb their throwaway culture, a growing body of evidence suggests a deeper problem of plastic permeating all ocean depths. Of the between 4-12 million tonnes that enter the oceans each year, just 250 thousand tonnes are thought to stay at the surface. Overall, more than 99 percent of plastics dumped at sea over several decades are currently unaccounted for. As plastics degrade through erosion, UV light and microbial decay, their density changes, putting them at the mercy of ocean currents – and, once they get pulled lower in the water, much harder for experts to track.

“It’s quite difficult to decide where it all is because there are so many processes at work,” Alethea Mountford, from Newcastle University’s School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, told AFP.

“Even plastic at the surface can sink down and go back up again – it’s moving between different possible sinks in different areas of the ocean at any time.”

In a potential breakthrough, Mountford used a computer model of ocean currents for plastics of three different densities to project where most of the world’s fragments collect once they start to sink. The model showed significant build ups at depths varying thousands of metres in the Mediterranean Sea, Indian Ocean and the waters surrounding Southeast Asia. Much of the plastic ends up on the seabed – as researchers outlined earlier this year in a separate study that found microplastic fibres in the guts of tiny shrimp that live at the bottom of the Mariana Trench – the deepest place on Earth. While Mountford stressed that her research was preliminary, the results could help focus investigation on the ocean areas identified and enable better studies of the damage plastics cause to marine life.

Coastal collection Mountford’s work draws on that of Eric van Sebille, associate professor in Oceanography and Climate Change at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. He said that most plastic pollution research had traditionally focused on the fragments that stay on the surface – and with good reason. “We know the most about the garbage patches so it makes sense to focus on them and if you look at the impact the surface plastic probably does have the most because most organisms live there,” he told AFP. “But if you want to understand the complete problem then we need to get a deeper view.”

Van Sebille’s current research is based on the fact that plastic pollution is now so prolific that monitoring the waste fragments themselves can provide valuable insight into how oceans circulate. His hunch – which should be borne out as modelling gets more sophisticated – is that the vast majority of plastics dumped in the oceans wash back ashore. This would account for the huge disparity in the volume entering the oceans and the smaller amounts that can be seen today. “Plastic gets out of a river, it stays within the coastal zone for a while and it has the opportunity to wash back to shore and quite a lot of it might do that,” he said. Van Sebille added that while the problem of plastic pollution today may seem insurmountable, focusing clean up efforts in coastal areas could save much more widespread plastic contamination in the long-run.

“More and more we think that plastic spends a lot of time in that coastal zone so you don’t need to do that much clean up to get rid of 10 million tonnes,” he said.

Plastics found on glacier In a series of studies on plastic waste unveiled Tuesday at the European Geosciences Union in Vienna, one paper showed plastic contamination on the Forni Glacier, a vast body of frozen water high up the Italian Alps. A team of Italian experts found between 28-74 items per kilogramme of sediment analysed – meaning that the entire glacier is home to 131-162 million

plastic items. “From marine trenches to glaciers we have now found microplastics,” said Roberto Sergio Azzoni, from the University of Milan, who led the research.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190415464798/>

SSWMB TO WORK ON ‘SAFE’ DISPOSAL OF MEDICAL WASTE

By Our Correspondent Published: April 15, 2019

KARACHI: Geo-mapping of hospitals, clinics, laboratories, blood banks and other related institutions has been commenced in all districts across Sindh in order to gather data that will help the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) collect medical waste. This was informed in a meeting on Sunday presided by the SSWMB Managing Director Dr AD Sanjani, in which a delegation from the Sindh Health Care Commission (SHCC) gave a detailed report on the proper disposal of medical waste.

The SHCC representatives also informed that a strategy to adopt protective measures to prevent pollution and diseases resulting from medical waste from all hospitals, clinics and other institutions was being prepared, which would not only protect the staff and those associated with it from diseases but also prevent environmental pollution as the waste will be disposed of far away from the city.

In the first stage, they informed, work will be started from the larger hospitals of Sindh. The SSWMB staff will weigh the medical waste, assess its properties and then transport it to a facility located at the landfill site for destruction. They will be provided coloured bags so that the waste can be kept separate as per its nature and properties. Also, the staff will be provided gloves and other protective items.

The meeting was attended by SHCC representatives Dr Faiza Erum Bhutto and Dr Amir Hussain, SSWMB Secretary Nadir Khan, landfill site director Sohail Khan, Global Testing Service (GTS) Director Ali Raza and others.

Dr Sanjani, assuring his full cooperation, said that one part of the land fill site will be assigned for destroying the medical waste. He directed the relevant officers to present a report in this regard and to provide technical guidance to the staff.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1950678/1-sswmb-work-safe-disposal-medical-waste/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 22ND TO APRIL 28TH 2019

PLASTIC POLLUTION POSES DANGER TO MARINE LIFE

RECORDER REPORT | APR 28TH, 2019 | KARACHI

Experts on Saturday warned plastic pollution damaging to the fresh water and the oceans, saying that the unsolvable material poses threats to the rivers and marine life. They urged the society to deal with the issue seriously and step up efforts to scale back the threat with reducing spread of the plastic materials in all their shapes.

“Act now otherwise we will lose rich biodiversity in a very short span of time,” they said at the coastal cleanup drive that the WWF-Pakistan organized at the Hawks Bay, Sandpit and Sea View in collaboration with the Coca-Cola. Over 800 participants from academia, students, volunteers and concerned citizens joined the drive and collected a total of 140 bags of garbage in a radius six kilometers across the beach area.

Dr Babar Khan, Regional Head Sindh and Balochistan, WWF-Pakistan said that plastic pollution is adversely affecting marine turtles, sea birds and other diverse marine life. “Many of the creatures we love, such as whales, dolphins, birds and turtles, die because of plastic pollution,” he told the participants.

He also said that plastic consumption is growing that alarms the society to step up its efforts to help place a ban on its production and discourage its use. He emphasized that the citizens should contribute to the drive by making lifestyle changes like recycling more or drinking from reusable water bottles. “Such small acts can have bigger impact and can help conserve nature,” he said, adding that discouraging single-use plastics and promoting sustainable food consumption can help make a real difference.

Fahad Qadir, Director Public Affairs and Communications at Coca-Cola said: “To eradicate plastic pollution, Coca-Cola, earlier in 2018 pledged to recycle 100 percent of its plastic packaged bottles that would be achieved by 2030.” He said that the PET bottles are 100 percent recyclable.

“As a responsible corporate citizen, through beach cleanups and other volunteer activities, we want to sensitize our consumers for taking action now and protect our environment to create a Pakistan without Waste – a joint programme supported by Coca-Cola in partnership with WWF to tackle plastic pollution,” he added.

Farah Waheed, Coordinator Corporate Partnership and Fundraising at WWF-Pakistan said that untreated waste being discharged into Arabian Sea is destroying marine life and polluting the sea. She said that the Indus River, one of the 10 largest freshwater rivers in the world, is also becoming polluted from industrial and domestic waste and effluents.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190428467972/>

90PC TREES MISSING IN BILLION TREE TSUNAMI: MARRIYUM

Sabah April 28, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Saturday that Prime Minister Imran Khan claimed to have planted plant five billion trees whereas not even 100 million were planted. It must have been a slip of tongue, she added.

PML-N leader said PM misinformed about his Billion Tree Tsunami Programme as 90 percent of his billion trees are missing in the project. While reacting to the auditor’s report on Billion Tree Tsunami project PML-N spokesperson sarcastically asked if 5 billion trees are being planted on the same planet where he is constructing 5 million houses. She said the PM has brought only billion lies to the nation. It is a worrisome situation for the big claimers now.

A committee member who went to inspect the forestation of programme Akram Khan Durrani claimed that not even 100 million trees were planted as opposed to the much-bragged one billion figure. one billion figure. Marriyum expressed that the 23-year long drama of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader is unfolding in front of the nation. Thank you Imran Khan for not claiming that you made a faster than speed of light metro in Peshawar, she added. Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto said that big scale corruption has been carried out in the name of Billion Tree Tsunami Programme.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/464056-90pc-trees-missing-in-billion-tree-tsunami-marriyum>

ANTARCTIC PENGUINS SUFFER 'CATASTROPHIC' BREEDING FAILURE

AFP Updated April 26, 2019

PARIS: The second largest emperor penguin colony on Earth has suffered a "catastrophic" breeding failure after nearly all chicks born over three years died as their icy Antarctic habitat shrinks, researchers said on Thursday.

The British Antarctic Survey (BAS) used satellite imagery to study the behaviour of the Halley Bay colony in the Weddell Sea due south of Cape Hope, which normally sees up to 25,000 penguin pairs mate each year.

They found that in 2016, when abnormally warm and stormy weather broke up the sea-ice on which the penguins normally raise their young, almost all the chicks died.

This pattern was repeated in 2017 and 2018.

The BAS said the colony at Halley Bay has "all but disappeared".

"We have been tracking the population of this, and other colonies in the region, for the last decade using very high resolution satellite imagery," said BAS remote sensing specialist Peter Fretwell.

"We can estimate the population based on the known density of the groups to give reliable estimate of colony size. These images have clearly shown the catastrophic breeding failure at this site over the last three years," Fretwell added.

The team noted however that a nearby penguin colony at Dawson Lambton had "markedly increased in size", indicating that many of the Halley Bay birds had migrated to safer breeding conditions.

BAS penguin expert Phil Trathan said it was impossible to know for sure if the break up of sea-ice at Halley Bay was caused by climate change.

"But such a complete failure to breed successfully is unprecedented at this site," he said.

Emperors, the world's largest penguin species, came to global fame with a 2005 documentary, March of the Penguins, portraying their annual trek across the icy wastes, and the 2006 cartoon movie Happy Feet.

But their population, centred around Earth's extreme south, is set to decline up to 70 per cent by the end of the century as the planet continues to warm.

A study in 2015 recommended the birds be added to an international “Red List” of endangered species.

Published in Dawn, April 26th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1478496/antarctic-penguins-suffer-catastrophic-breeding-failure>

PROTECTING SPECIES, PROTECTING EARTH

By Nasir Ali Panhwar Published: April 26, 2019

On April 22, 1970, some 20 million people in the US took to the streets, parks, and auditoriums to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment in massive rallies. Since then Earth Day is observed on April 22, every year with a different theme. The theme for Earth Day 2019 was “Protecting our species”.

All around the world, human activity is leading to the destruction or rapid reduction of plant and animal populations. These activities have led to species becoming extinct and habitats to rapidly shrink. Biodiversity is a key measurement of the overall health and wellbeing of an ecosystem. Ecosystems with a higher biodiversity are also generally stronger and more resistant to disease than those with less variety of species. Unfortunately, biodiversity is decreasing faster than ever before.

All species are interconnected and valuable to the successful functioning of our ecosystems. While it may not seem like a single species going extinct will change much in the world, the consequences may ripple throughout the ecosystem affecting other species, including humans.

For example, bees and other pollinators carry pollen from one plant to another, allowing that plant to reproduce. If the population of bees is dramatically reduced due to pesticide use and habitat loss, there will not be as many pollinators for those plants to rely on.

This could then reduce the biodiversity of those plants, since they would not be able to reproduce at the same rate. Widespread biodiversity loss would cause detrimental ecological and economic impacts worldwide. If habitats and biodiversity continue to be threatened, it will have a disastrous impact on the capacity of the planet to sustain life, including human life.

Since the dawn of the human species, humans have relied on plants and animals for food. As the human population increases rapidly, depletion of natural habitat is occurring at even a faster pace. We have overfished our waters and hunted many species of animals to extinction.

Illegal hunting known as poaching and illegal trade of wildlife products is a major direct threat to the future of many of the world’s most threatened species. Habitat destruction is another major threat to species. A bulldozer pushing down trees is the iconic image of habitat destruction. Other ways people directly destroy habitat: filling in wetlands, dredging rivers, mowing fields, and cutting down trees.

Much of the remaining terrestrial wildlife habitat has been cut up into fragments by roads and development. Aquatic species’ habitats have been split up by dams and water diversions.

The loss and fragmentation of habitats also makes it difficult for migratory species to find places to rest and feed along their migration routes. Habitats can become so degraded they can no longer support native wildlife, as a result of pollution, invasive species and disruption of ecosystem processes, such as the changing intensity of fires in an ecosystem.

Recently, pesticide use has been recognised as another major cause of habitat degradation. Heavy pesticide use in agricultural areas can leave downstream habitats dangerous for some species, especially certain invertebrates and plants.

As climate change alters the Earth's temperature and weather patterns, it also impacts plant and animal life.

Human actions, such as spreading non-native species, have increasingly driven evolution. This is known as the global homogenisation of flora and fauna. Biotic homogenisation is an emerging, yet pervasive, threat in the ongoing biodiversity crisis. They have enormous value to humans, the other plants and animals in their ecosystems. Every species has a specific role in its ecosystem. If the population of one species declines, it will no longer be able to perform its role and others in the ecosystem will be harmed as well. But we still have the chance to make changes and embrace new ways of doing things. We can save the planet and its species and efforts to do so increase our overall well-being.

Published in The Express Tribune, April 26th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1959401/6-protecting-species-protecting-earth/>

1 MILLION SPECIES RISK EXTINCTION DUE TO HUMANS: DRAFT UN REPORT

AFP Updated April 24, 2019

PARIS: Up to one million species face extinction due to human influence, according to a draft UN report obtained by AFP that painstakingly catalogues how humanity has undermined the natural resources upon which its very survival depends.

The accelerating loss of clean air, drinkable water, CO₂-absorbing forests, pollinating insects, protein-rich fish and storm-blocking mangroves — to name but a few of the dwindling services rendered by Nature — poses no less of a threat than climate change, says the report, set to be unveiled on May 6.

Indeed, biodiversity loss and global warming are closely linked, according to the 44-page Summary for Policy Makers, which distills a 1,800-page UN assessment of scientific literature on the state of Nature.

Delegates from 130 nations meeting in Paris from April 29 will vet the executive summary of the report

Delegates from 130 nations meeting in Paris from April 29 will vet the executive summary line-by-line. Wording may change, but figures lifted from the underlying report cannot be altered.

“We need to recognise that climate change and loss of Nature are equally important, not just for the environment, but as development and economic issues as well,” Robert Watson, chair of the UN-mandated body that compiled the report, told AFP, without divulging its findings.

“The way we produce our food and energy is undermining the regulating services that we get from Nature,” he said, adding that only “transformative change” can stem the damage.

Deforestation and agriculture, including livestock production, account for about a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions, and have wreaked havoc on natural ecosystems as well.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) report warns of “an imminent rapid acceleration in the global rate of species extinction.”

The pace of loss “is already tens to hundreds of times higher than it has been, on average, over the last 10 million years,” it notes.

“Half-a-million to a million species are projected to be threatened with extinction, many within decades.” Many experts think a so-called “mass extinction event” — only the sixth in the last half-billion years — is already under way.

The most recent event saw the end of the Cretaceous period some 66 million years ago, when a 10-kilometre-wide asteroid strike wiped out most life forms.

Scientists estimate that Earth is today home to some eight million distinct species, a majority of them insects.

A quarter of catalogued animal and plant species are already being crowded, eaten or poisoned out of existence.

The drop in sheer numbers is even more dramatic, with wild mammal biomass — their collective weight — down by 82 per cent.

Humans and livestock account for more than 95 per cent of mammal biomass.

“If we’re going to have a sustainable planet that provides services to communities around the world, we need to change this trajectory in the next 10 years, just as we need to do that with climate,” noted WWF chief scientist Rebecca Shaw, formerly a member of the UN scientific bodies for both climate and biodiversity.

The direct causes of species loss, in order of importance, are shrinking habitat and land-use change, hunting for food or illicit trade in body parts, climate change, pollution, and alien species such as rats, mosquitoes and snakes that hitch rides on ships or planes, the report finds.

“There are also two big indirect drivers of biodiversity loss and climate change — the number of people in the world and their growing ability to consume,” said Watson.

Once seen as primarily a future threat to animal and plant life, the disruptive impact of global warming has accelerated.

Shifts in the distribution of species, for example, will likely double if average temperature go up a notch from 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) to 2C.

So far, the global thermometer has risen 1C compared with mid-19th century levels.

The 2015 Paris Agreement enjoins nations to cap the rise to “well below” 2C. But a landmark UN climate report in October said that would still be enough to boost the intensity and frequency of deadly heatwaves, droughts, floods and storms.

Published in Dawn, April 24th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1478046/1-million-species-risk-extinction-due-to-humans-draft-un-report>

FORMER MINISTER VOWS TO RESTORE FLOOD-HIT INFRASTRUCTURE

By Our Correspondent Published: April 24, 2019

BHAG / QILA ABDULLAH: The recent flash floods have wreaked havoc in Balochistan. Roads in most areas of Kachhi district have been swept away disrupting all communication links with main cities and causing immense difficulties for the people.

“We are aware of the troubles being faced by our people and are in contact with the relevant departments,” said former provincial minister Muhammad Asim Kurd Gelo in a statement issued on Tuesday. “The recent flash floods have caused a lot of destruction in the areas of Kachhi district. We cannot leave our affected brothers alone in this hour of need,” he said.

Gelo said they were in contact with the relevant departments for the restoration of the roads. “The infrastructure of most of the areas of the district has been badly damaged. There are many small towns from National Highway to big cities where communication has been cut off,” said the former minister, adding that they were trying their best to utilise all the resources at their disposal to address these challenges.

The communication system of Haji Sheher, Landse, Ghazi, Tok, Chandar, Gamo, Mesr Shahwani along with many other areas of Kachhi district has been disrupted. “We are in direct contact with the relevant department for the restoration of the communication facilities.

We are also in direct contact with them for the reconstruction of the roads so that in case of any emergency no trouble arises,” said the ex-minister. He said that it was the utmost responsibility of the government to protect its citizens.

“Power and chair are not as important as solving the problems of the people. I have spent my whole life working for the welfare of the people. My vision and aim in life are to see the people happy, developed and educated,” he added..

The flood affectees of Qilla Abdullah on Tuesday blocked the QuettaChaman highway in protest against non-acceptance of their demands by the government. They burnt tyres and chanted slogans against the National Highway Authority (NHA) and the government. Several cars and commuters could be seen stuck in the traffic jam on the highway.

The protesters said the government had not yet provided any sort of proper compensation nor roof over their heads after the flash floods destroyed their homes. They termed the treatment of the government towards them as “sheer injustice”. “The floods deprived us of shelter and the government gave us just one or two tents and thought its work was done,” said the protesters. “We are living without basic necessities of life.”

On the other hand, the NHA has not yet taken any measures to broaden the barrier responsible for protecting the city against floods due to which the danger that the city might be swept again still lurks.

A provincial government delegation comprising Assistant Commissioner Jahanzeb Sheikh, Tehsildar Darya Khan Kethran and SHO Ashraf Kakar held talks with the protesters. After being assured that their demands would be met, the protesters called off their protest. The protesters said that if their demands were not met they would block the highway once again for an unlimited time period.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1958012/1-minister-vows-restore-flood-hit-infrastructure/>

INDUSTRIALISTS SEEK GOVT SUPPORT FOR WASTE TREATMENT

By Our Staff Reporter | 4/23/2019 12:00:00 AM

KARACHI: Sharing their grievances at an Earth Day programme held on Monday, representatives of industries sought government support in setting up effluent treatment plants as, they said, majority of small and medium-size industrial units neither had the resources nor space to establish such facilities.

The event was organised by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) at the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (Kati) office.

Welcoming the guests, Mohammad Danish Khan representing Kati briefed the participants about the history of the association and its contribution to the economy.

Being the largest industrial association in the country, Kati represented around 4,500 industrial units, he said, adding that 35 percent of leather goods were routed from this area for export.

‘Presently, Kati is contributing [millions] to the national exchequer daily,’ he said, emphasising the need for collaboration for the cause of environment.

During the course of the pro-programme, a detailed update on the problems being faced by the industrial units in Korangi was given according to which small and medium-size units were unable to implement the directives of the Supreme Court-mandated water commission, requiring establishment of effluent treatment plants in their respective jurisdictions.

These units, it was claimed, did not have resources and sufficient space to set up such facilities.

There was also a call from industrialists that the government remove hurdles and make procedures easier so that business could grow. There was a specific reference to ‘official delays’ in granting environmental NOCs and it was suggested that some clauses of the Sindh Environmental Protection Act 2014 should be revisited through a committee comprising relevant stakeholders.

Masood Naqvi, former Kati chairman, spoke about the different aspects of environmental degradation and the constraints being faced by industrialists.

He underscored the need of a proper and centralised mechanism for garbage collection and its disposal. Former Kati chairman Gulzar Feroz urged Sepa to revisit the Sindh Environmental Quality Standards and make them ‘realistic and practical’.

Director General Sepa Naeem Mughal highlighted agency’s role and the environmental challenges being faced in the province.

‘This year’s Earth Day theme ‘Protect Our Species draws attention towards the rapid extinction of species which is directly linked to human activities,’ he said, emphasising that everyone had a role and responsibility towards the environment.

Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Coastal Development Nawabzada Taimur Talpur expressed the government’s commitment towards people’s welfare and environment.

‘The government is ready to address each and every genuine grievance but won’t tolerate violation of law,’ he said, while seconding the opinion that a close liaison between the government and industry was required.

The Sindh Solid Waste Management Board would be asked to provide an update on the status of garbage transfer stations, he said.

https://epaper.dawn.com/print-textview.php?StoryImage=23_04_2019_116_004

DROUGHT RESPONSE PLAN WILL BE APPROVED BY CABINET

MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN | APR 23RD, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

The reshuffled federal cabinet which is scheduled to meet on Tuesday (today) with Prime Minister, Imran Khan, in the chair will approve Drought Response Plan 2019 worth over \$ 96 million, sans federal government share, well-informed sources told Business Recorder. Current drought situation in Sindh and Balochistan has approximately affected 5 million people and livestock. The provincial governments have initiated relief operation, yet a significant number of families remain unattended. Therefore PDMA Sindh and Balochistan have requested NDMA for support. Accordingly, NDMA has separately moved a summary seeking approval of the Prime Minister for provision of ration bags for one month to the drought affected families worth Rs 4.25 billion.

In order to address the prevailing drought, NDMA in consultation with PDMA Sindh and Balochistan, UNOCHA and other donor agencies has finalised a joint coordinated response structure on January 22, 2019 and drought response plan 2019 was jointly prepared by NDMA and UNRC/HC.

The drought response plan 2019 worth \$ 96.3 million focuses on short, medium and long-term interventions for one year in pre-identified sectors, i.e, nutrition, health, food security and agriculture, education and women and child protection. UNOCHA had approved grant of \$ 10 million to facilitate the respective sectors in responding to the needs of the affected communities, with an additional \$ 1 million (and possibly more) to be allocated from the Pakistan Humanitarian Pooled Fund (PHPF) reserve.

The plan was earlier forwarded to Prime Minister Imran Khan for approval on February 28, 2019. The Prime Minister constituted a committee under the chairmanship of former Minister for Finance, Asad Umar to discuss the drought response plan 2019 and to deliberate upon the issue of prevailing drought in Sindh and Balochistan and submit its recommendations within one week for placement before the federal cabinet.

The committee which was notified on March 3, 2019 held its meeting on March 11, 2019 under the chairmanship of former finance minister. Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination and Deputy

Speaker National Assembly being public representatives of drought affected areas and Director General Provincial Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Balochistan also attended.

The committee recommended that the drought response plan 2019 prepared by NDMA may be approved without any funding from the federal government in the light of its restricted functions and role after 18th amendment as well as 9th NFC award which had transferred majority of resources to the provinces.

Other agenda items of the cabinet meeting are as follows: (i) ratification of the decisions taken by the ECC on April 8, 2019; (ii) ratification of decisions taken by the Cabinet Committee on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CCoCPAC); (iii) deputation of an officer against the post of Member (Finance), NHA; (iv) tax exemption in respect of projects funded by Saudi Fund for development grant; (v) presentation to the federal cabinet to revamp the existing education system of the country; (vi) procedural delays and flaws in mercy petitions; (vii) appointment of judicial members (BS-21) appellate tribunal inland revenues; (viii) repatriation of judge, banking court-1, Peshawar;(ix) case of former members of board of governors of Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF);(x) transfer of National Endowment Scholarship for Talent (Nest) from Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms;(xi) recommendations of the committee of the cabinet headed by Minister for Defence on compilation of price statistics and control of price hike;(xii) MoU between China International Development Cooperation Agency and Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms on implementation of the projects under Joint Working Group of CPEC on socio-economic development;(xiii) additional charge of the post of Chief Statistician, PBS;(xiv) report on implementation of cabinet decision regarding utilization of freight trains by government departments; and (xv) signing of the MoU for the membership of the Belt and Road Initiative tax administration cooperation mechanism.

Prime Minister Imran Khan is also expected to take the reshuffled cabinet on board with respect to his visit to Iran. He would also introduce Dr Hafeez Shaikh, the newly appointed advisor on finance to the cabinet colleagues and appreciate Asad Umar, who quit the cabinet after his removal as the finance minister.

The prime minister, will also make it clear on all cabinet colleagues that no minister or advisor is permanent and their continuation as the minister depends on their performance.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190423466515/>

NFEH CALLS FOR NATIONAL CHARTER AMONG CENTRE, PROVINCES TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENT

By Press Release Published: April 22, 2019

KARACHI : National Forum for Environment and Health (NFEH) has called upon the federal and provincial governments to adopt a national charter to safeguard the environment before it gets too late and the issue of environmental degradation becomes irreversible.

This was stated by the NFEH President Naeem Qureshi on account of Earth Day, which will be celebrated today (April 22). Qureshi regretted that the issue of environmental degradation in Pakistan had been exacerbating with each passing day.

The NFEH president appreciated the fact that the conservation of environment and combating the issue of climate change was one of the top items on the current federal government's agenda. But at the same time, Qureshi said, the coordination required between the Centre and provincial governments to work with unanimity for the cause of environmental protection has almost been missing.

He said that the subject of Environment and Climate Change had been devolved completely to the provinces following the 18th Amendment so it is now the responsibility of the provincial governments to take measures to ensure environmental protection.

He lamented the situation that provincial governments were not being given the financial and technical support by the Centre that they deserved to enhance their capacity to combat environmental degradation and climate change.

"Take for instance the case of Sindh, where the environmental watchdog lacks the capacity and resources to combat the issues of air, noise, and industrial pollution," said the NFEH president.

Qureshi said that the Sindh government had been constantly complaining that it was facing serious fiscal shortfall due to the lack of funds given to it by the Centre. "When the Sindh government has been short of funds to meet its necessary recurring expenditures while its developmental expenses are also being curtailed, nobody could expect from it to extend any special support to the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) to enhance its capacity and improve its working," he said.

While SEPA and other agencies had been miserably failing to do their job as required under the Sindh Environmental Protection Act 2014, the issues of constant discharge of industrial effluents had been continuing without any check causing marine pollution and degradation of Pakistan's coastline.

Qureshi said that Karachi's seashore had been turned into a massive waste dumping site as the relevant civic and government authorities, including the SEPA, had been doing nothing on this alarming phenomenon.

"Karachi is supposed to be the engine of economic, business, and industrial growth in Pakistan but the capacity of the city to host such activities will be massively hampered if its residents continue to face issues of pollution that are also worsening each passing day," he said.

The relevant authorities should wake up to this situation and take due corrective measures before it is too late, he concluded.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1956005/1-nfeh-calls-national-charter-among-centre-provinces-protect-environment/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 29TH TO MAY 5TH 2019

PROJECT FOR GLACIAL FLOOD RISK REDUCTION STUCK IN RED TAPE

Manzoor Al Updated May 05, 2019

PESHAWAR: The launch of the Phase-II of the Glacial Lake Outbursts Flood (Glof) project in five districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been delayed by several months with officials of the province blaming it on red tape in the federal climate change ministry.

The project funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with the estimated annual cost of Rs4.3 billion covers Gilgit-Baltistan and five districts of KP and is meant to reduce risk from Glof in the northwestern Pakistan, where around 3,044 glacial lakes have formed over the years.

The Glof-I project was piloted in two districts one each from KP and GB, while Glof-II scales up the project from its initial two to 10 districts in both regions and is likely to benefit around 29 million people.

An official familiar with the project told Dawn that the project was progressing very slowly in KP the responsibility for which lied with the federal climate change ministry that wanted to run the project from Islamabad but both KP and GB refused to accept it.

He said the climate change ministry took several months to approve the work plans submitted by the KP government in April.

Official blames delay on a federal ministry saying it took months to approve work plans

“GB has already chalked out all activities and is about to start physical work on infrastructure schemes, while in KP’s departments concerned are still in the process of formulating ToRs for hiring consultants and firms,” he said.

The official said a quarter of the current year had already been lost due to delays on part of the climate change ministry, while the second quarter was likely to be consumed in settling the hiring of consultants and firms and other issues.

The official feared that further delays would push the project’s launch to the end of the current year, wherein work came to a grinding halt in those districts for being snow-bound.

“The delay in the project’s launch may cause loss of a whole year,” he said.

The official said had the project been launched in Jan this year, work on it would have begun on ground in these districts by the end of March.

He said the Glof-I was piloted in Chitral in its first phase, while the next phase was to cover Upper Dir, Shangla, Swat and Mansehra districts besides Chitral.

An official document available with Dawn also shows that the project has lost the first quarter of the current year in settling issues.

The document shows that KP Planning and Development (P&D) department had earlier reflected the project in the annual development programme (ADP) 2018-19 under the environment department.

An official objected to the making of the P&D department main party in the project saying the department only plans and coordinates schemes and projects and has never had such a position in any project.

He said the P&D department would receive funds from the UNDP before releasing them to the relevant departments.

“The Gfoc is all about disaster risk management, which is purely the responsibility of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority with which the Provincial Reconstruction and Settlement Authority was merged recently.

Published in Dawn, May 5th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1480318>

UN ENVIRONMENT REPORT

Editorial May 05, 2019

THE UN has compiled an expansive draft report on the state of the world’s environment, and as the document’s key findings indicate, there is reason for grave concern. What the report sums up is the fact that due to decades of overconsumption and unsustainable lifestyles, humans have had a devastating impact on the planet. In particular, a growing population requires tens of billions of tonnes of resources; this is having a debilitating impact on the land, the rivers and seas, and the air. The figures are indeed alarming. According to the estimates, 75pc of land, 40pc of oceans and 50pc of rivers “manifest severe impacts of degradation”. One does not have to be an environmental scientist to realise that plastic refuse is choking our drains and floating in our seas, untreated sewage is flowing into our waters and destroying marine life, and toxic air is making it hard for us to breathe.

But although the prognosis is grim, a poisoned dystopian future can be avoided if the international community — especially the industrialised states who tend to be the biggest polluters — come up with a workable plan of action to combat the effects of environmental degradation and climate change. While population control should be a central plank in the strategy, increasing the use of renewables in the energy mix can also go a long way in reducing our carbon footprint. Moreover, there must be a rationalisation of the use and manufacture of plastic. For example, in Pakistan, the ubiquitous plastic ‘shopper’ has wrought considerable damage. The move should be towards more environment-friendly materials, eventually phasing out single-use plastics. While some critics have said this country has no proper climate change policy, the fact is that the whole global community must work on a common plan, as environmental degradation does not confine itself to borders. And in this regard, those who have withdrawn from major climate accords — such as the US — and other developed states must play a bigger role in reducing their carbon footprint.

Published in Dawn, May 5th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1480390/un-environment-report>

PROBLEMS WITH PLASTIC

Shahzada Irfan Ahmed May 5, 2019

As the use of plastic products is on the rise in Pakistan, there seems to be a realisation among consumers as well as the government that use of certain products, such as plastic shopping bags, must be curtailed for their health and environmental hazards. But how practicable is it to ban plastic products?

Shoaib Munshi, Spokesperson Pakistan Plastic Manufacturers’ Association, (PPMA) says different provincial governments have announced ban on plastic bags but it will not be possible for them to

implement these. “Most of them are allowing only the biodegradable shopping bags despite the fact that these have harmful additives like chromium added to them. The government must realise that this decision will lead to mass unemployment at a time when the country’s economy is already facing a crunch.”

Munshi says they have challenged this decision in court on the grounds that oxo biodegradable shopping bags are more harmful than the ordinary ones. “The industry has suggested to the government to increase the micron value of shopping bags to 45 and make them heavy so that they do not fly and enter sewers or water bodies.” He also suggests that the industry is ready to buy plastic waste for safe recycling if a proper mechanism is introduced to collect it through scavengers or government servants. The industry figures show a 15 percent to 17 percent annual growth rate in this sector. This growth is also due to the fact that annual per capita consumption of plastic products in the country is 6.5 kg. This is far less than the global average of 38 kg. In countries like the US and Germany, this figure is well above 100.

Rapid urbanisation, changing lifestyles, emerging shopping patterns where people shop on the go, the ease of using disposable packaging material/containers, cost effectiveness and low weight of plastic products, etc, make consumers opt for this product.

Plastic industry in Pakistan depends on raw materials that have to be imported, mainly from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the Far Eastern Countries. It comes in the form of granules and resin that are treated at plastic units and moulded into different products. Basically, plastic is a petrochemical and extracted from crude oil. In addition to the imported raw material, many local manufacturers also depend on used plastic and plastic scrap to run their units. They use that in recycled form and violate laws governing these processes.

If we look at the range of plastic products, we find they are there in every sector. There are household utensils, stationery, auto-parts, agricultural products, appliances, computers, mobile phones and accessories, pumps, pipes, etc, that are either made of plastic or have components made of plastic. While use of plastic products has brought convenience to our lives, the challenge is the disposal of plastic products, especially the single-use ones like shopping bags. Made mostly of non-biodegradable materials, they may take hundreds of years to decompose. For this very reason these shopping bags contaminate soil if dumped in fields and so on. This calls for devising mechanisms and policies to promote safe plastic use and disposal.

The scale of the problem can be gauged from the briefing given by the former minister for climate change, Mushahidullah Khan, to the Senate of Pakistan during the last PML-N tenure. He told senators that as many as 55 billion plastic shopping bags were being used each year in Pakistan.

Referring to a national survey done by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Khan said that around 160,000 persons were directly and 600,000 indirectly dependent on this industry.

This brings us to the question whether there are comprehensive laws in place to govern plastic production and its use in the country. Aisha Khan, Executive Director for Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change (CSCCC), thinks the situation is not satisfactory.”At the national level, the Environment Protection Act of 1997 refers only to polythene bags in the same category of other waste materials and calls for their management, etc, does not specifically mention other plastics or banning them.”

The Environment Policy (2005), she says, “makes no mention of plastic/polythene bags, etc. The provincial environment protection acts (such as in Sindh in 2004) call for the ban on non biodegradable plastic but are not enforced. Similarly, local government ordinances have specified fines for wrong disposal of waste and littering but due to weak enforcement and lack of political will, these have not been successful. Khan adds Sindh has also produced Prohibition of Non-degradable Plastic Products (Manufacturing, Sale and Usage) Rules, 2014 whose implementation is also questionable.

According to the ministry of climate change, plastics industry is the fifth largest employer in Pakistan and is poised for even more growth. Job security in this sector as well as its contribution to the economy is often cited as a reason of inaction on the issue of plastic. Independent sources believe it is among the top three best performing industries keeping in view that a cottage industry has also been developed where people are producing plastic shopping bags and other products. These home-based units are undocumented and informal.

Khan believes the debate about allowing bio-degradable plastic products also does not have much weight. She says while the global research on biodegradable plastics has made strides and has also been piloted in Pakistan, there is still room for error. According to a report, she says, oxi biodegradables were piloted in Islamabad on a large scale, but later it was found that these were more harmful to the environment than regular polythene bags.

Therefore, she believes, the focus should be on encouraging behaviour changes to make consumers to not rely on single use type plastics. Studies show that worldwide only 10 to 13 percent of plastic items are recycled and the nature of petroleum-based disposable plastic makes this process difficult. The recycling industry has to add pure plastic materials and chemicals to the used plastic to get the desired results. Anyhow, large multinationals are taking certain initiatives to set precedents. For example, Coca Cola has partnered with Adidas to produce shoes that are created from plastic harvested from the oceans. Unilever has reduced its plastic production by 29 percent in the past decade.

Nazifa Butt, Manager Environmental Assessment/Green Office Initiative, WWF, believes there is a lack of awareness among masses on safe plastic use that is aggravating the problem. “According to international standards, the type of plastic must be mentioned on each product. Usually there are 10 to 12 types of plastics that not only tell the quality but also provide guidance regarding recycling or use of a plastic product in microwave.” Local companies do not follow these standards; nevertheless, “multi-national companies are bound to follow because of international compulsions and monitoring mechanism”, she adds.

On relevant laws, Butt states that in Pakistan only the guidelines of 2004 are available that impose compulsion on local companies to not produce plastic less than 15 microns. In addition to it, the monitoring policy in the country is pathetic and there are no laws except Environment Protection Act that is insufficient to build a strong monitoring mechanism. “The concerned departments are facing financial constraints to be more efficient and productive; in fact, environment and associated matters have been neglected throughout by the governments.”

Shoaib Munshi, Spokesperson Pakistan Plastic Manufacturers’ Association, (PPMA) says different provincial governments have announced ban on plastic bags but it will not be possible for them to implement these. “Most of them are allowing only the biodegradable shopping bags despite the fact that these have harmful additives like chromium added to them. The government must realise that this

decision will lead to mass unemployment at a time when country's economy is already facing a crunch."

Munshi says they have challenged this decision in court on the grounds that oxo biodegradable shopping bags are more harmful than the ordinary ones. "The industry has suggested to the government to increase the micron value of shopping bags to 45 and make them heavy so that they do not fly and enter sewers or water bodies." He also suggests that the industry is ready to buy plastic waste for safe recycling if a proper mechanism is introduced to collect it through scavengers or government servants.

On the bans imposed by provinces, Naseem ur Rehman, Director, Environment Protection Department (EPD), Punjab says so far the provinces have made drafts but not yet implemented them which will be a big challenge. "While others are talking about allowing oxo biodegradable grade, the Punjab EPD is not recommending them because of their harmful nature," he says, adding, "we have made it compulsory for plastic bag manufacturers to increase the micron value of bags to 45 and above."

This, he says, will make the bags expensive and discourage people from using them. "Very few people will use shopping bags if they are asked to pay Rs 5 or above per piece." He says the scavenger will also be interested in collecting these bags due to their weight, quality and value in the plastic scrap market and among the players of plastic recycling industry.

Another recommendation they have made is to strengthen the enforcement mechanism and make district administration and municipal authorities also responsible for monitoring plastic bag manufacturing industry. "At the moment only the staff of EPD is performing this duty at a limited scale due to their limitations," he informs.

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/problems-plastic/#.XNAW0jAzbc>

TARGETING MARINE LIFE

Zulfiqar Kunbhar May 5, 2019

According to recent studies carried out by WWF-Pakistan, pollution caused by plastic items is very badly affecting marine life. Since plastic waste decomposes very slowly, it either floats in the open sea or piles up on beaches. Due to poor solid waste disposal system, coastline beaches of Karachi, Malir and Gwadar are littered with plastic waste.

Recent indicators show that cases of marine animals entangled in floating plastic bags that cause injury or deaths are on the rise. "65 percent of garbage that litter beaches along Pakistan's coasts consist of plastics, which includes mineral water bottles, caps, polythene bags, balloons, wrappers, shoes, broken utensils, Styrofoam and discarded fishing nets," states WWF-Pakistan research.

Figures of Sindh Solid Waste Management Authority (SSWMA) say Karachi generates 12,000 tons of garbage everyday of which only 40 percent is collected and taken to dump site whereas the remaining garbage mainly reaches different nallahs or is burnt locally.

Muhammad Moazzam Khan, Technical Advisor (Marine Fisheries), WWF-Pakistan is of the view that only a fraction of garbage is burnt, which has its own environmental consequences but garbage that reaches the ocean consists mainly of non-degradable plastics. "The giant catfish and spot-tail

shark getting caught in plastic items and in polythene bags are important evidences that illustrate how plastic pollution is rapidly destroying marine habitats,” he adds.

According to statistics, marine pollution has impacted at least 267 species worldwide, including 86 percent of all sea turtles, 44 percent of all seabird species and 43 percent of all marine mammal species. The impacts include fatalities as a result of ingestion, starvation, suffocation, infection and drowning.

Mahera Omar, a filmmaker and director at Pakistan Animal Welfare Society says that sheer volume of plastic consumption is eye-opening. “We must act now to radically transform the way we live and consume. We need to challenge the throwaway culture encouraged by corporations and have the political will if we are to protect our precious earth from the collapse of oceanological ecosystems and irreversible climate conditions.”

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/targeting-marine-life/#.XNAXFDAzbc>

UN REPORT SHOWS NATURE AT DEATH’S DOOR

AFP Updated May 04, 2019

PARIS: A landmark UN report on the state of Nature makes for grim reading, showing how humanity has wreaked havoc with the environment.

The 1,800-page draft document, set to be finalised after a biodiversity summit in Paris this week, depicts a planet ravaged by rampant overconsumption and drowning in pollution, where hundreds of thousands of species risk extinction.

Here is a rundown of the report’s key findings, which read like a charge sheet against history’s most destructive creatures: ourselves.

Earth’s population has doubled in 50 years. Not only are we living longer than ever before, we are also consuming more. Today, humans extract around 60 billion tonnes of resources from Nature each year — a rise of 80 per cent in just a few decades.

Since 1980, manmade greenhouse gas emissions have doubled, adding at least 0.7C to global temperatures. We dump up to 400 million tonnes of heavy metals, toxic sludge and other waste into oceans and rivers each year.

The report, compiled from more than 15,000 academic papers and research publications, estimates that 75 per cent of land, 40 per cent of oceans and 50 per cent of rivers “manifest severe impacts of degradation” from human activity.

The document, the first of its kind in 15 years, paints a picture of rife inequality, with richer nations consuming vastly more per capita than poorer ones battling to retain their natural resources. Indeed, per capita demand for materials is four times more in high- than in low-income economies.

In Europe and North America, humans now consume several times the recommended intake of meat, sugar and fat for optimal health, while 40 percent of the world’s people lack access even to clean drinking water.

The inequality gap is huge and widening: GDP per head is already 50 times larger in wealthy nations than in poor ones.

Industrial fishing is destroying our oceans, according to the report. It found that 70,000 industrial fishing vessels operate in at least 55 percent of the world's high seas. Nearly three quarters of major marine fish stocks are depleted or exploited to the limit of sustainability, despite efforts from the fishing community to implement quotas and drive down overfishing. On land, the situation looks even bleaker.

A third of all land is now given over to agriculture and 75 per cent of freshwater resources is dedicated to food production. In all, at least a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions come from land clearing, crop production and fertilisation, the vast majority of which comes from animal-based food production.

Agribusiness expansion has also led to the disappearance of vast swathes of CO₂-absorbing forests: Earth has lost 290 million hectares — around six per cent — of its forests since 1990.

Fertiliser use, which degrades the soil's ability to grow plants and suck in greenhouse gases, has risen four-fold in just 13 years in Asia and doubled worldwide in the same period.

Scientists estimate there to be roughly eight million species of plants and animals on Earth, though only a fraction of them have so far been identified.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) "Red List" catalogues some 100,000 species, around a quarter of which are classed as in danger of extinction.

An IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) report goes much further, however, projecting that between 500,000 and one million species could face oblivion due to pollution and habitat degradation. Its authors stress that whatever losses humans inflict on Nature will in turn be inflicted upon us.

More than two billion people still rely on wood as their main energy source, and up to half of all medicines come from plants and animals.

What's more, the world's oceans and forests absorb more than half of our greenhouse gas emissions, which are still climbing year on year.

"At current trends, we risk drastic degradation, with drops in contributions critical for societies and uneven distribution of losses," the report states. "Basic needs and luxuries depend on Nature."

Published in Dawn, May 4th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1480199/un-report-shows-nature-at-deaths-door>

DEADLINE SET FOR BRICK KILNS TO GO HIGH TECH

By Our Correspondent Published: May 3, 2019

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Environment Protection Muhammad Rizwan said that in order to control environmental pollution, all traditional brick kilns should be converted to the Zigzag technology by the end of December 2019.

He was addressing a meeting at the Environment Protection Department (EPD) committee room on Thursday.

The minister said that the use of zigzag technology in the construction and operations of kilns can minimise the environmental effects of burning coal and reduce fuel consumption by 30%.

He directed Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) authorities to expedite the process of training of brick kiln owners and complete all arrangements as soon as possible. He urged kiln owners in Punjab to adopt this technology without any fear or hesitation as it gives better quality bricks and reduces coal consumption.

EPD Secretary Asad Gillani pledged the full support of his department to the association, both in terms of human and capital resources for the conversion of all traditional brick kilns.

Speaking on the occasion, President All Pakistan Brick Kiln Owners Association Muhammad Shoaib Khan Niazi said that around 226 brick kilns have been converted to zigzag technology. He also requested for technical and financial assistance to help other kilns for adopt this technology.

All Pakistan Brick Kiln Owners Association General Secretary Mehr Abdul Haq and other office bearers also attended the meeting.

Published in The Express Tribune, May 3rd, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1964495/1-deadline-set-brick-kilns-go-high-tech/>

PROTESTERS BLOCK KKH AGAINST RESTRICTION ON TIMBER MOVEMENT

Jamil Nagri May 02, 2019

GILGIT: The residents of Deral and Tangir valleys in Diamer district continued the daytime blockade of the Karakoram Highway in Basari area for the sixth consecutive day on Wednesday against Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's decision of not allowing timber transportation from Gilgit-Baltistan to other parts of the country and imposing taxes on GB goods in Kohistan district.

GB Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman, Speaker of GB Assembly Fida Mohammad Nashad, Deputy Speaker Jaffarullah Khan and cabinet members Aurangzeb Khan, Farman Ali, Ibrahim Sanai, Mohammad Shafiq, Mohammad Wakeel, Sobia Muqaddam, Fida Khan and Haider Khan attended the sit-in to support protesters.

The protesters insisted that timber owners would lose millions of rupees if the government didn't allow them to transport wood to other areas of the country before the expiry of the timber policy in July.

GB chief minister threatens march on Islamabad if issue not resolved this month

They said the policy enforced by the federal government in 2017 allowed the sale of wood from Diamer across the country.

Former member of the GB Legislative Assembly Rehmat Khaliq said Arshad Shah of Abbottabad claimed ownership of the forest in Deral and Tangir valleys over a 'fake' agreement from 1917 and even got a stay order from an Abbottabad court against the transportation of timber through KP.

Minister Haider Khan said under an 1952 agreement, Pakistani government had accepted the right of Diamer people to the forest and minerals of the district.

The other speakers complained that the KP police harassed GB traders bound for the province and extorted money from them.

Chairman of the Awami Action Committee Maulana Sultan Raees said KP should accept the right of GB people to their resources.

He warned that if the issue wasn't resolved amicably, the people would agitate across GB.

Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman said the KP government exploited natural resources of GB.

"I have already spoken to KP's chief minister and relevant federal government authorities about the issue but there is no seriousness on their part about its resolution," he said.

He alleged that the KP government had planned to occupy the Diamer forest.

The CM said the tensions had adversely impacted on tourism in GB.

He warned that if the GB's demands on the issue weren't met by the end of the current month, then the residents would march on Islamabad against the federal and KP governments.

Also in the day, the GB Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution warning if the issue isn't settled without delay, the situation will become dangerous.

Published in Dawn, May 2nd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1479680/protesters-block-kkh-against-restriction-on-timber-movement>

EXPERTS TERM AIR POLLUTION A 'SILENT KILLER'

RECORDER REPORT | MAY 1ST, 2019 | KARACHI

Speakers at a consultative meeting called for all the concerned stakeholders' coordinated efforts to control air pollution which they termed a silent killer.

They expressed their views at an event titled 'Air pollution in Sindh: Challenges and a way forward,' organised by Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) at its head office, here.

Director General (DG) SEPA Naeem Mughal briefed participants on the major urban and rural pollution challenges in Sindh. He spoke on dumping of industrial solid waste into Malir and Lyari rills, burning of domestic and commercial solid waste, vehicular air emissions, pollution due to brick kilns, cotton ginning mills, etc.

Environmental consultant Shahid Lutfi recommended revisiting the air quality standards. In future, we will have yellow and other lines buses; therefore, it is obligatory to have air quality standards which can minimise the harm, he suggested. He said Sindh EPA also acts as an advisory body so it should have proper guidelines for other concerned departments too, to safeguard the environmental degradation.

Gardazi from an NGO, Shehri, urged for more effective and coordinated liaison between all the stakeholders from government and others. He said Sindh EPA can't act solely to safeguard

environment. He urged that all the government departments have to join hands to protect an environment.

“Air pollution is a silent killer, it kills slowly but it does,” he said on magnitude of implications. He further said that air pollution is one of the primary sources which contribute loss of human life in Pakistan, as according to a study, 1 million under-5 infants suffer badly due to it. He also urged to revisit the emissions standards and further told that government should have zero tolerance policy towards non-compliance of an environmental law.

Dr Salman, director Sindh Health Commission, spoke on crossed infection disease occurred at hospitals due to air and other forms of pollution.

Saqib, an environmental consultant, discussed potential hazards of coal ash and regulation of plantation drives in city. He urged to declare air pollution emergency in province.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/05/20190501468879/>

GOVT DEPTS TOLD TO TAKE NECESSARY MEASURES FOR ‘SUPER FLOOD’ SITUATION

By Our Correspondent Published: April 30, 2019

HYDERABAD: In view of reports of climate change and weather forecast by Pakistan Meteorological Department, Hyderabad Commissioner Muhammad Abbass Baloch has asked all government departments to prepare for the super flood situation.

During a meeting at his office in Hyderabad on Monday, Baloch directed officials of health, education, irrigation, local government, livestock and other departments to submit reports about their preparedness to his office.

The education department was directed to submit a list of schools which could be used as relief camps, though the government’s priority would be to accommodate displaced people in the tent cities.

Irrigation officials sought the commissioner’s support for removing encroachments on the riverbed and the privately built illegal levees which both obstruct the flow of river water. The irrigation officials said that following the 2010 super flood, the height of all river embankments in Sindh has been raised by six feet.

Published in The Express Tribune, April 30th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1962296/1-govt-depts-told-take-necessary-measures-super-flood-situation/>

COAST CLEAN-UP DRIVE HELD; PLASTIC KILLING MARINE LIFE, PARTICIPANTS TOLD

THE NEWSPAPER’S STAFF REPORTER Published Apr 29, 2019

KARACHI: Speakers at a briefing session organised at Sandspit on Saturday for the launch of a coast clean-up drive highlighted threats plastic pollution posed to the marine and freshwater life and called for collaborative efforts to tackle the menace.

A total of 140 bags of garbage were collected by participants comprising students and concerned citizens from a 6km stretch during the drive carried out at Seaview, Sandspit and Hawkesbay.

The initiative was taken by World Wide Fund for Nature Pakistan in collaboration with a beverage company.

“Plastic pollution is adversely affecting marine turtles, sea birds and other diverse marine life. Many of the creatures we love die because of plastic pollution,” said Dr Babar Khan, the regional head of WWF-P Sindh and Balochistan.

Each citizen should reduce plastic use and contribute towards the cause, he added.

Fahad Qadir representing the beverage company said that the company had pledged last year to recycle 100 per cent of its plastic packaged bottles that would be achieved by 2030.

Farah Waheed of WWF-P said that an estimated 450 million gallons of untreated industrial effluent entered into the Arabian Sea daily. Recent studies indicated that a significant number of marine animals were entangled in plastic products as fishermen hauled them in their nets.

The Indus River, one of the 10 largest freshwater rivers in the world, was also becoming polluted due to industrial and domestic waste, she said.

Published in Dawn, April 29th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1479013/coast-clean-up-drive-held-plastic-killing-marine-life-participants-told>

PAKISTAN NAVY, DUHS JOIN HANDS IN BEACH CLEANING, TREE PLANTATION DRIVE

RECORDER REPORT | APR 29TH, 2019 | KARACHI

In line with the government of Pakistan’s vision of ‘Clean and Green Pakistan’, Pakistan Navy in collaboration with Dow University of Health Sciences (DUHS) conducted ‘Tree plantation and beach cleaning activity’ at Manora Island. Commodore Vaqar Muhammad was the chief guest on the occasion.

During his address, the chief guest highlighted the adverse effects of climate change caused by pollution and underscored the importance of clean and green environment in mitigating harmful effects. While highlighting Pakistan Navy’s efforts regarding protection of coastal as well as Marine ecosystems in the country, he lauded Dow University of Health Sciences for joining hands with Pakistan Navy in this noble cause. He further said that this activity is being conducted with the expectation that it would help in educating the masses about the importance of trees in our ecosystem and creating awareness about clean beaches. The chief guest inaugurated the activity by planting a sapling. During the activity, the participants planted more than 1500 different types of plants. Later, during the Beach cleaning part, participants collected garbage & used plastic articles/trash from the beach.

Pakistan Navy, besides its role of safeguarding maritime frontiers, pledges its full support in environmental sustainability and conducts beach/harbour cleaning and tree/mangroves plantations campaigns ranging from Margalla hills in the North to the coastline in the South, on regular basis. Today's beach cleaning and tree plantation activity is a continuation of Pakistan Navy's resolve for making the country's landscape teeming with green cover and oceans shimmering with clean blue waters. A large number of Pakistan Navy officers, men along with faculty members and students of Dow University of Health Sciences participated in the campaign.-PR

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/04/20190429468117/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 6TH TO MAY 12TH 2019

LANDMARK UN PLASTIC WASTE PACT GETS APPROVED BUT NOT BY US

AP Updated May 12, 2019

GENEVA: Nearly every country in the world has agreed upon a legally binding framework to reduce the pollution from plastic waste except for the United States, UN environmental officials said.

An agreement on tracking thousands of types of plastic waste emerged on Friday at the end of a two-week meeting of UN-backed conventions on plastic waste and toxic, hazardous chemicals.

Discarded plastic clutters pristine land, floats in huge masses in oceans and rivers and entangles wildlife, sometimes with deadly results.

Rolph Payet of the United Nations Environment Programme said the "historic" agreement linked to the 186-country, UN-supported Basel Convention means that countries will have to monitor and track the movements of plastic waste outside their borders.

The deal affects products used in a broad array of industries, such as health care, technology, aerospace, fashion, food and beverages.

"It's sending a very strong political signal to the rest of the world to the private sector, to the consumer market that we need to do something," Payet said. "Countries have decided to do something which will translate into real action on the ground."

Countries will have to figure out their own ways of adhering to the accord, Payet said.

Even the few countries that did not sign it, like the United States, could be affected by the accord when they ship plastic waste to countries that are on board with the deal.

Payet credited Norway for leading the initiative, which first was presented in September. The time from that proposal to the approval of a deal set a blistering pace by traditional UN standards for such an accord.

The framework "is historic in the sense that it is legally binding," Payet said. "They (the countries) have managed to use an existing international instrument to put in place those measures." The

agreement is likely to lead to customs agents being on the lookout for electronic waste or other types of potentially hazardous waste more than before.

“There is going to be a transparent and traceable system for the export and import of plastic waste,” Payet said.

Published in Dawn, May 12th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1481765/landmark-un-plastic-waste-pact-gets-approved-but-not-by-us>

SUGAR MILLS: SEPA MEETING DISCUSSES INSTALLATION OF WASTE WATER TREATMENT PLANTS

RECORDER REPORT | MAY 9TH, 2019 | KARACHI

Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) on Wednesday held a meeting to overview the progress on installation of waste water treatment plants by different sugar mills in the province. The meeting was chaired by Minister for Environment Climate Change and Coastal Development Taimur Talpur and Minister for Energy Imtiaz Sheikh here at the SEPA head office.

Director General SEPA on this occasion briefed the participants and said out of 38 sugar mills in Sindh, some 32 are functional. He said sugar mills owners are being directed to install waste water treatment plants in compliance with the Water Commission orders.

Matter particularly about 5 mills i.e. Bandhi, Sanghar, Habib, Tharparkart and Alnoor sugar mills were discussed in detail as they were discharging effluent at LBOD.

It was also discussed that distillery located at Habib Mill is a major source of pollution, step needs to be taken in this regard was also discussed and a follow up meeting will be convene to overview the progress.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/05/20190509470881/>

GOVT TO SPEND 1% OF PSDP ON GREEN PROGRAMME

By Zafar Bhutta Published: May 9, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The government has decided to allocate 1% of the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) in the upcoming 2019-20 budget for the initiatives planned to be taken under the Green Clean Pakistan Movement to make the country environment-friendly.

Prime Minister Imran Khan took the decision in a high-level meeting held to earmark funds for initiatives under the clean and green programme.

According to officials, Pakistan is one of the most vulnerable countries facing excessive threat from climate change like drought and floods. In the country, 60% of the waste remains uncollected, 93% of wastewater is not treated and 42% of population does not have access to basic sanitation.

The prime minister had launched the Green Clean Pakistan Movement in September 2018. Five pillars of the programme were identified as tree plantation, solid waste management, liquid waste management, total sanitation/hygiene and safe drinking water.

The Ministry of Climate Change has planned to take scores of initiatives throughout the country in coming months. All federal ministers are being asked to join these events in their respective constituencies.

The ministry will develop a comprehensive clean and green scorecard on a priority basis, which will show the performance of various cities across the country. The best performers will be recognised at the national level for their achievements.

Religious leaders will also be engaged to deliver the message of clean and green Pakistan through mosques. Under the programme, standing committees of the Senate and National Assembly have already banned the use of plastic bags and bottles in their meetings. There are also plans to make parliament plastic-free. The Ministry of Climate Change has also banned the use of plastic bags and bottles in its offices.

The government has framed a communications strategy to increase awareness, build consciousness and sensitivity among the public.

Different communities will be mobilised in order to take individual and collective action. Partnerships will be established with sector partners, private organisations and media to maximise the impact. Showcase events and celebrations will also be held to advocate social and behavioural change.

The government has decided to lead from the front and set an example for the others to follow. The Ministry of Climate Change will closely coordinate with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in implementing the communications strategy, which includes public service messages on PTV, Radio Pakistan and private media channels.

Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) will facilitate in this regard by giving access to 10% free air time under the corporate social responsibility (CSR) component. Apart from this, SMS to mobile users will be ensured through the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA).

Further initiatives include messages in the curriculum and establishing clean and green teams in schools, colleges and universities through the Ministry of Education.

Published in The Express Tribune, May 9th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1968767/2-govt-spend-1-psdp-green-programme/>

NATURE UNDER SIEGE AS A MILLION SPECIES FACE EXTINCTION, UN WARNS

AFP Updated May 07, 2019

PARIS: Humanity is squandering the natural capital that has allowed society to thrive, driving a million species to the brink of extinction in the process, a landmark UN report on the state of Nature warned on Monday.

Relentless plundering and poisoning of Earth's bounty — water, wildlife, air, soil and forests — threatens societies “at least as much as climate change,” said Robert Watson, who chaired the 132-nation meeting that validated a Summary for Policymakers forged by 450 experts.

“We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality-of-life worldwide,” said Watson. “We really need to get governments to think beyond GDP.” “It is like using the goose that lays golden eggs to make soup,” said co-chair Eduardo Brondizio, a professor of Anthropology at Indiana University Bloomington.

The accelerating pace of extinction — ten to hundreds of times faster than over the last 10 million years — could tip Earth into the first mass extinction since non-avian dinosaurs died out 66 million years ago.

Halting and reversing these dire trends will require “transformative change” — a sweeping overhaul of the way we produce and consume almost everything, especially food, the report concluded. Watson said pushback from vested interests is likely to be fierce.

“A lot of actors in the fossil fuel industry and agriculture sector would not want to see energy, transportation or agriculture subsidies reduced,” he said.

“But these are the hard decisions that governments need to take.” Drawing from 15,000 sources and an underlying 1,800-page report, the executive summary details how our growing footprint and appetites have compromised the natural renewal of resources that sustain civilisation, starting with fresh water, breathable air, and productive soil.

An October report from the UN’s climate science panel painted a similarly dire picture for global warming, and likewise highlighted the need for social transformation “on an unprecedented scale” to cap the rise in temperature at 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit).

Climate change and biodiversity loss, it turns out, feed off each other in a vicious cycle.

Deforestation and industrial agriculture are major drivers of species and ecosystem decline, but also account for at least a quarter of man-made greenhouse gas emissions.

Global warming, in turn, is pushing thousands of animals and plants out of their comfort zones, and intensifies the kind of heatwaves and droughts that recently fuelled unprecedented fires in Australia, Indonesia, Russia, Portugal, California and Greece.

The overlapping drivers of global warming and biodiversity loss point to shared solutions, but there is potential for policy conflict too, the new report cautioned.

Plans to green the global economy reserve a crucial role for burning biofuels and locking away the CO₂ released, a technology known as BECCS.

But the huge tracts of land needed to grow energy crops on this scale — roughly twice the size of India — would clash with the expansion of protected areas and reforestation efforts, not to mention food production.

Published in Dawn, May 7th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1480796/nature-under-siege-as-a-million-species-face-extinction-un-warns>

CM ASKS SECMC TO EXPAND MINING FOR TWO MORE POWER PLANTS IN THAR

RECORDER REPORT | MAY 7TH, 2019 | KARACHI

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has directed Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) to begin expansion of the mining work in its phase-I project so that two more private companies may establish their coal-based power plants in Thar. He said this, presiding over a meeting at the CM House, here on Monday. Minister Energy Imtiaz Shaikh, Minister Irrigation Syed Nasir Shah, Chairman P&D Naheed Shah, Principal Secretary to the CM Sajid Jamal Abro, secretary Irrigation Jamal Shah, Secretary Finance Najam Shah, Secretary Energy Musadiq Khan, House of Habib chairman Ali Habib, CEO Engro Ghias Khan, SECMC chairman Khurshid Jamali, CEO SECMC Syed Abul Fazal, CEO Thal Energy Limited (TEL) and Thal Nova Saleemullah, CEO Engro Energy Ahsan Zafar, MD Thar Coal Tariq Ali Shah and other concerned officials attended the meeting.

The meeting was told that Hubco was setting up two power projects of 330MW each based on Thar-coal. Thar Energy Ltd (TEL) and Thal Nova Thar Limited (TN) re-partners with Hubco. These projects are part of Mines Phase-II of Sindh Coal Mining Company Block-II. The TN is also in advanced stage of arranging finances.

The Hubco has already begun work and wants the provincial government to execute LBOD scheme under which water would be provided to the coal power projects.

Energy Minister Imtiaz Shaikh told the meeting that Nespak has been appointed for study of pre-treatment system for LBOD. He said work would begin once the study papers were submitted and approved by the chief minister. TEL water requirement is June 2020, therefore, pre-treatment system would be made before June 2020.

Irrigation Minister Nasir Shah told the meeting that the portions of LBOD schemes facing delay would be taken up shortly. He said he would personally visit the area where work has been suspended to restart it. The chief minister directed the Irrigation department to prepare water use agreement for TEL and TN that could be signed after mutual agreement.

Murad Shah was apprised that out of 660MW, two Thar coal-fired power plants (330MW each) were generating 500MW during their testing period. This generation would reach to 660 by second week of June. The chief minister termed it a big success and said he would personally visit the plant when it would begin operating at its maximum capacity.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/05/20190507470346/>

HUBCO TO SET UP TWO POWER PROJECTS IN THAR

By Our Correspondent Published: May 7, 2019

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah directed Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) to start expansion of the mining work in its phase-I project so that two other private companies could establish their coal-based power plants at Thar.

This he said while chairing a meeting at the Chief Minister House on Monday.

Hub Power Company (Hubco) will be setting up two power projects of 330 MW each, in Thar. Thar Energy Limited (TEL) and ThalNova Power Thar Limited (TN) are partners with Hubco on the project that are part of Phase-II of Sindh Coal Mining Company Block-II. TN is also at an advanced stage of arranging finances.

Hubco has already started its work and wants the provincial government to execute the Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD) scheme, under which water would be provided to the coal power projects.

Energy Minister Imtiaz Shaikh said that Nespak had been appointed for study of pre-treatment system for LBOD. He added that the work would be started once the study was submitted and approved by the CM. Since TEL would require water in June 2020 and therefore, pre-treatment system needed to be installed before June 2020.

Irrigation Minister Nasir Shah said that the portions of LBOD schemes facing delay would be taken up shortly. He said he would personally visit the area where work has been suspended.

The chief minister directed the irrigation department to prepare the water use agreement for TEL and TN. He also apprised the participants that the two Thar Coal power plants, that can produce 660MW, were generating 500MW during their testing period. This generation would reach 660MW in the second week of June.

The CM termed it a big success and said he would personally visit the plant when it started operating at its maximum capacity.

The meeting was attended by Planning and Development Chairperson Naheed Shah, Principal Secretary to CM Sajid Jamal Abro, Irrigation Secretary Jamal Shah, Finance Secretary Najam Shah, Energy Secretary Musadiq Khan, House of Habib Chairperson Ali Habib, Engro CEO Ghias Khan, SECMC Chairperson Khurshid Jamali, SECMC CEO Syed Abul Fazal, Thal Energy Limited (TEL) and Thal Nova CEO Saleemullah, Engro Energy CEO Ahsan Zafar, Thar Coal Managing Director Tariq Ali Shah and other relevant officers.

Published in The Express Tribune, May 7th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1967191/1-hubco-set-two-power-projects-thar/>

PUNJAB MINISTER CALLS FOR TACKLING ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

By APP Published: May 7, 2019

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Environmental Protection Muhammad Rizwan on Monday said pollution has become a great challenge.

While chairing a meeting of all district officers of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to discuss the strategy for launching an effective campaign against environmental pollution at the EPA headquarters, he said the Punjab government was taking the pollution issue very seriously.

Speaking on the occasion, Environmental Protection Department Secretary Asad Rehman Gillani said all officers must start their activities on a fast-track without taking any pressure.

He asked the officers to take all possible measures to protect environment and deliver in true sense in this regard. “Targets will be set and progress of each officer will be judged against the set targets,” he added.

Director Nasimur Rehman briefed the meeting that in compliance with the minister’s directions, action against fake lube oil is continued. Six units were inspected at Saggian Road and one unit involved in manufacturing of substandard plastic cans and bottles had been sealed.

Published in The Express Tribune, May 7th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1967244/1-punjab-minister-calls-tackling-environmental-pollution/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 13TH TO MAY 19TH 2019

KILLING TO CONSERVE

Khan Shehram Eusufzaye May 19, 2019

In April, as soon as the melt begins, the trophy hunting season ends, and the mountains in Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan go silent. The hunters reluctantly pack their guns and shells and the community members who earn a living by facilitating the licensed hunters eagerly await the provincial government to dispense their share of money raised through the trophy hunting programme. The wait is usually long.

Trophy hunting in Pakistan is marred with many controversies: on the economic side, due to delayed payments to communities and communities accusing the government officials of favouring other communities; and on the social side, the proper utilisation of the 80 percent share a community receives for facilitating a hunt.

To protect the endangered wild animals from poaching, the government of Pakistan launched the community-based trophy hunting programme in the 1990s, which allows licenses to be granted to hunters. These include blue sheep, ibex and urial and markhor usually found across Gilgit-Baltistan, Kohistan and Chitral and Balochistan. The programme incentivises the local communities for protecting wildlife by giving them 80 percent of the share of the generated funds through licenses. The most sought after license is that of a markhor, which on an average can fetch up to USD100,000. The government gives out 12 licenses per year, four each to Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit Baltistan.

Recently, an official from the Ministry of Climate Change informed the members of the Standing Committee on Climate Change of the National Assembly that despite requests for increasing markhor trophy hunt licenses from 12 to 16, the ministry has declined all such proposals until a proper population survey is conducted. He reportedly said, “The numbers of markhor(s) in the wild are possibly on the rise. However, unless there is a fresh census to ascertain their numbers, permits will not be increased. Surveys in the past are too old and incorrect.”

Speaking on the quality of surveys done in the past, the official added, “No standardised procedure was followed in the last survey conducted in 2017-18 [by all provinces]. Most surveys [done in the past], including surveys done by World Wide Fund for Nature, Pakistan (WWF-Pakistan) and other non-government organisations (NGOs), are not reliable.”

Mujeeb Sardar, Divisional Forest Officer at the Chief Conservator Office in Gilgit, agrees there might be some loopholes in the surveys conducted in the past, but “an exact number can never be ascertained due to the terrain where the animal lives”.

Most of the survey reports conducted in the past have been collaborations between the provincial wildlife departments and Wildlife Conservation Society Pakistan, WWF-Pakistan and Snow Leopard Foundation (SLF). “We are welcoming every opinion and are already planning to conduct the next survey after September on the suggestions we receive,” he says.

Talking to TNS, Sardar says the wildlife and forest departments are facing problems in rotating the four markhor trophy hunt licenses between the Community Control Hunting Areas (CCHA) spread across Districts Diamer and Nagar in Gilgit-Baltistan. “Our request to increase the license number is purely based on the demand from the CCHA. In the given conditions, it will take us 8-10 years to ensure every CCHA gets a hunt. This also means that during the 8-10 years of rotation cycle, the trophy sized markhor might die or be hunted down illegally,” Sardar explains.

He further adds the rotation plan, when revised, will take into consideration the attitude and behaviour of the communities towards the conservation programme, availability of trophy size animal and proper utilisation of the 80 percent share by the community as per their agreement with the government.

Although Sardar’s argument on the method of rotation among the CCHA seems like a viable solution, experts think otherwise. Due to the “sensitivity” of the topic an official from a conservation organisation of Pakistan, while talking to TNS on condition of anonymity, says “On the face of it, the trophy hunting programme seems good for the communities as it generates revenue but how can they operate without a scientific and thorough ecological survey? At present I don’t think the conservation organisations are interested in conducting such a survey since many have shifted focus on livelihood programmes which have more funding opportunities.”

In his opinion a mere increase in the number of the animals is not enough to determine the “viability” of a species. “A proper survey must look at the trophy size males, breeding females and juveniles that will replace the trophy size males when they’re hunted down. Unfortunately, there have been instances where breeding males have been shot down resulting in a negative impact on the herd. In the absence of competition, young males mature quickly and copulate which results in passing on poor genes to the future generation,” the official emphasises.

Zafar Khan, assistant professor of Environmental Sciences at the Karakoram University in Gilgit, agrees that there has been an increase in the size of animal population in recent years. “There is no doubt the communities reap the socio-economic benefits from the programme. They also have been successful in protecting the animals which were once threatened. But a proper ecological survey must be conducted on a priority basis to clear doubts that shroud the programme.”

Experts agree the trophy hunting programme has loopholes and conservation organisations which boasts of starting the programme in the first place should step in to rectify the issues. The jury is still out on the subject of trophy hunting until a proper ecological survey based on scientific evidence is conducted.

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/killing-consume/#.XOJPIIzYdU>

GOVT PONDERERS OVER ELECTRIC CARS TO FIGHT POLLUTION

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated May 18, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday chaired a meeting on climate change and decided to introduce electric cars by setting up electric car plants for the first time in the country.

Adviser to Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam briefed the premier on the climate change.

The prime minister ordered the authorities concerned to ensure conversion of 30 per cent of all cars running in the country into electric vehicles by 2030.

PM orders conversion of 30pc cars into electric vehicles by 2030

On the issue of possibility of heavy rains and flood in Gilgit-Baltistan, the meeting was informed that Shisper glacier in Hassanabad village of Hunza was posing a serious threat to residents of the area with each passing day as it has surged by three kilometers.

The prime minister directed his team on climate change to expedite the process of installation of a glacier monitoring system to monitor all glaciers in the country.

Referring to the government's plan to plant 10 billion trees across the country, the prime minister said that it was a national project and the matter should not be politicised.

Later, Mr Aslam told a press conference that the government planned to introduce electric cars in the country by 2030 and that the move would have far-reaching impact on the country's environment.

"Most countries are opting for electric cars across the world and Pakistan is far behind in it and once introduced in the country, electric vehicles will help save Rs2 billion worth of oil imported into the country besides reducing the country's air pollution," Mr Aslam said.

The adviser said that smoke emissions from vehicles were a major source of air pollution in the country and it contributed heavily to smog during winter season in Punjab, especially in Lahore.

He said that electric cars would help lessen dependence on LPG and compressed natural gas stations, most of which were shut down because of gas closure on different days especially in winter in Punjab and these stations would be converted into charging docks for electric cars.

Referring to the smog issue in Punjab during winter, he said that last year crop burning, one of the major sources of smog in Punjab, was banned. This year, too, he said, crop burning would be prohibited and the government planned to purchase the crop waste to sell it to industrial units.

He also announced plans to launch Green Rickshaws in the country and for this purpose the government was holding talks with different stakeholders.

Published in Dawn, May 18th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1482983/govt-ponders-over-electric-cars-to-fight-pollution>

REMOTE ISLAND BEACH PLASTICS POINT TO GREATER WASTE PROBLEM

AFP May 17, 2019

PARIS: The world may be seriously underestimating the amount of plastic waste along its coastlines, researchers said on Thursday as they unveiled findings showing hundreds of millions of plastic fragments on a remote Indian Ocean archipelago.

A team of experts travelled to the Cocos Islands, a group of 27 small atolls 2,100 kilometres west of Australia and found an estimated 414 million pieces of plastic. In all, the plastic fragments would weigh around 238 tonnes, the team said. Images taken from the survey show white sand beaches blanketed with plastic waste.

But according to lead study author Jennifer Lavers, the fragments on the surface of Cocos Island beaches — and beaches around the world — may just be the tip of the iceberg. Lavers and the team dug multiple holes across beaches on the Cocos Islands, and found plastics, mainly in the form of small or microparticles, throughout the sand layers.

They estimate that the true amount of plastic pollution on the beaches surveyed may be as much as 26 times greater than the fragments visible on the surface. The study, published in the journal Nature Scientific Reports, concludes that global plastic waste surveys “have drastically underestimated the scale of debris accumulation”.

Plastic production has exploded worldwide in recent years, with half of all plastics produced in the last 13 years. Mankind throws millions of tonnes of plastic into the sea every year, and much of it gets washed back ashore onto beaches where it poses a risk to wildlife.

Lavers, from the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies at the University of Tasmania, said such plastic concentrations found on a remote group of islands was deeply concerning. “While the five oceanic gyres or ‘garbage patches’ tend to garner a lot of research and media attention, the Cocos Islands are not located near or within one of these gyres,” she said. “Plastic is everywhere, in all corners of the ocean, being distributed by current systems big and small.”

Lavers said industry- and society-wide changes in behaviour — from production, to consumption and re-use — were needed to stem the plastic waste epidemic.

Published in Dawn, May 17th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1482790/remote-island-beach-plastics-point-to-greater-waste-problem>

DUST STORM, RAIN IN SEVERAL DISTRICTS CAUSE WIDESPREAD DAMAGE TO CROPS IN SINDH

Dawn Report Updated May 17, 2019

KARACHI: A dust storm coupled with light rain swept through several districts of southern and upper Sindh on Thursday causing some casualties and widespread damage, besides trouble to commuters, pede-s-trians and others.

The dust storm hit Hyderabad at around 5pm and continued to disrupt the routine life and vehicular movement for about 15 minutes as visibility turned poor, though it brought a pleasant change in weather conditions as the temperature dropped considerably.

Gusty winds caused serious damage to the mango orchards in the district, according to growers. “The fruit is ripe and any shedding means monetary losses to growers, said Mahmood Nawaz Shah, a mango grower.

SANGHAR: Two persons were killed and scores of others injured as dust storm hit Sanghar district on Thursday evening. It was followed by a spell of heavy rain.

Hospital sources confirmed arrival of 25 people with injuries of different nature they had sustained during the storm as gusty winds uprooted many trees and brought down billboards.

In Islamabad Colony, a girl, Noor Bibi Mallah, was killed when the wall of a house was pulled down by strong winds. In another storm-related incident, a man, Jameel Ahmed, lost his life in Panhwar Colony.

NAWABSHAH: Nawab-shah city and other towns and villages of Shaheed Benazirabad district on Thursday received moderate rains followed by the dust storm.

The rain brought down the temperature in the district, otherwise experiencing sizzling weather conditions.

NAUSHAHRO FEROUZE: Several moderate spells of rain lashed Naushahro Feroze and several other towns including Kandiaro, Halani, Mehrabpur and Bhiria city turning weather pleasant.

Twenty-five persons, mostly children, injured in different incidents were taken to the Sanghar Civil Hospital from Chotiariyoon, Kot Nawab village and Chak 22 for treatment. Widespread damage to houses and crops was caused by the storm in Tando Adam, Shahdadpur, Sinjhor and some other parts of the district.

Many full-grown trees and electricity poles were uprooted in Nawabshah, Daur, Jam Sahab and other towns.

Electricity went off in Nawabshah city soon after the storm hit and could not be restored till late in the evening as it continued to rain intermittently.

Moderate to heavy spells of rain lashed many towns of Umerkot and Shikarpur districts late on Thursday evening, private TV channels add.

It was still raining when the last reports came in at around midnight, the reports suggested.

Published in Dawn, May 17th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1482694/dust-storm-rain-in-several-districts-cause-widespread-damage-to-crops-in-sindh>

POLYTHENE BAGS MAJOR CAUSE OF LUNG CANCER, NA BODY TOLD

RECORDER REPORT | MAY 15TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

A parliamentary panel was informed on Tuesday that excessive use of polythene bags is a major cause of lung cancer in the country. This was revealed before the National Assembly Standing Committee on Science and Technology, which met with Sajid Mehdi in the chair here at COMSATS University.

The committee was briefly apprised of the excessive use of polythene bags which are a major cause of lungs cancer, stoppage of sewage draining system and disruption of environment. These are absorbed into soil and slowly toxic chemicals are released. Officials informed the committee that production of plastic bags must be eliminated but around 35,000 people are linked with this industry and they must be cared of.

The committee was also briefed about the working, performance, achievements and issues being faced by the COMSATS. The COMSATS rector informed the committee that cases about irregularities are under investigation by FIA and NAB. He told that COMSATS has seven campuses in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He urged that a one-time funding of Rs 500 million should be given to the university to oust it from deficit, which was Rs 900 million but reduced during the last two years. The university finances about 75 percent of the budget from its own resources while the remaining 25 percent or around Rs 1.75 billion are given by the government.

The committee urged that one new campus each of COMSATS University should be constructed in Karachi and Balochistan. However, the committee was told that matter of land acquisition is under consideration with government of Sindh. The committee was informed that 150 acres of land have been acquired in Balochistan, but funds are awaited from the federal government. “We have the ability to open two new campuses every year, but we are not getting funds from the Higher Education Commission (HEC),” the official informed the committee.

The committee lauded the efforts of a student for inventing a speedy wound healing molecule for diabetics and burn victims. A huge investment is required to launch it but unfortunately, nobody in Pakistan could invest and out of compulsion the COMSATS had to sign MoU with an Australian company. Now it is in clinical research process and it would take more than one-and-a-half-year to get into the market.

MNAs Engr Usman Khan Tarakai, Rahat Aman Ullah Bhatti, Abdul Shakoor Shad, Sobia Kamal Khan, Mukhtar Ahmed Malik, Khawaja Saad Rafique, Zaib Jaffar, Dr Samina Matloob, Sikandar Ali Rahoupoto, Naveed Aamir Jeeva and Aftab Hussain Siddique, besides the officials of the ministry attended the meeting.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/05/20190515473593/>

SEVEN STEEL MILLS CLOSED IN MALAKAND OVER POLLUTION

A Correspondent May 14, 2019

MINGORA: Commissioner Malakand Division Riaz Khan Mehsud has ordered the closure of all seven steel mills operating in the built-up zones of the Malakand district for violating environmental laws.

In his standby directives issued here the other day, the commissioner clarified that no steel mill could be operated in the seven districts of Malakand division except those having compliance with Environment Protection Agency's SOPs.

"These open furnaces are distributing cancer and other epidemic diseases in the community and the administration will not let them compromise on public health and safety," he said, adding that environment came first, and anyone who was interested to run his industry should install the mechanical unit being suggested by the Environment Protection Agency to filter and control emission of hazardous and nitrogenous gases.

"Malakand division is one of the scenic regions of the country and the natural beauty of this region will not be allowed to be harmed by environmental pollution. Necessary steps have to be taken for the protection of its clean and green environment," he said.

He maintained that regional administration was trying to shift these industries to the industrial estate recently inaugurated by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan in Malakand.

He conditioned the operation of the steel mills with no objection certificate issued by the Environment Protection Agency.

Published in Dawn, May 14th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1482138/seven-steel-mills-closed-in-malakand-over-pollution>

IMRAN KHAN-LED CABINET DENIES FUNDS FOR DROUGHT RELIEF

By Zafar Bhutta Published: May 14, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has refused to contribute funds to the relief operations for drought-hit families in Sindh and Balochistan.

Earlier, the provincial disaster management authorities (PDMAs) of Balochistan and Sindh approached the federal government, seeking its contribution to the relief operations launched for the drought-stricken families.

Following request from the provincial authorities, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) prepared a plan for providing ration bags worth Rs4.25 billion for one month to the drought-hit families. In this regard, the NDMA prepared a summary and tabled it before the cabinet for approval.

The cabinet, in a recent meeting, was informed that the current drought in Sindh and Balochistan had hurt around 5 million people and livestock. The provincial governments had initiated relief operations, yet a significant number of families remained unattended to.

Therefore, the PDMAs of Sindh and Balochistan sought the NDMA's support. Accordingly, the cabinet was told, the NDMA sent a summary for approval of the prime minister for the provision of ration bags worth Rs4.25 billion for one month to the drought-affected families.

The cabinet was briefed that in order to overcome the prevailing drought, the NDMA, in consultation with the PDMAs of Sindh and Balochistan, UNOCHA and other donor agencies, had finalised a joint

coordinated drought response structure on January 22, 2019 and prepared a drought response plan in collaboration with the UNRC.

The drought response plan worth \$96.3 million focused on short, medium and long-term interventions for one year in pre-identified areas ie nutrition, health, food security and agriculture, education, and women and child protection.

The UNOCHA had approved a grant of \$10 million to facilitate the respective sectors in responding to the needs of affected communities with an additional \$1 million and possibly more would be allocated by the Pakistan Humanitarian Pool Fund (PHPF) reserve.

The cabinet was informed that the plan was earlier forwarded to the prime minister for approval. The premier gave directives for constituting a committee, headed by the finance minister, to discuss the drought response plan and the prevailing drought in Sindh and Balochistan, and send its recommendations to the cabinet.

The committee held its meeting on March 11, 2019, chaired by the then finance minister. The minister for inter-provincial coordination and National Assembly deputy speaker, being public representatives of drought-stricken areas, and director general of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority Balochistan attended the huddle.

The committee recommended that the drought response plan for 2019, prepared by the NDMA, may be approved without any funding from the federal government in light of its restricted functions and role after the 18th Constitutional Amendment as well as the 9th NFC Award, which gave majority of the resources to the provinces.

In line with the directive of Prime Minister Imran Khan, the drought response plan along with recommendations of the committee was sent for approval of the cabinet. The cabinet, chaired by the prime minister, approved the plan with the stipulation that no federal government funding would be involved in the programme.

Published in The Express Tribune, May 14th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1972239/2-imran-khan-led-cabinet-denies-funds-drought-relief/>

PAK-EPA PROMOTING CONCEPT OF GREEN INDUSTRIAL ZONE, CLAIMS OFFICIAL

RECORDER REPORT | MAY 13TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) in the wake of Clean Green Pakistan programme has promoted the concept of green industrial zone in coordination with the industrial sector. Pak-EPA had conducted a detailed survey of Industrial Estate of the federal capital situated in sectors I-9, I-10 and Kahuta Triangle to identify and categorize the number and types of industries.

An official of Pak-EPA told APP that a total of 185 industrial units were identified in I-9, I-10 and Kahuta Triangle. “Major source of air pollution are steel furnaces in Islamabad Capital Territory which are being regularly monitored by Pak-EPA through installation of cameras and online dust monitoring system,” he added. To a question, he said the Green Industrial Zone initiative aimed at increasing the plantation cover in the sector which was depleted due to massive construction and

development. The initiative was launched with the assistance of the industrial community on plant 4 Islamabad day which was observed on April 3. While referring to the concerns of the masses about increased pollution levels due to industrial emissions, he said, "It is not a fact as number of industries emitting smokes are not increasing day by day in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). Scrubbers have also been installed for absorption of carbon from emissions." It was, the official said modern air reverse bag technology that used accumulate dark Carbon in the vent of the furnace and later on packing up in proper bags. The packaged Carbon was then sold for Rs85,000 per 20 kilograms bag, adding since May 1 the steel mills owners had started importing the black carbon to China and other countries, he mentioned.

There are 12 steel units which were causing pollution in sector I-9, I-10 despite strict monitoring and legal action, he said. However, the apex court in its order of 5th July 2010 directed cessation of operations of all Steel Mills till such time the online dust monitoring system was installed on the stacks. "Cases against two Steel Mills I.e. Modern Steel and Potohar Steel have been filed in the Environmental Protection Tribunal (EPT) which imposed fine to the tune of Rs 50,000 on each unit. During the visit of Pak-EPA monitoring team to the industrial area on 28 August 2017 three industries that is Zia Steel, Mustahkem Foundry and Silk Route Steel Mills have been found to be non compliant as the anti pollution equipment not working where Pak-EPA initiated legal action through issuance of environmental protection order and subsequent closure of tile industries through ICT administration," he said.

Moreover, on account of non-compliance of the order of the apex court dated 30th June 2018 following four steel furnace and re-rolling Mills were sealed the same day by the agency after issuing environmental protection order (EPO) and a fine of rupees 5 million was imposed on each 1 Pak-Iron Re-Rolling and Furnace Steel Mills, Mustahkem Steel Mills (foundry), Siddiqui Steel Mills (furnace), Karachi Steel, he informed.

Replying to another question, he said, "Presently, all the Steel furnaces situated in ICT have installed pollution abatement Technology and Pak-EPA regularly monitors these Steel units for ensuring the compliance of the national environmental quality standards (NEQS). These units are being monitored by Pak-EPA through CCTV cameras installed inside and on the rooftops of the Steel units. The Steel units are also submitting their monthly gaseous emissions report to Pak-EPA."

The Agency, he said had notified National Environmental Quality Standards Ambient Air under Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) no. 1062 (I)/2010 and industrial gaseous emissions under SRO no. 549(I)/2000. "Every industry is liable to keep its gaseous emissions within the permissible limits notified in NEQS," he stated.

Pak-EPA, he told this scribe conducted a 30 day ambient air quality survey of industrial areas of ICT in February 2018 where the Agency now regularly monitored industrial areas to assess the pollution status of ICT due to these industries. In ICT, Pak-EPA, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ICCI) and all associations of industries were working together the first model green industrial zone of Pakistan and all necessary steps were being taken under the green and clean initiative of prime minister.

"Pak-EPA is also arranging lectures, seminars and workshops regarding the use and introduction of green technologies in the industrial sector to abate air pollution within the country with ICCI," he said. He went on to say that in this connection a training and awareness session was conducted in Pak-EPA on 9th April 2019 wherein then 20 industries representing soap, pharmaceutical, steel flour,

marble Industries and warehouses nominated by ICCI participated who were imparted awareness regarding procedural and legal requirements for compliance of the provisions of PEP Act, 1997 and rules.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/05/20190513472871/>

ELECTRONIC MARVELS TURN INTO DANGEROUS TRASH IN EAST AFRICA

By Amy Yee May 12, 2019

DAR ES SALAAM, Tanzania — After nightfall, when trash covers the streets of the busy Kariakoo market here, compactor trucks rumble along followed by men in green uniforms and women wearing skirts and rubber boots.

Armed with brooms and shovels, they sweep up the usual detritus of discarded vegetables and fruit, along with bottles and plastic packaging, and throw it into the maw of the trucks that haul it away to the dump.

In developing countries, trash doesn't easily disappear, so this scene of formal garbage collection signals progress in Dar es Salaam, East Africa's largest city.

But complicating the trash disposal problem is the increasing amount of electronic waste. E-waste includes everything from computer monitors to television sets to cellphones and beyond.

Regular garbage collectors are not equipped to deal with e-waste. And much of it is stored in warehouses or scavenged for recyclables, then dumped.

Solar energy products that help low-income, rural people without electricity are also adding to the e-waste blight. As solar energy booms in the region, so do expired lead-acid batteries for rooftop solar panels and lithium batteries for solar lamps. E-waste can damage the environment by leaking dangerous chemicals into groundwater and harm people who scavenge recyclable materials by hand.

Already an environmental concern in wealthier countries, the problem is growing in places like East Africa as incomes rise and more people can afford electronic devices.

But many of these regions also lack facilities and equipment to properly dispose of the waste.

In Tanzania, "there's no training for hazardous materials," said Allan Suddih, general manager of Green WastePro, a waste management company here that does not deal in e-waste.

In Dar es Salaam, for example, laborers who collect heavy lead acid batteries used in cars, power backup systems and rooftop solar systems frequently break them open with machetes and drain the acid into the ground by hand. Then they sell those batteries to factories that melt lead scrap in furnaces to be resold to dealers.

The process pollutes the soil and water with lead, which can lead to brain damage and other health problems, according to a report from Phenix Recycling, which operated briefly in Tanzania.

Water and soil around the Msimbazi River are already polluted from battery, steel, paint, food processing and other factory waste, according to a paper published in 2018 in the Journal of Scientific

Research and Reports. Samples showed levels of chromium, copper and lead far above the World Health Organization's safety levels.

"The chance of having contaminated groundwater is very high," said Ghanima Chanzi, an engineer at the Water Institute in Dar es Salaam who wrote the paper.

Water from the river is used to irrigate nearby vegetable fields, she said, adding that Tanzania has virtually no safe disposal systems for industrial waste.

In East Africa, the vast majority of expired lead acid batteries are car batteries and power backup systems, used during frequent blackouts. Solar products account for a fraction of overall e-waste, although the amount is growing as the industry booms.

Power Africa, an initiative of the United States Agency for International Development (U.S.A.I.D.), and various partners aim to have 25 million to 30 million new solar connections across Africa by 2030.

Companies mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia sold 3.7 million solar energy products, including solar lamps and rooftop systems, in the first half of 2018, according to a report from the Global Off-Grid Lighting Association (Gogla), a nonprofit organization representing the off-grid solar industry.

Solar energy has clear benefits, of course. It is a clean alternative to fossil fuels, which contribute to climate change.

It provides renewable energy that is often cheaper than electricity created from dirty diesel generators and kerosene.

However, the lithium batteries in solar lanterns are difficult to recycle. They are often dumped or even burned with other trash.

Rooftop solar systems connect to lead acid batteries that last five to eight years if properly maintained, and then are discarded.

Some lead acid battery companies provide formal recycling services in East Africa. But they are limited.

"There are not sufficient facilities with robust health and safety standards to handle lead-acid batteries," acknowledged Drew Corbyn, program manager at Gogla.

Solar companies, industry donors and investors are starting to address e-waste, especially because environmental pollution and health risks are undermining their green brands.

"By taking a proactive stance and working with local and regional governments now, the industry can avoid punitive measures in the future," said Declan Murray, a researcher at the University of Edinburgh who studies e-waste in Africa.

Investors interested in social good often have stringent environmental and social criteria. They are also increasingly concerned about hazardous solar e-waste.

Companies that can show proper e-waste management plans presumably will have an advantage, Mr. Corbyn said. However, it is a "challenge that requires further work and investment."

To help address the problem, aid agencies in the United Kingdom and the United States have vowed to give \$1 million in grants to companies addressing solar e-waste in sub-Saharan Africa. The aid is available through the Global Leap Awards program, supported by groups like the U.S.A.I.D.

For example, the German solar company Mobisol is working with Associated Battery Manufacturers in Kenya, and with Enviroserve, which opened an e-waste recycling center in Rwanda in December 2017.

That center is building a lead acid battery treatment center about an hour from Kigali, the capital, said Olivier Mbera, the center's manager.

In Nairobi, Kenya, the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Centre, the country's only registered e-waste recycler, collects batteries but sends complex materials to Europe.

Mobisol is also using technology for better maintenance. Solar home systems have a controller with a modem and SIM card.

"It communicates with our database and informs us about the system performance, energy consumption, appliance use," explained Paula Berning, corporate sustainability manager at Mobisol.

"We find out automatically if something is wrong with the product."

The need to confront the waste problem does not necessarily guarantee a business's success, however. Phenix Recycling was founded by Athina Kyriakopoulou, who worked for several years at solar energy companies in Tanzania and Uganda, where she saw the "alarming" accumulation of e-waste.

Phenix received e-waste from clients including the solar companies M-Kopa and Mobisol. It sent difficult-to-recycle circuit boards and lithium batteries to Belgium, and solar panels to South Africa, Israel and Belgium.

A lot of e-waste must be sent abroad for proper recycling that meets international standards. Phenix also received conventional recyclable materials like plastic and paper.

Despite the huge need for recycling services, many businesses still struggle for support and funding.

Case in point: Phenix closed down last year partly because of "the lack of investors willing to fund waste companies, and a hesitation from companies to pay for their waste because of lack of regulation or lack of enforcement," explained Ms. Kyriakopoulou.

A lot of money goes into understanding the issue "but not yet to support growing companies. Phenix came a few years too early," she said.

But Ms. Kyriakopoulou is optimistic that e-waste recycling in East Africa will improve with stronger regulation and more competition. There may be hope yet for Phenix to rise from the ashes.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/12/climate/electronic-marvels-turn-into-dangerous-trash-in-east-africa.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 20TH TO MAY 26TH 2019

CM ORDERS CRACKDOWN ON MANUFACTURING, USE OF PLASTIC BAGS

Bureau Report May 25, 2019

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Mahmood Khan has ordered a crackdown against manufacturing and use of plastic bags throughout the province.

He was chairing a meeting on promotion of tourism in the province, said an official handout.

The meeting was also attended by Senior Minister for Tourism Atif Khan, Minister for Information Shaukat Ali Yousafzai, Minister for Local Government Shahram Khan Tarakai, Minister for Communication & Works Akbar Ayub, Chief Secretary Muhammad Saleem Khan and Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Shahab Ali Shah.

The chief minister expressed concern and displeasure over the ongoing use of plastic bags in various parts of the province.

He added that the relevant laws should be implemented to curb the practice which was causing environmental pollution and threatening human lives and biodiversity in the province.

Mahmood Khan directed the administration to take stern measures against all those factories manufacturing plastic bags without using biodegradable material. He ordered imposition of heavy fines on the people involved in buying plastic bags from other provinces.

The chief minister directed the Information and Public Relations Department to launch an awareness campaign to highlight the relevant laws and penalties against the use of plastic bags.

This was needed to warn the manufacturers and shopkeepers in addition to educating the masses on the negative impacts of plastic bags on environment and biodiversity, he added.

The chief minister directed the Information and PRs Department to undertake measures in cooperation with the district administrations for promoting the use of biodegradable shopping bags.

Mahmood Khan directed the district administration to crack down against plastic bag manufacturers so that its production and use may be curtailed at the source.

He stated that the use of plastic bags had negative impacts on the tourism industry as it was one of the major causes affecting the natural beauty and tourist spots of the province.

The chief minister directed the district administration to ensure the availability of biodegradable shopping bags throughout the province. He called for banning new constructions in tourist spot in Kalam in Swat district.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/475944-cm-orders-crackdown-on-manufacturing-use-of-plastic-bags>

PTI GOVT CLUELESS ABOUT LAND COVERED BY FORESTS IN COUNTRY

By Shabbir Hussain Published: May 24, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The government lacks any actual data regarding the total area of the country which is under forest cover with the last effort to compile data coming in 2011. Moreover, there is no parameter to measure the increase or decrease in forests in the country after the billion tree tsunami programme.

Sources in the climate change ministry have disclosed that two years ago, the previous government led by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) had conducted a survey under the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation and sustainable management of forests (REDD Plus) programme.

However, after its results were disputed, neither the report nor the survey data emerged onto the public scene.

Sources say that according to land cover Atlas of Pakistan, constituted by Pakistan Forest Institute, Peshawar in 2011, around 4.549 million hectares of land in the country is covered by forests or around 5.1% of Pakistan's total area.

However, a survey conducted by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in 2017 found forest cover around 5.7% of all land in the country. Moreover, it noted that Pakistan had lost some 43,000 hectares of forest every year from 2000 to 2010. This is half the size of the total land of Islamabad and is the highest rate of deforestation in Asia.

The survey found that Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) had the most area covered by forests or around 435,138 hectares. This amounts to 36.9% of the Himalayan state's area.

Similarly, around 1.509 million hectares of land is covered by forests in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) or around 20.3% of the total land of the province.

In Islamabad, forests cover around 20,343 hectares of land, which is 22.6% of the total land. Similarly, in the formally Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata), 534,579 hectares of land is covered by forests, forming around 19.5 per cent of the tribal belt's total area.

In Gilgit-Baltistan, forests cover around 3.04 million hectares or only 4.9% of the total land of the mountainous region.

Sindh has around 660,584 hectares of land covered by forests or around 4.6% of its total area. Punjab, being the most populated province of Pakistan, only has 553,862 hectares land covered by the forests or only 2.7% of its total area.

The country's largest province by size, Balochistan, only has 498,904 hectares of land covered by forests or just 1.4% of its total land.

Moreover, a report by the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) states that around 1.617 million hectares of land are covered by forests which are 2.2% of the total land.

A World Bank report, though, ranks Pakistan at 113 out of 143 countries for the lowest rate of forests. Climate Change Ministry officials, though, say that Pakistan is amongst the 56 countries where forests cover around 10% of the total land in the country.

Members of the public and representatives of social welfare organisations have resented the proposed legislation to authorise industries to manufacture or import flat polythene bags for general consumption besides its usage in industrial packing, primary industrial packing, municipal waste, hospital waste and hazardous waste.

The resentment emerged during a consultative meeting organised by the Climate Change Ministry. The meeting was chaired by Prime Minister's Advisor on Climate Malik Amin Aslam and was attended by plastic manufacturers, environmentalists, industry and civil society representatives.

Participants were of the view that since the draft legislation has already been submitted to the Law Ministry for approval, the 'after-the-fact' consultative process appeared to be meaningless.

Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director Munir Ahmed, who attended the meeting, said that the proposed legislation has two parts. The first explicitly imposes a ban on all types of plastics bags from June 5 onwards with a cut-off date for a complete ban on the sale and use of plastic bags within the jurisdiction of the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT).

The second part of the same legislation, though, intends to authorise the plastic industry to manufacture or import flat polythene bags for general consumption.

Published in The Express Tribune, May 24th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1979280/1-pti-govt-clueless-land-covered-forests-country/>

LACK OF INTEREST OF PROVINCES DELAYS WILDLIFE POLICY

By Shabbir Hussain Published: May 23, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Owing to the lack of interest on part of the provinces, the national wildlife policy could not be given final shape to be presented in the cabinet or the Council of Common Interests (CCI) for approval.

The draft will be presented after incorporating the input of stakeholders, including the provinces, on the policy draft.

According to sources, the climate change ministry has prepared the draft of the national wildlife policy for the protection of wildlife and its promotion. While the draft was prepared six months ago, the ministry had decided to make the policy more comprehensive, thus making changes to the draft.

It has also sent copies of the draft to the provinces over two months ago in order to solicit and incorporate their input but the provinces weren't forthcoming with their input.

Sources said that the policy draft could not be given final shape owing to the delay in advice and input from provinces and stakeholders.

According to officials of the climate change ministry, as soon as comments from other provinces are received, the draft will be given final shape and presented in the cabinet or the CCI.

It is pertinent to note here that in the compiled wildlife policy draft shared a few months ago, the ministry had recommended strict enforcement of the laws in view of the threats faced by the wildlife species and their habitat due to illegal hunting and poaching carried out in different ways in the country. It also called for enactment of stricter laws in this regard.

The draft lays special emphasis on the protection of the wildlife and species faced with the threat of destruction and extinction. It also calls for regular zoological survey to identify and monitor the different species of wildlife inhabiting the country along with a comprehensive report on each species preferred habitat.

It also tackles issues including those pertaining to protection of wildlife facing destruction and its promotion, protection of migratory birds, protection of wildlife sanctuaries, trophy hunting, wildlife population, urban wildlife, zoos and safari parks as well.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1978512/1-lack-interest-provinces-delays-wildlife-policy/>

STERN ACTION DEMANDED AGAINST TIMBER SMUGGLERS

By Our Correspondent | 5/22/2019

MINGORA: The members of civil society and youth activist here on Monday complained about large scale illegal cutting of trees in Charma and Chitkarai area of Matta tehsil and demanded of the government to take strict action against the timber mafia.

Youth activists from different parts of Swat told Dawn that they noticed illegal cutting of a large number of trees in the forests of Charma and Chitkarai.

‘We went to the forests of Charma and Chitkarai with a group of friends but we were shocked to see fresh chopped trees at different places. We took photos and videos of the chopped trees and informed the local elders,’ said Azahrud Din, a youth activist.

Akbar Ali, another youth activist, said that they saw that the trees were properly cut into planks. ‘We saw that at many places planks were taken away, however, at few places we found several planks that were covered with grass and earth,’ he said.

A resident of Charma village on condition of anonymity told this scribe that the timber smugglers in Chitkarai and Charma villages were influential people and also had the support of politicians. He alleged that the forest guards were not performing their duty properly.

‘Usually, the timber smugglers cut the trees during the nighttime but the guards visit the forest for a little while in the daytime. At least I have not seen the guards for about a week now,’ said a resident of Charma.

Niaz Khan, a civil society member, said that the leaders of ruling PTI in Swat were also not interested in saving the forests. The forests of Swat would turn into barren land if the illegal cutting of trees continued in the same way, he added.

`If illegal cutting of trees is openly carried out in the hometown of chief minister, then what will be situation in other areas of Swat,` questioned the civil society members.

SDFO Umer Khitab, when contacted, said that he had already taken action of the recent cutting of trees and detained some people under Section 3 of the MPO and further legal action would be taken against them.

https://epaper.dawn.com/print-textview.php?StoryImage=22_05_2019_007_007

PUNJAB CS URGES PEOPLE TO MINIMISE USE OF POLYTHENE BAGS

SAFDAR RASHEED | MAY 20TH, 2019 | LAHORE

Chief Secretary Punjab Yousaf Naseem Khokhar on Sunday has said that use of polythene bags for shopping must be minimized as these are causing environmental pollution. He said that a strategy has been prepared to phase out plastic bags and distribution of cloth bags is a ‘first step’ towards this objective. He was talking to reporters during his visit to Ramazan bazaar Johar Town. He heard complaints of consumers and ordered the authorities to resolve their problems.

Commissioner Lahore Division Mujtaba Piracha, distributed cloth bags among consumers to create awareness about harms of ploythene bags. He appealed to people to prefer use of cloth bags instead of plastic bags. He said that as per vision of the prime minister of Pakistan it is a priority of the provincial government to overcome environmental pollution. “We all will have to make collective efforts against pollution and media can play an important role in creating awareness among people in this regard,” he opined.

He mentioned that all government machinery is working day and night to ensure best arrangements for Ramazan bazaars and provincial ministers and administrative officers are conducting regular visits to these facilities to provide relief to people in the holy month. He said that demand of lemon, tomato and onion is high due to subsidy in Ramazan bazaars but their sufficient supply is being ensured. Similarly, numbers of counters for sugar sale have been increased due to rush of buyers. A proposal to allow sale of upto 2kg of sugar in Ramazan bazaars would be considered in the meeting of Cabinet Committee on Price Control whereas as sale of upto 2 kg of the commodity has already been allowed for elderly people, he concluded. Deputy Commissioner Saleh Saeed told journalists that a campaign to distribute cloth bags has been started to discourage use of plastic bags. She said that the drive is aimed at creating awareness among citizen about harms of polythene bags which are causing environmental hazards. The district administration, in collaboration with Sapphire Retail Group, is distributing 10000 cloth bags in Ramazan bazaars in the city, she added.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/05/20190520477236/>

June 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 27TH TO JUNE 2ND 2019

MODERATE DROUGHT FORECAST FOR SINDH'S SIX DISTRICTS

RECORDER REPORT | JUN 2ND, 2019 | KARACHI

Mercury level on Saturday shot up to 51 degrees Celsius in Jacobabad as the Met Office (MO) has forecast a moderate drought for six districts of Sindh in the next week. Similarly, no rain has been forecast for Sindh and Balochistan over the period, indicating that a moderate drought like situation will continue. However, "Wet conditions are likely to prevail in the northern parts of the country," the Met said.

Rainfall recorded in Balochistan's different districts during May 24 and May 30, 2019, was: Dalbandin 15.2mm, Barkhan and Lasbella 14mm, each, Sibbi 4mm, Zhob 2mm and Quetta (Sumungli) 1mm. Districts in Sindh which received rainfall were: Padidan 7 mm, Jacobabad 6mm, Larkana 5mm, Dadu 4mm, Mohenjo-Daro 3mm, and Shaheed Benazirabad 1mm.

In the last 24 hours Jacobabad sizzled with 51 degrees Celsius, Sukkur, Dadu, Mohenjo-Daro and Larkana 49, each, Noorpur Thal, Rahimyar Khan and Bahawalnagar 48, each, Lahore, Faisalabad and Multan 46, each, Hyderabad 45, Peshawar 44, Islamabad 41, Karachi and Muzaffarabad 37, each, Gilgit 34.

In the next 24 hours mainly hot and dry weather is expected in the most parts of the country with isolated dust-thunderstorm and rain in Malakand, Hazara and Kohat Divisions, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir.

Hot and warm weather is expected in Karachi with temperature up to 37 degrees Celsius on Sunday and 36 degrees Celsius on Monday with humidity up to 75 percent and 80 percent respectively. "Continental air is prevailing over most parts of the country. A shallow westerly wave is present over upper parts of the country," the Met said.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190602483244/>

CARBON TAX

By Editorial Published: June 2, 2019

The PTI-led government is mulling over plans to impose a carbon emission tax on fuel in Punjab equivalent to one rupee a litre. The idea is that this will help reduce environmental pollution. The plan — understood to have secured Prime Minister Imran Khan's nod — has been forwarded to the provincial cabinet for approval. As per the proposal, the money collected under the head of this new tax will go towards funding green initiatives.

Carbon tax is not a new concept. It has helped force industries in certain countries to become energy efficient by adopting greener technology and fuel. But in those countries, mostly developed

economies, a host of prerequisite and support mechanisms are available which make the transition somewhat easier. And even if the desired impact of reducing greenhouse gases has been underwhelming, as per studies where these taxes have been in vogue for an extended period of time, the tax presents at the moment the best way to force the change.

In a country like Pakistan, which is still struggling to fully meet its peak summer energy demands and where fuel prices remain volatile owing to a fickle currency, it remains to be seen whether people will opt to pay more for their fuel rather than adopt change — as they do when fuel prices change on the first of every month. This is particularly truer when there is an absence of a genuine alternative.

Then there is the issue of the value of the tax imposed. A rupee per litre of fuel does not amount to much, not at least for the average consumer. There are some studies which call for an ‘effective tax’ reflecting new and higher forecasts for future costs of climate change. Imposing a new tax for climate change can certainly help generate revenue to fund these projects but without forcing concerted change in habits by making alternatives available, the plan is unlikely to work.

Published in The Express Tribune, June 2nd, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1984988/6-carbon-tax/>

JAPAN TO HELP SET UP DISASTER WARNING SYSTEM

By Shabbir Hussain Published: June 1, 2019

ISLAMABAD: As part of collaboration on issues of climate change and dealing with calamities, Japan will help Pakistan in the installation of disaster warning system and to create awareness regarding the dangers of changing weather.

Moreover, three major automobile manufacturers of Japan are exploring investment opportunities in the electric car industry in Pakistan. These views were expressed by Japan’s ambassador to Pakistan Kuninori Matsuda in a meeting with the Adviser to the Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam.

The Japanese ambassador also appreciated steps taken by the incumbent government to mitigate disasters while assuring his country’s cooperation in tackling challenges posed by climate change.

Acknowledging the environmental challenge facing the country, the PM’s aide expressed his gratitude for the equipment provided by Japan to measure air pollution.

Pakistan is one of the countries affected by climate change and environment pollution, Aslam noted. “The problem has increased in Pakistan during the last few years, especially in Lahore,” he added.

The provincial capital was caught up in the midst of an air pollution crisis during last winter, with its air quality index (AQI), an internationally accepted measure of pollution levels, went north of 300. When AQI values go above 100, the quality becomes unhealthy, particularly for sensitive groups, but if AQI values are higher it becomes unhealthy for everyone.

Ambassador Matsuda also offered training support for Pakistani experts to deal with natural disasters, establishment of an academy, seminars and workshops.

He said that the Japanese experts have vast experience of restoration of forests, which could be useful for the training of Pakistani experts. The Japanese envoy also offered the installation of the automatic warning system for natural disasters.

The PM's adviser said that the current Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led government was aware of the climate situation and was taking adequate steps to address it. He also briefed the Japanese ambassador about the green youth movement – a training programme about environmental pollution and climate change.

On the issue of electric cars, Aslam said that the PM had advised to formulate policy for the establishment of electrical car industry in Pakistan. "The draft of the policy is in its final stages," he continued.

"The production units of traditional cars are also small in number. The environment is conducive for the industry of electrical cars," he added.

Furthermore, he PM's adviser said that despite the challenges in the energy sector, Pakistan expects to produce more electricity than demand in the coming years.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1984605/1-japan-help-set-disaster-warning-system/>

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION: PUNJAB MULLS CARBON EMISSIONS TAX

By Rizwan Asif Published: May 31, 2019

LAHORE: Prime Minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan has given his blessings to a proposal to charge a one rupee per litre carbon emission tax on petrol and diesel being sold in Punjab in a bid to curb environmental pollution.

This was among the proposals forwarded to Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar by the Punjab Excise and Taxation department. The recommendations also include a number of tax exemptions for women and orphans under the age of 25.

The excise department has also decided to start an express service for the registration and transfer of motor vehicles, according to which any application would be processed within 48 hours. The owners of motorcycles would be charged Rs300, while the owners of cars will be charged Rs1,000.

Meanwhile, there are plans afoot to conduct fresh surveys for property tax estimation in Punjab in August 2019.

The excise secretary has also directed that the administration of taxes on alcohol and spirits be streamlined to reduce corruption and improve regulation of the controlled substance. Punjab's resource mobilisation committee has agreed with the budget advice of the excise department that women get increased property tax exemptions for residential properties, while orphans may also get exemptions till the age of 25.

Currently, the excise department only grants tax exemptions of up to Rs12,800 to widows and orphans under the age of 16. The excise department prepared this recommendation based on the PTI chief's announced policy to provide support and respect to women.

Punjab CM Buzdar had agreed with this advice while noting that the children of most widows are young and need financial support but noted that divorcees are also usually young women with minor children and they also deserve a tax exemption.

According to sources, PM Imran was recently presented with the excise department's recommendation that a carbon emissions tax be imposed in Punjab to help curb damage to the environment. The tax would help finance green initiatives.

According to excise department estimates, the tax could easily generate between Rs8 and Rs10 billion per year. Imran approved the recommendation, but the Punjab government has to take the final decision on whether to implement a carbon tax and also whether excise department's token taxes and transfer fees will be kept in place, reduced or revoked in order to provide some relief to the public.

Currently, the department collects Rs7 billion per year from token tax and Rs500 million through motor vehicle transfer fees. However, the department faces difficulties in collecting token tax and the practice requires both, a large workforce and time for road checking, while citizens, in general, have shown little interest in paying the tax.

The property tax survey will be started early in the new financial year and is expected to take three months. Property records will also be updated through the survey and plans are afoot to set new property categories and rates.

Punjab Excise and Taxation Minister Hafiz Mumtaz Ahmed told The Express Tribune that he gave a briefing along with former excise secretary Sher Alam Mehsood on the issue of imposing a carbon tax on petrol and gas to Prime Minister Imran Khan, who agreed that it was actionable, and the Punjab Resource Mobilisation Committee also agreed with it. "Now the suggestion will be sent to the provincial cabinet for approval," he said.

Excise Director General Akram Ashraf Gondal said that the proposal for a carbon emission tax on petrol and diesel price has been agreed to in principle and final approval will be sought from the cabinet.

Published in The Express Tribune, May 31st, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1983780/2-environment-protection-punjab-mulls-carbon-emissions-tax/>

CIVIC BODIES TOLD TO COMPLETE DRAINS' CLEANING BY JUNE 15

Tahir Siddiqui May 29, 2019

KARACHI: The city administration on Tuesday asked the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and other civic agencies to complete desilting and cleaning work of storm water drains under their jurisdiction by June 15.

Official sources said that the deadline was given to civic agencies at a meeting chaired by Karachi commissioner Iftikhar Shallwani and attended among others by deputy commissioners, officials of the KMC, district municipal committees (DMCs), Water and Sewerage Board, cantonment boards and the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board.

The commissioner asked the deputy commissioners to monitor the garbage removal work being carried out by the SSWMB and DMCs check the complaints of dumping of garbage into the storm water drains.

Showing his displeasure over the reports of dumping of garbage in the storm water drains, he said that there must be some special arrangements by departments concerned to discourage this practice.

The commissioner directed the KMC, DMCs, cantonment boards, Defence Housing Authority and other civic agencies concerned to make all-out efforts to complete the work of desilting and cleaning of storm water drains before the deadline.

He also directed the SSWMB and DMCs concerned to ensure that the garbage was disposed of at landfill sites as per adopted mechanism.

The meeting participants were informed about the civil work carried out at the Gujjar Nala and Mahmoodabad Nala by the municipal administration.

It was further informed that walls were also being constructed at both sides of the two drains to curb the practice of throwing garbage in drains.

The KMC and other departments briefed the participants about their respective contingency plans.

The commissioner asked all departments concerned to ensure that they were fully prepared to combat emergency situation in the wake of heavy rains in the city during the upcoming monsoon season.

The KMC also briefed the participants in the meeting about the progress of cleaning of storm water drains.

It was informed that there were 38 major drains running throughout the city and most of them were discharging their effluent directly into the sea without any treatment.

The commissioner asked the KMC to ensure that the choking points of all drains were cleared before the expected rains.

The meeting participants decided that the utility organisations would remove the obstructions in the cleaning of drains due to supply lines under the structures on the storm water drains.

It was decided in the meeting that Water and Sewerage Board would ensure that no manhole was left open in the city.

The commissioner asked the water utility to check all manholes in the city and ensure that they were properly covered.

It was decided that all deputy commissioners would coordinate with the KWSB and supervise the work to be carried out by them for covering of the manholes.

Mr Shallwani also directed the officials concerned to be alert to perform their duties to meet the challenges of rain emergency.

He told the participants in the meeting that Chief Minister of Sindh Syed Murad Ali shah wanted serious and extraordinary efforts to be taken by all agencies and departments concerned to meet the challenges of rain emergency.

The commissioner further directed the officials concerned to be alert and ensure that no road was inundated during rains.

He asked the officials to keep monitoring the arrangements made for the rain emergency so that they could improve the arrangement and overcome the shortcoming or lapse.

It was also decided that the civic bodies would set up rain emergency centres and launch fumigation drive before the rains.

Published in Dawn, May 29th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1485129/civic-bodies-told-to-complete-drains-cleaning-by-june-15>

WORLD'S RIVERS LOADED WITH ANTIBIOTICS WASTE

RECORDER REPORT | MAY 28TH, 2019 | PARIS

Rivers worldwide are polluted with antibiotics that exceed environmental safety thresholds by up to 300 times, according to research unveiled at a conference Monday. Scientists found one or more common antibiotics in two-thirds of 711 samples taken from rivers in 72 countries, they told a meeting of environmental toxicologists in Helsinki.

In dozens of locations, concentrations of the drugs – used to fight off bacterial infection in people and livestock – exceeded safety levels set by the AMR Industry Alliance, a grouping of more than 100 biotech and pharmaceutical companies.

Ciprofloxacin, a frontline treatment for intestinal and urinary tract infections, surpassed the industry threshold at 51 of the sites tested. At one location in Bangladesh, concentrations of another widely used antibiotic, metronidazole, were 300 times above the limit, the researchers said.

“The results are quite eye opening and worrying, demonstrating the widespread contamination of river systems around the world with antibiotic compounds,” Alistair Boxall, a scientist at the York environmental Sustainability Institute, said in a statement. The widespread presence of antibiotics not only impacts wildlife, but likely contributes to the problem of antimicrobial resistance.

The countries with the highest levels of antibiotic river pollution were Bangladesh, Kenya, Ghana, Pakistan and Nigeria. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has warned that the world is running out of antibiotics that still work, and has called on industry and governments to urgently develop a new generation of drugs. Discovered in the 1920s, antibiotics have saved tens of millions of lives from pneumonia, tuberculosis, meningitis and a host of deadly bacteria.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/05/20190528481098/>

SEPA SIGNS MOU WITH AKU

By Our Staff Reporter | 5/27/2019

KARACHI: The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Aga Khan University (AKU) with an aim to collaborate and build capacity on environmental issues.

Director general of Sepa Naeem Mughal and dean of AKU's medical college Dr Adil Haider signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Earlier, Dr Syed Zafar Ahmed Fatmi, a senior professor at the AKU department of community health sciences, gave a detailed orientation on the departmental working and objectives of the agreement.

The AKU department of community health sciences, he said, was the largest department of its kind in Pakistan and emphasised that this MoU would serve as a stepping stone for environmental protection.

The audience was informed that a quarter of deaths in the world were being caused by environmental degradation and that the largest number of deaths took place in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific regions, followed by sub-Saharan Africa, where around a quarter of deaths were likely caused by air pollution, chemicals, climate change and lack of access to sanitation.

Air pollution was estimated to cause seven million premature deaths annually, the audience was told.

Later, director general of Sepa gave a comprehensive presentation on the impact of air pollution and the steps taken by the agency to address the problem.

He also talked about urban and air quality issues in Sindh and said that vehicular emissions were a major contributor of air pollution.

Mr Mughal also highlighted the department's efforts in tackling pollution issues related to brick kilns, coal power projects, cotton ginning, stone crushing units, municipal and solid waste and burning of batteries.

In his speech, Dr Adil Haider appreciated the agreement between the two institutions and said that the AKU followed a holistic approach meant to safeguard the communities and environment.

Taimur Talpur, the minister of environment, climate change and coastal development, noted that the government was determined to do its best to provide relief to the masses despite facing a financial crunch.

"Today's agreement is a reflection of our commitment in this regard.

We need friends like the AKU to have a better understanding of environmental issues," he said, adding that such initiatives would help improve policy making.

https://epaper.dawn.com/print-textview.php?StoryImage=27_05_2019_114_009

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUN 3RD TO JUN 9TH 2019

COUNTERING AIR POLLUTION

RECORDER REPORT | JUN 9TH, 2019 | EDITORIAL

Each year, June 5 is celebrated as the World Environment Day with the UN designating different themes to highlight various environmental challenges and persuade governments to take action. This year's theme is "Air Pollution." Since 1974 it has become a major global event, though one of the world's biggest polluters, the US, under President Donald Trump refuses to recognise the link between climate change and greenhouse gas emissions, and despite ample evidence terms global warming "a hoax". But no one is safe from the effects of air pollution. According to "European Heart

Journal”, an average person in Europe loses two years of life from breathing polluted air. And 97 percent of cities in lower and middle income countries do not meet the World Health Organization’s minimum air quality standards; in high income countries, 29 percent of cities fall short of its guidelines. Air pollution-related ailments kill about 7 million people every year.

In Pakistan, environmental pollution plays havoc with public health. As per a World Bank report, outdoor air pollution in this country accounts for 22,000 premature adult deaths and indoor pollution 28,000 deaths, annually. Countless others suffer from chronic ailments. Among children it is associated with poor lung and mental development, low birth weight, asthma, cancers, even autism and other health issues. Unfortunately, so far environmental degradation has been of least concern to policymakers. Indeed, some of it is caused by activities in neighbouring India, and hence is beyond control since Nature does not recognise borders between nation-states. But the clear issues are inside this country, which need to be addressed to improve the quality of air we all breathe. For a start, laws inhibiting unrestrained emissions from industries, brick kilns, burning of tyres for fuel, and motor vehicles ought to be effectively implemented. Another contributor to air pollution are diesel generators, though, in view of energy shortages they have become a nasty necessity. Similarly, burning of wood and other biomass for cooking and other purposes in rural areas or poor households in cities cannot be stopped for obvious reasons, but at least people should be made aware of what they inhale so they can take necessary precautions.

Prime Minister Imran Khan’s interest in the issue inspires hopes of a better future. His billion tree plantation campaign has been extended from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to other parts of the country, which should help counter environmental degradation to a significant extent. Last winter, his government took preemptive measures to stop the smog that for the last few years kept returning to engulf Lahore and several areas in southern Punjab and upper Sindh. A lot more needs to be done to make individuals, enterprises, and provincial governments act with a sense of responsibility towards the environment. This government must formulate a comprehensive, long-term plan to deal with the challenge.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190609484170/>

AIR POLLUTION AND US

By Neil Buhne Published: June 9, 2019

Most people know the story of the frog who happily sits in water that gradually gets warmer and warmer — and the frog does not notice until it is too late, and dies. Sadly we can draw parallels from the behaviour of this frog and us, as we slowly become enveloped in air pollution, oblivious to how it is slowly harming, and possibly killing us. From time to time something dramatic does happen, which should shake our complacency, such as the smog that enveloped Lahore last year. But we soon forget as soon as the smog lifts and we find ourselves again slowly suffocating.

According to the United Nations’ World Health Organisation (WHO), worldwide ambient air pollution accounts for 29% of all deaths and diseases of lung cancer, 17% from acute lower respiratory infection, 24% from stroke, 25% from ischemic heart disease and 43% from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Exposure to small particulate matter of 2.5 microns or less in diameter, can cause other cancers in addition to lung cancer.

But these statistics have not shocked people into action. The impact of air pollution on people continues to be severe. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), nine out

of ten people worldwide breathe polluted air. Also, according to WHO reports, more than 80% of people living in urban areas are exposed to air quality levels that exceed the WHO guideline level of 10µg/m³, with low- and middle-income countries suffering the most — countries such as Pakistan.

In Pakistan, air pollution's harm is heightened by how it accentuates existing health issues. There is a direct correlation between numerous diseases and air pollution; ranging from respiratory diseases to cardiovascular damage, fatigue, headaches, anxiety, irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, damage to reproductive organs, liver failure, spleen and blood and also nervous system damage. Infants and children are particularly vulnerable. The most serious example in Pakistan is increased vulnerability to tuberculosis (TB). There are an estimated 510,000 new TB cases emerging each year and approximately 15,000 developing drug resistant TB cases annually. Pakistan is ranked fifth among high-burden countries worldwide and it accounts for 61% of the TB burden in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Examples from two of the world's best-known cities show this need not be the case. In the 1950s, thousands of Londoners died from 'killer fogs' — a toxic mix from coal fires, and emissions from industry and vehicles. Today London is a much larger city, but one where the killer fogs exist only in television serials about Winston Churchill and Queen Elizabeth! As recently as 10 years ago, Beijing had levels of air pollution that affected everyone's health and sometimes killed people. That is now a memory of a result of programmes to reduce the use of coal for heating and to cut vehicle emissions. Cleaning the air of London and Beijing had costs, but those costs are less than the effects continued high levels of air pollution have on health and the economy.

With programmes like the 10 Billion Tree Tsunami, and Clean Green Pakistan, the government is communicating loudly and clearly that there is an urgent need to take action to improve the environment. The gains can be higher and benefit more people if there is more sustained investment in technologies to reduce air pollution, and if there is a bigger push to clean up the air in all Pakistan's cities, including mobilising citizens to be more aware.

We can make that choice either to continue to be wrapped in a blanket of life-threatening dirty air, or to take practical and simple steps to breathe better and enjoy the stars. That would also be an environment more conducive to happy and healthy frogs who stay out of hot water!

Published in The Express Tribune, June 9th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1988200/6-air-pollution-us/>

PRESERVING OCEANS

By Editorial Published: June 9, 2019

June 8 marked World Ocean Day but it passed without much ado in Pakistan. The topic is highly relevant to Pakistan which is nestled along the shores of the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, even though we have a rich water resource, water worries have been perpetual throughout our history. Issues regarding water are important to highlight because not only does the Indian Ocean have the ability to assuage our water problems, we also have a blatant disregard for mitigating pollution with a health department and environmental protection agency that have been in a constant deep slumber. From an environmental point of view, with Pakistan poised to be one of the most impacted countries with climate change, we should be on our toes with regard to spreading awareness within on upkeep of our vast access to the strategic Indian Ocean.

The economics of the sea route would perhaps be more convincing in the argument of preserving our oceans. As glaciers melt, ocean levels are rising. However, water resources are limited and our practices of certain types of farming such as meat and dairy further strain Pakistan's water supply. A further strain on water supply will certainly bring the economy to its knees. While the main aim of World Ocean Day is to spread awareness about ocean preservation, Pakistan needs to take practical steps towards conservation as it cannot afford to be careless. Citizens do not have steady access to drinking water, which in itself is an emergency. Cleaning up our oceans is necessary for the way to be paved for innovation such as desalination plants to pull the resource from our ocean.

Some 1,050 kilometres of our coastal belt need immediate attention especially as we seek to expand tourism. Human health and safety need to be a priority and the biggest way to create that impact is through regulations on industrial waste. At present, only some companies follow internal waste management practices but all of them should experience strict oversight, along with greater pressure on oil transporters to follow safe practices.

Published in The Express Tribune, June 9th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1988234/1-preserving-oceans/>

PLANTING SOLUTIONS

Shahzada Irfan Ahmed June 9, 2019

Historically, the uncontrolled growth of cities, lack of proper urban planning, non-implementation of building bylaws and a general disregard for green development rules have resulted in environmental disasters in our country. Mired in atmospheric pollution and devoid of the indispensable green cover, these cities are fast becoming unlivable for people.

People have no option but to breathe polluted air and bear extremely high temperatures, caused mainly by the urban heat island effect. Heat island can be described as built up areas that are hotter than their surrounding areas due to increased human activity, especially modification of land surfaces. This difference in temperature is larger at night than during the day-time and can be unbearable when there are no winds. When trees are cut, green areas encroached upon and construction carried out without concern for environmental hazards, this phenomenon is bound to set in.

Over the last many years, the green areas of our cities have been eaten up by infrastructural development giving them the shape of a concrete jungle. The case of Punjab province can be discussed here as the last decade has seen a lot of development carried out here by both the government and the private sector.

While cutting of trees is condemned widely, it is unfortunate there has been no comprehensive urban forest policy in the province that can define and enforce rules about developing green areas, planting trees and penalising those violating these rules. Different entities look after functions like forestation and plantation but in isolation from each other. Therefore, there is an urgent need to come up with an Urban Forest Act for Punjab Province and legally bind all the stakeholders to strive for this collective goal. This will also be in line with the recommendation of the province's smog valley.

The draft of the Punjab Urban and Peri Urban Forest Policy 2019 has been prepared by The Urban Unit (TUU) Punjab and awaits approval by the provincial cabinet. The policy draft also includes input coming from different government departments including Forest Department, civil society

organisations and citizens' groups. It is hoped once this policy comes into force, the cities that have lost their green cover will get much of it back and saved from further onslaught.

However, there are a couple of questions that come to one's mind. For example, what exactly led the government to take this long-awaited step? Was it a policy move from within or there were external factors involved? How workable can be such plans in the presence of strong mafias and shortage of funds at the disposal of the government to carry out massive plantation drives?

What happened was that Justice Jawad Hassan of Lahore High Court (LHC), while hearing a petition, asked the government of Punjab to submit a policy on the issue of growing trees. The government submitted a draft prepared by the Forest Department after getting these orders. The learned judge asked Khalid Sherdil, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), TUU, to make improvements after holding consultations with all the stakeholders.

Talking to TNS, Sherdil says a major issue in this context was that there was no single department responsible for plantation. The Forest Department caters only to the notified forest land and does not operate in urban areas and the peri urban areas that fall within 20-kilometre distance of city limits. Similarly, the Parks and Horticultural Authority (PHA) mainly does beautification work and landscaping but not plantation. That is why this policy is of great significance. "It gives guidelines, defines duties and responsibilities of stakeholders and provides the required legal framework."

He shares they have issued instructions to 600 industries and 150 housing cities to plant trees in required numbers and fulfill their commitments they had made while applying for NoCs. The industries, he says, can plant trees on their premises as well as adopt roads for tree plantation whereas the housing societies can use their seven per cent open area to grow plants and trees.

He shares there are several housing societies that have either left designated areas open without trees or used these for construction purposes. This is totally against the law and it is suggested the owners of such housing societies be dealt with strictly. "As a punitive measure their NoCs can be revoked."

Sherdil shares that to start with, the government lands will be used for plantation — including vertical plantation in which plants are grown against wall of buildings etc. The immediate dividends will be improved health of citizens, increase in aesthetic value of cities, decrease in urban temperatures, pollution control and so on.

Hammad Naqi, Country Director, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), says the policy was urgently needed keeping in view the environmental hazards associated with deforestation. He shares the country loses an average of approximately 43,000 hectares of forests every year which is equivalent to half the size of Islamabad. Besides, Pakistan has just 2.2 per cent forest cover which is well below the recommended cover of 25 per cent and an annual deforestation rate of over 2.37 per cent which is the second highest in Asia after Afghanistan.

Naqi suggests care in species' selection for plantation. For example, the trees shall be native to the area and must have close association with bird diversity, have no adverse effects on nearby infrastructures, be maintenance-free as much as possible, be tolerant of seasonal drought and deep rooted to resist wind power and be fast growing, if possible.

He shares a single tree planted will sequester atmospheric carbon dioxide at an average of 50 pounds per year and a patch of tree will be able to recharge up to 0.96 million liters of water per year per hectare.

Environmental lawyer, Sardar Asif Ali Sial Advocate, suggests special focus on peri urban areas that are food baskets of cities but have lately been eaten up by housing societies. These areas must be preserved also for the reasons that trees planted on peripheries save cities from urban flooding caused by overflowing of water bodies. He also fears the fate of these plantation drives will be the same as those undertaken earlier where there was no system to do follow-ups.

Sherdil tries to allay these concerns and says they will use technology and remote sensing to track the inventory of available plants and even the health of each and every tree. A Management Information System (MIS) which complements with the satellite imagery-based estimations is being established at TUU.

Regarding the finances required to carry out desired activities, the policy suggests that all the stakeholder departments shall be funded through development and non-development budgets. The activities proposed in policy mainly involve raising of nurseries, land development and planting, maintenance of planting through protection weeding, and irrigation and development of green grounds. Usually, these activities are not adequately funded except in case of Forest Department, horticulture and other development authorities.

It further suggests the government shall set up a Fund, to be called the Green Development Fund (GDF). This Fund shall be financed from the sources like grants made by the provincial government, loans, aid and donations from the national, provincial or international agencies and any fees prescribed under rules formulated to implement this policy. The provincial government shall, in its annual budget, make provisions for this fund at 1 per cent of the total Annual Development Programme (ADP) budget.

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/planting-solutions/>

FIRE DESTROYS TREES IN SWABI MOUNTAINS

Muqaddam Khan June 08, 2019

SWABI: A wildfire broke out in the Karamar mountains here on Tuesday night destroying trees on a large scale.

Rescue 1122 director general Dr Khateer Ahmad said around 75 percent of the fire had been put out, while the rest would extinguished shortly.

Official says 75pc fire extinguished, rest to be put out shortly

Mohammad Uzair of Kalu Khan area told Dawn that the fire broke out on the top of the Karamar mountains, which was located at the confluence of Mardan, Swabi, Buner and Haripur districts, and it took four hours from Kalu Khan to be there.

He said the people tried in vain to put out the fire, so it spread fast due to strong winds.

The resident said the district didn't have Rescue 1122 service and therefore, the administration called the emergency service in Nowshera, Mardan and Peshawar, which sent in teams besides water bowsers and firefighting equipment.

Assistant commissioner of Razaar tehsil Tabinda Tariq said as the fire broke out five kilometres away from the road, fire engines didn't reach there.

She, however, said the firefighters went to the spot on foot and tried to put out fire all through Eid holidays.

The AC said all rescue teams were on high alert to prevent damage to public life and property.

She said a 24-hour control room had been established to monitor the situation.

Five firefighters fell unconscious during the operation.

One of them was taken to the hospital due to serious condition, while the rest were given medical aid on the spot.

Also, a fire erupted in Kund Park alongside the Indus.

Though holidaymakers were there in large numbers as part of Eid celebrations, no damage to public life was reported in the incident.

Members of the park's staff brought the fire under control after sometime.

A fire destroyed trees in Mero area of Topi tehsil as well before residents extinguished it on their own.

Also, a fire broke out near the Tarbela dam mountains burning down trees.

Dam employee Sardar Ahmad said the fire spread as most staff members were away due to Eid holidays.

Published in Dawn, June 8th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1486869/fire-destroys-trees-in-swabi-mountains>

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Editorial June 05, 2019

FORTY-FIVE years ago on this day, the United Nations' World Environment Day was first celebrated. Throughout the world, on June 5, efforts are made at creating greater awareness of environmental issues and finding solutions to the world's most pressing climate-related problems. Since 1974, the day has increasingly assumed global significance, with country after country realising the import of a joint natural heritage that transcends borders. Glass ceilings have been shattered and information is easily accessible to everyone. And yet, despite all their technological advancements and research, societies and governments have moved away from a basic truth about the crucial link between human existence and nature. In all these years, we have only seen climate patterns change at an accelerating speed, with commerce and convenience trumping environmental concerns in a world where so-called 'free-market' greed and desire reign supreme — with no realistic alternatives in sight to replace that system.

In the past few years alone, we have witnessed our mighty rivers and oceans clogged with toxic waste and plastic; the death of coral reefs that maintain the ecosystem for diverse marine life; ferocious wildfires swallowing everything in their path; glaciers melting at terrifying speed; rising water levels, heavy rainfall and flooding that destroy and displace in equal measure; droughts and heatwaves that scorch the earth and kill vegetation, animal and human life; rising food shortage; and large-scale climate-caused migration. And it is only expected to get worse. Despite growing evidence of the

catastrophes posed by climate change, there are still some among those occupying the most powerful positions in the world who deny the reality of global warming. In 2015, the Paris Agreement stated that the responsibility for halting climate change rests with each nation. Its aim was to reduce global warming to below 2°C — unfortunately, we are not even close to achieving that goal, and greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase.

As many parts of Pakistan are currently gripped by a suffocating heat wave, policymakers must reflect on whether they are keeping their promise. That Pakistan is the world's seventh most vulnerable country to the risks of climate change is an oft-repeated statistic. This year's theme in particular — 'air pollution' — is something the country is no stranger to. For the past few years, several parts of the country have been enveloped in thick smog at certain times of the year, presenting a health emergency. According to a Washington-based report, Pakistan is second only to India and China when it comes to mortality rates connected to poor air quality. Pakistan may be fortunate to have a prime minister who refers to himself as an environmentalist and clings to an idealism that is refreshing. But until the idealism translates into long-lasting change that can be seen (and breathed), it will remain a hollow and futile sentiment.

Published in Dawn, June 5th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1486644/world-environment-day>

200 ULEMA, NGOS JOIN HANDS WITH WSSP FOR CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

RECORDER REPORT | JUN 5TH, 2019 | PESHAWAR

The Water and Sanitation Services, Peshawar(WSSP) has announced that some 200 Ulema, from different schools of thoughts, will work with them to create awareness on the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene to make Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's 10-day sanitation campaign a success. The campaign titled, "Ashara-e-Safai" has been launched on May 25 throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

To make it a success, WSSP has also expedited its operations and community outreach efforts in collaboration with government and local non-governmental organizations. Several NGOs have deputed female staff to carry out door-to-door awareness campaigns jointly with WSSP female staffers to promote sanitation and water conservation.

The teams have been visiting girls' schools and colleges where they sensitise students on the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene apart from holding sessions with teachers.

Besides, community outreach drive is underway throughout the provincial capital. The company has constituted teams under the supervision of its social mobilisers for water and sanitation to hold corner meetings with masses in union councils and neighbourhood councils.

Moreover, awareness walks, meetings with teachers, Ulema and elected representatives, seeking their help to make the campaign a success. For effective community engagement to ensure participation at the gross root level, WSSP has, thus far, organised 10 prove community awareness sessions and as many walks while several awareness activities were conducted in public and private schools.

Walks were held in Tehkal, Faqirabad, Board Bazaar, University Town, Chowk Yadgar, Hashtnagri, Taj Abad, Charkhano, Gulabad, Abdara, Pawaka. WSSP has also organized schools quiz competitions in schools, as well as live programmes on water and sanitation, has been broadcasted through Radio Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Students from various schools were invited to the programmes who delivered speeches on the importance of water and sanitation and winners were awarded shields. To ensure proper dumping of waste, teams of WSSP held meetings with traders' unions, urging them to keep their markets clean and dump waste at WSSP designated places and containers.

Chief Executive Officer WSSP Syed Zafar Ali Shah said that sanitation and conservation of water were collective responsibilities of all. "WSSP alone can neither keep the city clean nor ensure water conservation unless masses play their due role in doing this," he said and urged them to cooperate with sanitation staff by disposing waste at proper places.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190605483831/>

DROPPING SEWAGE TREATMENT PLAN DEALS MASSIVE BLOW TO ENVIRONMENT: NFEH

RECORDER REPORT | JUN 5TH, 2019 | KARACHI

National Forum for Environment and Health (NFEH) has expressed its serious dismay over the deletion of Greater Karachi Sewage Treatment Plan (S-III) from the new Public Sector Development Programme while saying that the marine and coastal environment of Karachi will continue to be massively harmed due to the untreated discharge of around 450 million gallons daily sewage into sea owing to the absence of a scheme like S-III.

In a statement issued here on the eve of World Environment Day on 5th June, NFEH President Naeem Qureshi said that the federal government should not back out from its solemn commitment to share half of the cost of S-III project as this scheme is vital for reversing the serious phenomenon of environmental degradation being faced by Karachi.

He said that concerned quarters in Karachi, which were all set to mark the World Environment Day, would surely be dejected after learning about this latest government's decision concerning the S-III scheme. "A government, which came into power to fight the issues of environmental pollution and climate change by doing massive countrywide tree plantation campaign, should not delete a scheme from its developmental plan, which is solely meant for safeguarding the Karachi's marine ecosystem and environment," he said.

He said that Sindh chief minister had rightly pointed out in the recent meeting of the National Economic Council that the deletion of the S-III from the PSDP tantamount to penalizing the people of Karachi. The NFEH President said that continued financial support for schemes like S-III would simply prove the claim of federal government that it was genuinely concerned about the issue of environmental degradation in Karachi and was also taking practical steps to reverse this alarming phenomenon. "And when this support and commitment is absent then it simply means that the government is doing mere lip service for the cause of environment," he said.

"On one hand our prime minister seems very concerned about the environment of Karachi when he emphasizes upon adopting a new master plan for the city as he also lays stress on promoting urban

forestry but on the other hand his government altogether deletes a vital scheme like S-III from the PSDP,” said NFEH President.

“The Prime Minister should know well that the issue of environmental degradation in Karachi could never be reversed if 450MGD of sewage continued to dump into sea without any treatment as a comprehensive scheme like S-III should be constructed to tackle this issue permanently,” he said. He said that another massive source of environmental pollution was the untreated discharge of industrial effluents from industrial estates of the city. “Equally damaging is the undue delay in completing the scheme to build combined effluent treatment plants at industrial estates of the city,” said Qureshi.

“Now S-III scheme altogether dropped from the federal developmental plan, it is feared that serious deterioration of Karachi’s environment would become irreversible,” he said. The NFEH President called upon the concerned environmental activists, researchers, scientists, and like-minded non-governmental organizations in the city to come together and jointly raise the voice in favour of the S-III scheme while calling upon the federal government to immediately restore it in its new annual developmental plan.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190605483836/>

‘WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY’ TO BE OBSERVED WORLDWIDE TODAY

SARDAR SIKANDER SHAHEEN | JUN 5TH, 2019 | ISLAMABAD

Coinciding with the Islamic festival of Eid-ul-Fitr, the World Environment Day is being celebrated across the globe today (Wednesday) to highlight the serious environmental issues being faced globally. The World Environment Day (WED), celebrated each year on June 5, is the day to raise worldwide awareness and inspire action to protect our environment, according to a statement issued by the United Nations here on Wednesday.

Since it began in 1974, the event has grown to become a global platform for public outreach that is widely celebrated in over 100 countries that are members of UN. “This year, the WED is coinciding with the end of the holy month of Ramzan and Eid-ul-Fitr,” the statement said. Each World Environment Day is organised around a theme that draws attention to a particularly pressing environmental concern. The theme for 2019 is “Air pollution”, the UN said. “It is a call to action to combat one of the greatest environmental challenges of our time. Chosen by this year’s host, China, the theme invites us all to consider how we can make changes in our everyday lives to reduce the amount of air pollution we produce and thwart its contribution to global warming and its effects on our own health,” the UN statement said.

In his message issued on the eve of World Environment Day, United Nations Secretary General António Guterres said, “To improve air quality, we must know our enemy. Deaths and illnesses from air pollution are caused by tiny particles that penetrate our defences every time we fill our lungs. These particles come from many sources: the burning of fossil fuels for power and transport; the chemicals and mining industries; the open burning of waste; the burning of forests and fields; and the use of dirty indoor cooking and heating fuels, which are major problems in the developing world.

This polluted air kills some 7 million people each year, causes long term health problems, such as asthma, and reduces children’s cognitive development. According to the World Bank, air pollution costs societies more than \$ 5 trillion every year.”

The UN chief's statement added that tackling air pollution therefore presents a double opportunity, as there are many successful initiatives that both clear the air and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as phasing out coal-fired power plants and promoting less polluting industry, transport and domestic fuels. With investments in renewable energy sources outstripping those in fossil fuels every year, the rise of clean energy is helping globally. Cleaner transport is also growing around the world.

"Today, we face an equally urgent crisis. It is time to act decisively. My message to governments is clear: tax pollution; end fossil fuel subsidies; and stop building new coal plants. We need a green economy not a grey economy.

On World Environment Day, I ask each of us to act so we can breathe more easily. From pressuring politicians and businesses to changing our own habits, we can reduce pollution and beat climate change," António Guterres said.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190605483860/>

MELTING GLACIERS THREATEN ASIA'S DROUGHT BUFFER, WARN SCIENTISTS

RECORDER REPORT | JUN 3RD, 2019 | TBILISI

Countries from India to Kazakhstan are far more dependent on melting glaciers for water than previously thought, particularly in summer droughts, scientists said on Wednesday, warning that rising temperatures were threatening supply.

Each summer, the 95,000 glaciers in the mountain region spanning from Kyrgyzstan's Alai range to the Himalayas produce enough meltwater to support 221 million people, researchers at the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) calculated. That provides a crucial buffer against droughts, when rains fail and reserves are strained, according to the study, published in the journal Nature.

But such protection is under threat as ice caps shrink under rising global temperatures, threatening the region, said Hamish Pritchard, the study's author. "If we lose the glaciers then we lose that protection from drought," said Hamish Pritchard, the study's author.

At least a third of the ice in the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush will thaw by 2100, even if governments take tough action to limit global warming under the 2015 Paris climate agreement, a separate study found in February. When drought hits, ice melt from those mountains – often referred to as the "third pole" – can account for up to 100% of the water in some of Asia's main rivers, Pritchard said.

This waterflow is expected to grow in the coming years as more of the ice melts, but will then start to decline towards the end of the century as the glaciers retreat – something that would exacerbate droughts, he said.

Droughts are already affecting people's access to drinking water, food production and electricity generation across the region, said Tianyi Luo, senior manager for water risks at the World Resources Institute, a think tank.

“Water demand is also expected to grow significantly over the coming decades due to growing population and food and energy demand,” he said. “If the demand is going up but supply is going down, already stressed water resources is going to be even more scarce.”

Pritchard said effects could be particularly severe in drought-prone regions with arid summers such as the Aral basin in Central Asia, potentially forcing people to migrate or straining relations between countries that share a river. “As the climate crisis increases pressure on already scarce water supplies, the impacts will be felt most severely by those with least access to clean water, threatening their health and livelihoods,” said Jonathan Farr, policy analyst at the charity WaterAid. “It is the poorest communities who are paying the price for the world’s failure to act.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190603483459/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUN 10TH TO JUN 16TH 2019

FIRE DESTROYS TREES IN GADOON MOUNTAIN

The Newspaper’s Correspondent June 13, 2019

SWABI: A fire destroyed scores of trees in a mountain of Gadoon Amazai area.

The fire, which had erupted in Mangal Chai village on Tuesday night and immediately spread to a large part of the mountain due to strong winds, was put out afterward.

Soon after the fire broke out, the district administration called Rescue 1122 for help that sent in personnel, who with along with local officials, policemen and residents, extinguished it.

The reason for the fire wasn’t known.

The Gadoon Amazai region is known for precious timber.

Earlier, the fire erupted in the region’s Mangal Chai, Karamar and Ajmer mountains causing large-scale tree destruction.

The residents suspected that vested interests were involved in the frequent wildfire incidents in the region.

Meanwhile, nazim of Topi tehsil Sohail Yousafzai said the Ajmer Mountain fire had been controlled.

Meanwhile, a man allegedly killed his father in Shahmansoor area on Wednesday.

Riazullah told police that his brother, Muhibullah, gunned down their father, Farmanullah, for ignoring his opposition to the plan to sell house, and fled.

The police registered an FIR and began investigation.

Published in Dawn, June 13th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1487881/fire-destroys-trees-in-gadoon-mountain>

BILLION TREE PROJECT AT RISK IN KP'S TRIBAL DISTRICTS

Zulfiqar Ali Updated June 13, 2019

PESHAWAR: The saplings planted over hundreds of acres of land during the previous spring season in the merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are in danger of dying after staff of the forest department abandoned their maintenance due to unavailability of funds.

Official sources said the office of the conservator forests for merged districts couldn't get Rs90 million from the provincial government to clear bills of contractors and labourers hired for the spring plantation drive.

The plantation over 3,000 hectares of land in tribal districts is part of the 10 Billion Trees Afforestation Programme 2018-23 (BTAP).

"Our forest range officers and forest guards cannot go out of their offices for the maintenance of plants as contractors and labourers run after them to get their wages," said an official.

He said contractors and daily wagers had staged protests in front of the offices district forest officers for payment of dues.

Officials say forest dept staff stopped plantlet maintenance due to funds' unavailability

The data consolidated by forest offices shows that the department planted saplings over 3,126 hectares against the target of 6,095 hectares during the previous spring season in seven merged districts through different interventions apart from free distribution of 4475,000 saplings out of 3.6 million. However, funds have so far not been released to DFOs to clear the outstanding bills and continue the plant maintenance.

Sources said the row between the forest and tourism departments dating back to the alleged 'biased role' of the former in Malam Jabba land scandal had resulted in hiccup of release of funds for the new plantation carried out across the province, including merged districts under BTAP. The National Accountability Bureau is probing the high-profile land scam.

Officials admitted that the forest department was in hot water after two ministers opposed the approval of funds. The cabinet had deferred the matter for an indefinite period.

When approached, a senior official of the forest department acknowledged that the financial crunch had cast a pall over plantation in other districts of the province, too.

He said new plantation had become liability for the department due to delay in payment.

"The newly-planted saplings are at risk of dying if funds are not provided immediately," said he said, adding that the department needed Rs1.8 billion to clear the outstanding dues of contractors in all districts, including merged areas.

Sources said the department concerned launched the spring plantation drive without the approval of PC-1 and release of funds from the federal and provincial governments.

He said the BTAP was an all-Pakistan project but the forest department launched the drive without approval of its PC-I.

“It is unprecedented to execute a project without approval of its PC-I,” he said adding that he thought some officials had overreacted by launching the drive in an attempt to inspire Prime Minister Imran Khan.

A senior official of the forest department insisted that PC-I for the spring plantation drive was approved and Prime Minister Imran Khan had launched tree plantation campaign in Haripur in Sept 2018.

He said plantation in merged districts was part of the federal government-funded Green Pakistan Programme, which was launched by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in 2017.

The official was optimistic that the provincial and federal governments would allocate funds for the BTAP in the new budget.

The estimated cost of the five-year BTAP in KP is Rs27 billion to be equally shared by the provincial and federal governments.

The KP government has already carried out the Billion Tree Tsunami afforestation project at the estimated cost of Rs18 billion and grew over one billion trees during the last five years, according to the forest department.

The forest-covered area in merged districts is around 20 per cent and 19,000,000 hectares land is still barren.

Officials said the forest department would focus on merged districts and 60 per cent share of the budget under BTAP would be spent in tribal districts and the rest in others.

Under the BTAP, merged districts will get around Rs9.07 billion for the five years afforestation drive.

Published in Dawn, June 13th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1487888/billion-tree-project-at-risk-in-kps-tribal-districts>

GB TORRENTIAL RAINS WREAK HAVOC IN SHAGAR DISTRICT

By Shabbir Hussain Published: June 13, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Torrential rains in Gilgit-Baltistan have caused widespread devastation in Shagar district with several houses and crops being washed away due to the ensuing floods. All roadways in the district have also been blocked due to continuous rains over a period of two days in the district.

The floods entered the village late at night forcing area residents to take refuge on higher ground. However, a labourer and his son hailing from the Basha area of the region were trapped under the rubble of their house, prompting local people to rush to their aid and launch a rescue operation. The effort, unfortunately, was in vain as the two were found dead after 12 hours of intense effort by rescue officials, the district administration, local people and disaster management authority officials. The

labourer was identified as Ali Hussain. Their bodies were subsequently sent to their families in their native villages.

According to the district administration, 71 houses were affected by the torrential rains and floods of which 17 were completely destroyed, the rest sustaining partial damage.

Disaster management authority officials and the district administration distributed tents, foodstuffs, and other necessities to the victims and machinery was being brought in from Kharmang, Khaplo and Skardu to clear the roads.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1991321/1-gb-torrential-rains-wreak-havoc-shagar-district/>

TROPICAL CYCLONE ‘VAYU’ MAY UNLEASH WIDESPREAD RAINFALL IN SINDH

RECORDER REPORT | JUN 12TH, 2019 | KARACHI

The swirling tropical cyclone storm-‘Vayu’ is likely to unleash widespread windstorm with heavy rainfall in Sindh on Thursday and Friday, the Met Office said on Tuesday. The Sindh fishermen should avoid voyages into the deep sea from Wednesday evening until the storm dissipates most likely on Friday evening. The sea is likely to remain rough to very rough with the storm.

The sea breeze is likely to remain cut off on Thursday and Friday because of disturbed marine weather and may trigger heat wave like conditions in coastal areas of Sindh including Karachi, it said, adding that temperature in Karachi is expected to scale up to 40 degrees Celsius with 60 percent humidity during the period.

The stormy weather is expected to unleash widespread dust-thunder-showers with an isolated heavy falls in Thatta, Badin and Tharparkar districts on Thursday and Friday. However, the rest of Sindh is likely to receive scattered and isolated dust-thundershowers during the period, it said. The Tropical Cyclone ‘Vayu’, spotted presently at a distance about 1150 kilometres south of Karachi coast, is swirling with gusty winds at a speed of between 80 kilometers and 90 kilometers.

‘‘The system is likely to intensify further into a Severe Tropical Cyclone by evening today and will continue to move in northerly direction during next 24 hours,’’ it said.

The storm is now expected to grow into a Severe Tropical Cyclone with changing its direction to the northward in the next 24 hours, the Met Office said on Tuesday. It said that the authorities of Sindh concerned should remain alert during coming days to cope with the aftermaths of ‘Vayu’.

Maximum temperature in the last 24 hours was recorded in Sibbi as 48 degrees Celsius, Jaccobabad and Noorpur Thal 47, each, Turbat, Dadu and Bahawalnagar 46, each, Lahore and Faisalabad 44, each, Multan 43, Hyderabad 41, Islamabad 38, Peshawar 37, Karachi 36, Quetta 31, Muzaffarabad 34, and Gilgit 19. Murree received 22mm of rainfall, Astore 17 mm, Bunji 8mm, Saidu Sharif 7mm, Malamjabba and Pattan 6mm, each.

In the next 24 hours: Mainly hot and dry weather is expected in the most parts of the country. However, a very hot weather may strike eastern Balochistan, Sindh and central and southern Punjab. An isolated dust-thunderstorm with rain is expected in Malakand, Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Rawalpindi divisions, besides Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190612485316/>

AIR POLLUTION EMERGENCY

By Saad Gul Published: June 12, 2019

We all know that air pollution poses substantial health risks. All across Pakistan — especially in industrial cities like Karachi, Faisalabad, Gujrat, and Lahore — millions of people live and work in spaces where the average air pollution levels are way above the maximum limits recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Air pollution is a ‘public health emergency’, according to the WHO, with more than 90% of the global population enduring toxic outdoor air. New analysis indicates 8.8 million early deaths each year — twice earlier approximations — making air pollution a bigger killer than tobacco smoking.

Can anyone even fathom what will happen to our extremely vulnerable, ill, poor, uneducated and unaware masses if we continue to ignore air pollution? While Pakistanis are suffering harm — from head to toe i.e. dementia, heart and lung disease, fertility problems and reduced intelligence — our selfish, self-centred and narcissistic policymakers politicians and bureaucrats are still comfortable and unmoved.

How come a problem that kills nearly five million Asians every year goes unreported in mainstream media? The state and quality of the thoughts of our media, politicians and policymakers is reflective of the state of affairs — dense, dark, abysmal and catastrophic.

Amidst all this melancholy and grim environment around us, there is a glimmer of hope. Justice Jawad Hasan, of Lahore High Court, seems to have taken note of this. While hearing a petition related to controlling environmental pollution in the country on May 21, he directed that every citizen building a home in any housing society must plant at least two trees in order to curb environmental pollution.

The court has also, during the past five months, taken action (summoned detailed reports) against factories which are contributing to pollution.

Similarly, PM’s Adviser on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam recently stated before a conference that up to 37 per cent of the vehicle systems in the country will be converted to electric cars by the year 2030.

We just have to bear in mind that in the next decade or two, environmental pollution from vehicles, population growth (CO2 emissions), fossil fuel emissions from power plants, deforestation, water pollution and radiation will considerably increase.

We increasingly know what the problem is. What we now need are solutions — actionable steps that can be implemented relatively easily. Here are the three areas we should focus on to restore the basic human right of breathing clean air.

Firstly, we have to have established emission controls which focus on emissions that lead to the formation of fine particulate matter (PM2.5). This can be done by improving emission standards for road vehicles with a special focus on regulation of light and heavy-duty diesel vehicles as well as enforcing mandatory checks and repairs for vehicles. Moreover, we have to introduce advanced emission standards in industries.

Secondly, there is need to reduce the burning of agricultural and municipal solid waste; prevent forest and peat land fires; go for proper management of livestock manure; and strictly enforce bans on open burning of household waste and emissions standards for Brick kilns (stone ovens).

Thirdly, we have to embrace measures contributing to development priority goals with benefits for air quality. This includes using clean fuels — electricity, natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) in cities, and LPG and advanced biomass cooking and heating stoves in rural areas, and substitute of coal by briquettes.

Last but not the least, there is need to promote and incentivise wind, solar and hydro power for generating electricity; encourage a shift from private passenger vehicles to public transport or making Pakistan bike-friendly; and solidify waste management by encouraging centralised waste collection with source separation and treatment.

Published in The Express Tribune, June 12th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1990288/6-air-pollution-emergency/>

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Editorial June 10, 2019

IT was only last year that the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency had revived its water-testing laboratory and air quality-monitoring systems, after receiving instructions to do so by the Supreme Court's water commission in 2017. According to a report published in this paper on Saturday, however, it has now come to light that Sepa's air quality-monitoring stations and water-testing laboratory have been out of service for the past several months. The reason? It is the same issue that was pointed out after the 18th Amendment was passed and the agency came under the provincial government, and it remains a challenge that seems to plague many government departments in Sindh — the lack of finances. Three environmental monitoring systems were provided by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency and the Japan International Cooperation Agency in 2007. The functioning of these operations is vital to the health of Sindh's population, where public health services are few and of poor quality. Sindh has also been hit by a series of health scares in recent years, along with severe water shortages. In fact, the water commission had pointed out that the quality of drinking water in Sindh had deteriorated, with 78.1pc of the water samples collected found not suitable for drinking purposes, largely due to untreated sewage water mixing with freshwater bodies.

It is widely acknowledged that the bad quality of water along with the lack of awareness of basic hygiene and sanitation practices leads to serious illness. In fact, many illnesses in the country are directly connected to the poor quality of water and air, which has led to a high percentage of entirely preventable illnesses in the population. The suspension of vital services cannot simply be an issue of lack of funds. That there is wide-scale lethargy, incompetence, mismanagement and misuse of funds in the government sector is common knowledge. Whatever the real reason may be, the provincial government must urgently look into the matter and not seek excuses.

Published in Dawn, June 10th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1487241/environmental-concerns>

SAYING NO TO THE WEST'S TRASH

10 Jun 2019

BY MIKE IVES Muktita Suhartono contributed reporting from Bangkok, and Jason Gutierrez from Subic Bay in the Philippines.

The raid in the town of Telok Gong last week was among the latest efforts by officials to shut down unlicensed dumps holding plastic scrap imported from the United States and other wealthy countries.

“Everybody knows those dumps are illegal,” said Modh Faiz Tamsir, a butcher hawking fly-covered beef in a parking lot on Telok Gong’s main drag. “We don’t like them.”

After China, once the world’s primary dumping ground, abruptly imposed restrictions on “foreign garbage” in 2017, countries across Southeast Asia began taking in the West’s plastic waste.

Within months, Malaysia had replaced China as the world’s largest importer of plastic scrap.

But this country, and others across the region, soon saw the waste as an environmental nightmare, prompting a strong backlash. With public support, some advocacy groups have urged officials to permanently ban the import of plastic waste.

But with the world awash in plastic waste, some experts worry that backlashes like Malaysia’s could block the flow of raw material to Southeast Asia’s legal recyclers and manufacturers and increase the chances that plastic scrap will end up in rivers, oceans, dumps and illegal burn sites.

By imposing blanket bans on imported waste, “you’re potentially risking damaging the good recyclers’ business,” said Kakuko Nagatani-Yoshida, the United Nations Environment Program’s coordinator on chemicals and waste in the Asia-Pacific region.

“When those people lose a business opportunity, then in the future you have fewer options for waste management,” she added. “And I don’t think any government should have fewer options; you always need more.”

China’s waste restrictions were a response to years of pollution there by low-end recycling. The restrictions caused anxiety across a vast supply chain that includes waste companies and municipal recyclers in the United States and other developed economies.

“The exporter countries’ pants were on fire,” said Yuyun Ismawati, a cofounder of the Indonesian environmental group BaliFokus. “They realized they had underestimated China’s seriousness.”

Around the same time, unlicensed trash dumps, many of them owned by mainland Chinese investors, began appearing in the back alleys of Telok Gong and other towns near Southeast Asia ports.

“They just popped out of nowhere two years ago,” said Soh Ah Boon, the Malaysian owner of a junkyard about 15 miles from Telok Gong that collects material from local sources.

By March 2018, the peak of the surge, Malaysia was importing about 139,000 tons of plastic waste per month, up from about 22,000 tons per month a year earlier, according to official trade data analyzed by Khor Yu Leng, an economist in Singapore who studies Southeast Asian commodities.

The United States was the largest source, followed by Japan, Britain and Germany, she said.

As plastic imports rose across Southeast Asia, pollution became more noticeable — typically in the form of trashlogged rivers or smoke from ragtag incineration sites, according to environmental groups.

Local opposition grew, too. “Who would like it when someone comes to your neighborhood and tears the place up?” Mr. Soh said at his junkyard between drags of a cigarette.

In response, Southeast Asian governments issued waste-import restrictions of various shapes, sizes and durations.

Thailand imposed an indefinite ban on electronic waste last summer, for example, while Vietnam stopped issuing waste-import licenses and vowed to stop importing scrap plastic by 2025.

In the Philippines last month, officials returned a shipment of waste that had been mistakenly sent there from Canada several years ago and vowed to send another back to Hong Kong.

“Load that up on a ship and I will advise Canada that your garbage is on the way,” President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines said of the Canadian shipment in early May. “Prepare a grand reception. Eat it if you want to.”

In Malaysia, the campaign against imported waste has been led by Yeo Bee Yin, the 36-year-old environment minister.

On a recent trip to Port Klang, down the road from Telok Gong, she said the government would return 10 of about 60 containers with waste from the United States and elsewhere that had been smuggled into processing facilities.

Ms. Yeo’s campaign may be a way to score public relations points against countries, including the United States, that have criticized Malaysia for its high rates of deforestation and other severe environmental problems, said Helena Varkkey, an expert on pollution in Southeast Asia at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur.

“This is a ‘Here’s a taste of your own medicine,’” she said. Ms. Yeo’s office could not be reached for comment.

But whatever the motivation, one danger may be that legal recyclers across Southeast Asia will now miss a chance to both scale up their business and help mitigate environmental problems, including the scourge of plastics in the oceans.

Some plastic waste, if properly sorted and classified, is already being used in the region as a raw material for high-end manufacturing and as a replacement for fossil fuels in cement kilns, among other uses.

And because municipal waste sorting here is virtually nonexistent, importing plastic scrap is often the only way for recycling companies to achieve economies of scale.

But the current waste crackdowns have not clearly distinguished between truly hazardous garbage and other types of plastic that can be safely recycled again and again, said Douglas Woodring, the founder of the Ocean Recovery Alliance, a nonprofit group based in California and Hong Kong that works on plastic pollution.

“You’re categorizing these as a dangerous substance, which they are not if you process them the right way,” he said. “They’re just like any other commodity — like copper, steel, metal, wood and paper.”

Some recyclers are already feeling the effects.

Officials in the Philippines, for example, declined to issue import permits last month for a shipment of plastic-wastebased fuel that is produced in Australia and used in the production of cement, customs paperwork shows.

In a report explaining the decision, a Philippine customs official noted that the import request had been rejected partly because of “past and present controversies on the importation of waste.”

Pavel Cech, the Malaysia-based managing director of ResourceCo Asia, the Southeast Asian branch of an Australian company that produces the fuel, said that between 100 and 150 shipping containers of it would not reach cement kilns in Malaysia and the Philippines this month because of customs disputes.

Mr. Cech said he was pleading his case to officials but did not expect the region’s governments to clarify their plastic scrap policies anytime soon.

“Throughout Southeast Asia,” he said, “politics and populism prevails over a technocratic approach.”

<http://iht.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/viewer.aspx?issue=1003201906100000000001001&page=8&article=0f6fd055-98f3-45da-90ae-9232e9a8c3df&key=clxArGKnYEENfO0KGfiBJg%3D%3D&feed=rss>

KP FOREST DEPT LACKS SPECIALISED RESOURCES TO CONTROL WILDFIRES

Bureau Report Updated June 14, 2019

PESHAWAR: Though billions of rupees have been invested in the province to increase forest cover, the forest department does not have specialised resources to control wildfires, which destroyed small and mature green trees over large swathes of land in four districts during the last few days.

The department’s officials said in the absence of firefighting system, the blazes were controlled with the help of shovels, mattocks and other tools.

Conspicuously, the wildfires erupted in those areas, mostly in Mardan and Swabi districts, where the provincial government had carried out massive plantation under its signature Billion Tree Tsunami afforestation programme during the last five years.

Officials surprised to see fire erupt in areas where massive plantation was carried out in five years

“We are astonished to hear that the wildfires erupted simultaneously in six or seven areas where trees were planted during the last five years,” said Mardan divisional forest officer (DFO) Tariq Khadim.

He told Dawn on Thursday that a committee had been formed to probe the forest fire incidents.

The committee will submit its report within 10 days, he said.

The opposition parties in and outside the provincial assembly have been demanding investigations into the Billion Tree Tsunami programme.

The departmental inquiries have already been conducted in the project.

The preliminary reports suggest that blaze caused substantial damages to small and mature trees over four square kilometers area in the forests of Gadoon Amazai, Swabi district.

The surface fire has destroyed plants and trunks of green trees over 17 hectares of land in Gandaf area.

Officials said a large number of picnickers had rushed to forest covered areas during Eid holidays and cooking might have caused bushfire. They said heat wave could also ignite bushfire in forests.

The wildfire also destroyed trees in Karamar Mountains of Swabi.

Blazes were also reported in Kund area near Nowshera and Haripur districts after Eidul Fitr. Police have arrested several persons in connection with these incidents.

The forest covered area in KP has surpassed one million hectares figure after the execution of over one billion trees afforestation programme, which, according to official estimates, is 20.3 per cent of the total lands of the province.

Despite massive tree plantation and increase in forest cover, the department does not have equipment or firefighting machines to cope with wildfires.

Officials said the forest department used manual methods to contain forest fires in Mardan and Swabi.

They said police, staff of Rescue 1122 and forest guards from neighbouring districts were called in to control fire.

The officials said the fire frequently erupted in forests but the department did not have sufficient resources and tools to protect trees.

“At the moment, the forest department does not have firefighting equipment except manpower to extinguish fires in forests,” said an official, adding that the component of firefighting had been included in the Sustainable Forest Management Project.

Published in Dawn, June 14th, 2019

SRO ON PLASTIC BAGS BAN READY FOR CABINET APPROVAL

By Shabbir Hussain Published: June 14, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Climate Change (MoCC) has received the draft of SRO banning use and sale of polythene bags after vetting by the Ministry of Law.

MoCC will present the Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) before the federal cabinet in the next meeting to bring into force ban on plastic shopping bags in Islamabad from August 14.

The federal government wants to ban manufacture, purchase, sale and use of non-degradable polythene bags from August 14.

According to the SRO, after the given date, nobody would be allowed to manufacture, import, sell, retail, supply, store and distribute polythene bags.

However, the authority concerned would allow use polythene flat bags for industrial packing, primary industrial packing, municipal packing, hospitals' waste and hazardous packing under certain regulations.

Companies would have to file an application in this regard and if allowed, the applicants will have to pay fee Rs10,000 rupees yearly for using flat bags.

According to SRO draft, violators of polythene bag ban will face heavy penalties. If a violation is made by a manufacturer, importer or wholesaler, penalty will be Rs100,000 for first time, Rs200,000 for second time and Rs500,000 for more than two violations.

Similarly, if the regulations was breached by a shopkeeper, hawker or a vendor, the fine would be Rs10,000 on the first violation, Rs 20,000 for the second time and Rs50,000 on more than two violations.

If any other person breached the plastic bag ban rules, he would have to pay Rs5,000 fine.

Sources said that after the climate change ministry and its subsidiaries would run an awareness campaign in the federal capital after draft approval from the federal cabinet in which the public would be informed about environmental hazards associated with plastic.

The officials of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said that there were several small and micro enterprises engaged in plastic manufacturing across the country with no plan for environmental protection as well as NOC.

They added that the shopkeepers or traders give these bags for free with the grocery items as they are very cheap which, he termed, was a big cause of its large scale usage.

He suggested that the use of plastic bags could only be reduced if they were produced with an improved standard and sold at an increased price.

The officials expressed that the polythene bags or plastic shoppers cause severe threat to the environment, while being non-degradable they choke the sewerage lines. Further, the smoke emitted after burning of plastic bags was hazardous to health and environment.

Similarly, these shoppers lying in open spaces are eaten by animals which they could not digest and ultimately it becomes a cause of their death.

If anything warm is kept in these shoppers, the chemicals present in the plastic enter into the items and become a source of cancer.

The EPA officials told that there are plants for recycling of polyethylene bags in developed countries and now these countries have also introduced the "oxo-biodegradable" and "photo-biodegradable" system for recycling of polyethylene bags.

According to a survey report of EPA, as many as 55 billion plastic bags are used per year in Pakistan while the amount of plastic use is increasing by 15 per cent each year.

The report disclosed that more than 8,000 plastic manufacturing units are present in Pakistan with an average daily production capability of 250kg-500kg each.

Further, this industry provides direct employment to some 0.2 million people whereas it is the source of bread and butter of some 0.6 million people indirectly.

According to a latest EPA report, around five trillion plastic bags are consumed every year worldwide out of which some 13 million tonnes of plastic bags are dumped into the seas causing danger to marine life as around 0.1 million marine animals die annually due to swallowing plastic.

Published in The Express Tribune, June 14th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1992068/1-sro-plastic-bags-ban-ready-cabinet-approval/>

INDONESIA RETURNS FIVE CONTAINERS OF WASTE TO THE US

By AFP Published: June 15, 2019

JAKARTA: Indonesia has returned five containers of rubbish to the United States and will not become a “dumping ground”, officials said Saturday, the latest Southeast Asian country to return imported waste.

The containers were supposed to contain only paper scrap, according to the customs documents. Instead they were loaded with other waste including bottles, plastic waste, and diapers, said senior environment ministry official Sayid Muhadhar.

“This is not appropriate and we don’t want to be a dumping ground,” Muhadhar told AFP.

The five containers – owned by a Canadian company – were shipped from Seattle in the United States to Indonesia’s second biggest city Surabaya in late March, Muhadhar said.

It was not immediately clear where the rubbish originated from.

Indonesia is currently examining several other containers in Jakarta’s port and the city of Batam on the island of Sumatra.

It is the latest country to return imported rubbish after neighbouring Malaysia vowed to ship back hundreds of tonnes of plastic waste last month.

The Philippines has ordered tonnes of garbage dumped in the country to be shipped back to Canada, sparking a diplomatic row between the two countries.

For years China received the bulk of scrap plastic from around the world, but closed its doors to foreign refuse last year in an effort to clean up its environment.

Huge quantities of waste have since been redirected to Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, Indonesia and to a lesser degree the Philippines.

Around 300 million tonnes of plastic are produced every year. Much of that ends up in landfill or in the seas, according to the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF).

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1993238/3-indonesia-returns-five-containers-waste-us/>

PUNJAB EARMARKS RS 3.43 BILLION FOR FOREST SECTOR

RECORDER REPORT JUN 16TH, 2019 LAHORE

In order to develop, maintain and maximize forest resources in a modern scientific, environmentally sustainable, ecologically stable and socially acceptable manner, the Punjab government has earmarked Rs 3.43 billion for the forest sector for the year 2019-20.

According to the official sources, the amount will be spent on 28 ongoing and four new schemes with an aim of rehabilitation of existing forest resources through afforestation/re-forestation, enhancing tree cover through promotion of social forestry and production of planting stock through establishment of potted and bed nurseries.

The new initiatives planned for the next financial year include launch of up scaled version of 'Green Pakistan Program Reclamation & Development of Forest Areas in Punjab' at a total cost of over Rs 15 billion and establishment of Dargai Gill Forest Park with a total expense of Rs 175 million.

The other new initiative includes conservation, propagation and promotion of neglected indigenous wild fruit tree species at a cost of Rs 100 million.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190616486774/>

PUNJAB ALLOCATES RS 1,000 MILLION FOR ENVIRONMENT

ZAHID BAIG JUN 16TH, 2019 LAHORE

Punjab government has proposed an allocation of Rs 1000 million for environment for the year 2019-20 as compared to an allocation of Rs 1200 million for the corresponding period to promote sustainable development in the province through integration of environmental considerations in pursuit of economic growth while improving regulatory regime and enforcement mechanism.

The government has proposed this allocation for carrying out 13 new schemes with an allocation of Rs 594.868 million and continuing work on four ongoing schemes with an allocation of Rs 405.132 million.

The key initiatives government intends to take up in the next financial year is to work for capacity building of EPA Punjab for Enforcement of Environmental Standards in Punjab including Combined Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs) and Industrial Estates (IEs) under J&C Programme and establishment, functioning of Strategic Planning & Implementation Unit (SP&IU) to carry out the activities identified under Punjab Green Development Programme, establishment of environmental laboratories at DG Khan and Bahawalpur and enhanced environmental quality monitoring systems for Punjab's air, surface and ground water resources, provision of missing environmental monitoring

equipment / instruments in existing eight regional labs of EPA Punjab to effectively monitor the air and water quality.

Punjab Green Development Programme (PGDP) funded by the World Bank to strengthen environmental governance and promote green investments in Punjab at cost of US \$273 million is also expected to take off during the next financial year. According to the budget document, US \$200 million out of the total cost would be a loan by the World Bank under P4R modality. The government has proposed an allocation of Rs 599 million. The energy department will implement a scheme under PGDP titled retrofitting of public institutions with the allocation of Rs 500 million in FY 2019-20, the total cost of scheme is Rs 2.5 billion.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190616486781/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUN 17TH TO JUN 23RD 2019

MARGALLA HILLS FIRE IN LIMITS OF KP FOREST AREA: MCI

By Our Staff Reporter | 6/17/2019 12:00:00 AM

ISLAMABAD: Another wildfire engulfed a portion of the Margalla Hills on Sunday that, according to the Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI), falls in the limits of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's forest area.

Spread over 12,605 hectares, the Margalla Hills National Park sees many fires every year, but these have become bigger and more frequent over the last few years.

Thick smoke could be seen rising from the massive fire in the hills on Sunday. However, Wildlife and Zoo Director Rana Tahir Mahmood said the fire was in Kingri, in the limits of KP's forest area.

'We are very much alert. For the ongoing fire season, we hired 400 local boys from villages in the hills to fight fires,' he said.

He said six massive fire incidents have taken place in the part of the Margalla Hills that falls in Islamabad's jurisdiction this season.

He said 10 pickets have been set up and firefighting staff have been deployed on the ground.

'Today, 200 of our staffers are on the ground to tackle the flames,' he said.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=17_06_2019_151_003

G20 STATES CLINCH DEAL TO CUT MARINE PLASTIC POLLUTION

AFP Updated June 17, 2019

TOKYO: The Group of 20 major economies said they agreed a deal to reduce plastic waste that is choking the seas at a meeting in Japan on Sunday.

Under the agreement, G20 member countries committed to reducing plastic waste but gave little detail on how that would be done. They added that the steps would be voluntary and progress would be reported once a year, according to local media.

The Japanese government hopes to hold the first meeting in November, said newspaper *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

“It is great that we were able to make rules for all, including emerging and developing countries,” Japanese environment minister Yoshiaki Harada said after the two-day meeting of the G20 environment and energy ministers’ meeting.

Plastic pollution has become a global concern, particularly after bans imposed by China and other countries on the import of plastic waste from overseas.

Many countries, including Japan, have seen their waste pile up as a consequence.

Microplastics — tiny pieces of degraded waste — have attracted particular attention.

They absorb harmful chemicals, accumulating inside fish, birds and other animals, and are difficult to collect once in the water. The framework agreed at the meeting in the central mountain resort of Karuizawa would be the first to reduce plastic pollution in the ocean involving not only rich nations but emerging economies as well.

The deal would be “the first step” to tackling plastic waste, Hiroaki Odachi of Greenpeace Japan said in a statement.

“However, it is insufficient to rely on countries’ voluntary actions” to resolve the crisis, he said. Only an estimated nine percent of plastics ever produced are recycled and campaigners say the only long-term solution to the plastic waste crisis is for companies to make less and consumers to use less.

“G20 countries should clearly announce that they will prioritise reducing generation of single-use plastics” along with recycling and reusing materials, Odachi said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1488689>

MUET BODY, SEPA TO JOINTLY WORK FOR BETTER ENVIRONMENT

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent June 19, 2019

JAMSHORO: The US-Pakistan Centre for Advanced Studies in Water (USPCAS-W) and Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) have agreed to collaborate for environmental protection in the province through capacity building of public and private sectors and research in the field of the water and waste-water management.

A delegation of Sepa led by director general Naeem Ahmad Mughal visited the USPCAS-W of the Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET) Jamshoro and held a detailed meeting with the management of the centre led by USPCAS-W project director Dr Bakhshal Lashari. Deputy director academics and research Dr Rasool Bux Mahar gave presentation regarding the performance, achievements and available facilities and services of the centre.

Dr Lashari said the USPCAS-W would welcome every organisation to provide its expertise in various sectors related to environment and water. He said the centre was already working with various organisations and industries to resolve their water-related issues with the help of innovative research of its faculty and scholars.

Briefing the delegation, Sepa DG Naeem Mughal welcomed the offer and suggestions by the USPCAS-W team and agreed to collaborate in future. He sought the list of research projects, their titles and recommendations as he might discuss those with the government, non-government and private organisations on priority for implementation.

Mr Mughal said the centre should conduct trainings, workshops, awareness campaigns, for general public and workers of various industries and Sepa would collaborate in this regard.

He also said the USPCAS-W and Sepa would also work for air quality monitoring, indoor air pollution and to make mechanism for climate change in future and other sectors also. Both the organisations agreed to sign an MoU and develop an action plan to address the priority issues in the field of water and environment.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1488980>

WWF-PAKISTAN, OXFAM MARK WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

JUN 21ST, 2019KARACHI

Oxfam in Pakistan in collaboration with World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWF-Pakistan) celebrated World Environment Day to raise environmental awareness and sensitize people; join hands with the government, the private sector, youth and relevant stakeholders to protect the environment from climate change caused by human-led activities.

The event, organized at a local hotel in city, emphasized the impacts of climate change and the crucial role of those most affected in driving solutions to this global problem. Many countries that are acutely vulnerable to climate change, including Pakistan, are showing determined leadership in response to the climate crisis.

The Provincial Minister for Environment Climate Change and Coastal Development, Mohammad Taimur Talpur graced the occasion and said, "Pakistan ranks amongst the top ten most disaster-prone countries in the world, hence we must collectively acknowledge climate change is a serious issue." He also shared that women, children and indigenous people are disproportionately affected by climate change which is expected to have wide-ranging impacts on Pakistan.

He emphasized, we must commit towards collectively tackling the impacts of this global challenge faced by many nations across the world. He also shared that after Sukkur, Sindh government will soon ban plastic bags in Karachi. He informed that climate change policy has been prepared by the Sindh government which will be made public in next few weeks.

The Country Director of Oxfam in Pakistan, Mohammed Qazilbash supported the minister's views and said, "Climate change affects us all, but it has a larger impact on women throughout the developing world. Women often grow the family's food, fetch fuel and water, and raise children.-PR

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190621489052/>

MINISTER WARNS INDUSTRIES LACKING EFFLUENT TREATMENT PLANTS OF ACTION

The Newspaper's Staff ReporterJune 22, 2019

KARACHI: Regretting lack of action on part of industries in installing on-site treatment plants despite orders of the Supreme-Court mandated water commission, the Sindh environment and climate change minister announced on Friday at an event that the government was left with no option but to issue closure notices to non-cooperating industries.

He was speaking at a programme held to conduct a beach-cleaning drive at Seaview to mark World Oceans' Day.

"It's good that some people [industrialists] have started their work [on effluent treatment plants] but still there are a lot of industries, which are not cooperating with us and the government is left with no option but to issue closure notices to them [non-cooperating industries]," Environment and Climate Change Minister Mohammad Taimur Talpur said.

These notices could be issued to at least 100 industries in the next 10 to 20 days on their consistent failure to act upon the directives of the water commission to install an effluent treatment unit at their respective sites.

According to him, 85 per cent industries of Karachi didn't act upon the directives of the commission and they defied all deadlines given for the purpose.

Highlighting government initiatives in this respect, Mr Talpur said that work was in progress to install combined effluent treatment plants at different industrial zones of Karachi with the federal government's support.

He claimed that these combined effluent treatment plants would reduce 70 to 80pc environmental damage currently being done to the sea.

Plastic pollution

The minister also spoke about increasing plastic pollution and asserted that since he had assumed charge of environment department, instances of open municipal waste burning had been reduced to half in Karachi.

"The provincial government will soon declare district South in Karachi a plastic-free zone by imposing a complete ban on the use of polythene shopping bags," he vowed, while conceding that an earlier decision of the cabinet to impose ban on the use of polythene bags in Sukkur district could not be properly implemented.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1489613>

COMMISSIONER ORDERS END TO SEWAGE DISCHARGE IN INDUS

Published: June 22, 2019

HYDERABAD: Hyderabad Commissioner Muhammad Abbas Baloch has directed Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) to immediately seal a drainage channel that empties into the Indus River at the point of village Haji Khan Shoro.

He issued the directives while visiting the embankments along Indus River, from Kotri Barrage's downstream to Latifabad unit 12, along with other government officials, including those from the Irrigation Department.

He pointed out that the drainage lines of a large number of residential units were also discharging sewage into the river. The commissioner directed WASA to take action against consumers living in those residential units and take measures to stop the discharge of sewage waste into the river.

Baloch also asked the officials of Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority (SIDA) to submit a report of all the development and maintenance work that had been carried out on the embankments since 2017. He also directed district administration officials to remove encroachments built on and inside the embankments and to take action against those who put up resistance.

Keeping in view the effects of climate change, Baloch said that a super flood was expected this year and "government functionaries should realise their responsibilities and fulfil them honestly in view of the coming situation".

"We can't endanger the lives of people due to the negligence of certain officials," he said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1997577/1-commissioner-orders-end-sewage-discharge-indus/>

TREE PLANTATION CAMPAIGN BEGINS ACROSS SINDH TO MARK 66th ANNIVERSARY

RECORDER REPORT JUN 22ND, 2019 KARACHI

On the occasion of 66th birthday anniversary of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed, Provincial Minister for Works & Services, Prison and Religious Affairs Syed Nasir Hussain Shah and Advisor to Chief Minister Sindh on Information, Law and Anti Corruption Barrister Murtaza Wahab said Pakistan Peoples Party had started a campaign of tree plantation across the Sindh as well as all over Pakistan. They were talking to media persons at Yadgar-e-Shuhada, Karsaz on 21st June 2019.

On this occasion Provincial Minister for Works & Services Development, Prison, and Religious Affairs Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said that a huge amount had been allocated in the budget 2019-20 for the plantation of trees. He said that "Urban Forest" was a bright project. He further said that "our Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has also instructed the Sindh government to plant more and more trees for pleasant and better environment."

On this occasion Barrister Murtaza Wahab said tree plantation project would be started from Lyari and Malir Naddi. Murtaza said that Federal government's claims were very high but in the 10 months it failed to resolve the core issues of the masses. He said that Federal government had done nothing for the development of common men in last 10 months rule.

He said that three hospitals had been taken over by the Sindh Government from Federal Government. Sindh Government looks after these hospitals from 2018 and provides better and modern facilities to the people of Sindh and Pakistan. In the budget 2019-20, Sindh government allocated a sufficient amount in the head of hospitals' betterment but Federal Government is trying to take back these hospitals.-PR

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/06/20190622489324/>

ASIAN NATIONS VOW TO COMBAT PLASTIC DEBRIS IN OCEANS

Reuters Updated June 23, 2019

BANGKOK: Southeast Asian nations vowed on Saturday to fight against plastic pollution in the ocean, as their leaders adopted a joint declaration during a summit in Bangkok.

The Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in Asean Region was adopted by leaders of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), which includes four of the world's top polluters.

Asean members Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand, along with worst offender China, throw the most plastic waste into oceans, according to a 2015 report co-authored by environmental campaigner Ocean Conservancy.

"All countries...value and emphasise environmental protection and support Thailand in including the agenda on safeguarding of the environment and combating marine debris, which matches a global agenda," deputy government spokesman Werachon Sukondhapatipak told reporters on Saturday.

The declaration was commended by environmentalists as a good first step for the region, though doubts remained that implementation will be a challenge because the group has a code of non-interference that would leave necessary policymaking in the hands of individual member countries.

The 10 Asean countries vow to "strengthen actions at the national level as well as through collaborative actions...to prevent and significantly reduce marine debris," according to the official document.

They will also “strengthen national laws and regulations as well as enhance regional and international cooperation including on relevant policy dialogue and information sharing”.

Neither the declaration nor its accompanying Framework of Action specifically mention bans on single-use plastic or imports of foreign waste, as environmental groups previously demanded ahead of the summit.

The declaration came ahead of next week’s G20 summit in Japan, which assembles 20 major economies and will also aim to tackle marine plastic pollution.

The China-originated Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) pact was expected to be finalised this year, Werachon said.

Negotiations began in 2012 on RCEP, which envisions the creation of a free trade zone encompassing 45 percent of the world’s population and more than a third of its GDP, but does not involve the United States.

“Every country emphasizes the importance of the RCEP negotiation. All leaders agreed that it should be completed this year,” he said.

“This mechanism will strengthen Asean economically and can be linked up with other regional economic cooperation frameworks.” First proposed by China, RCEP currently has 16 signatories: Asean and six Asia-Pacific countries, including major economies India, Japan and South Korea.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1489908>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 24TH TO JUN 30^{TY} 2019

PAKISTAN, THREE OTHER COUNTRIES GOT HIGHEST G20 COAL SUBSIDIES

Reuters Updated June 26, 2019

LONDON: Pakistan is one of four countries which received highest amount of G20 international public finance for coal-fired power plants in 2016-17, according to a report issued by a London-based think tank on Tuesday.

Despite promising a decade ago to phase out fossil fuel subsidies, the world’s leading economies more than doubled subsidies to coal-fired power plants over three years, putting climate goals at risk, said the report by the Overseas Development Institute.

Between 2014 and 2017, G20 governments more than halved direct support for coal mining, from \$22 billion to about \$10 billion on average each year.

But over the same period, they boosted backing for coal-fired power plants — particularly supporting construction of the plants in other, often poorer nations — from \$17 billion to \$47 billion a year, the report noted.

China and Japan — which will host a G20 summit later this week in Osaka — were the biggest providers of public finance for coal-fired power plants, followed by South Korea and India, it said.

While spending from national budgets on coal fell, as did tax breaks for it, other forms of support — from development finance institutions, export-credit agencies and state-owned enterprises — soared, the report said.

“You can see they’re pretty much exporting the dirty energy systems to countries in much earlier stages of their development,” said Ipek Gencsu, a researcher at ODI and a lead author of the report.

Those include nations such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan and Vietnam, she said where foreign backing for coal power is slowing adoption of cleaner renewable energy systems and locking in dirty energy and air pollution risks.

To meet an internationally agreed goal of holding rising global temperatures to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times, coal power will need to be phased out between 2030 and 2050, according to the Powering Past Coal Alliance.

That alliance, formed in 2017 and led by the British and Canadian governments, includes 30 countries committed to switching to clean energy as rapidly as possible to meet climate goals. Coal currently provides about 40 per cent of the world’s electricity, according to the alliance.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1490477/pakistan-three-other-countries-got-highest-g20-coal-subsidies>

IN NORTHERN AREAS, PLASTIC BAGS FACE THE BIN

Reuters Updated June 27, 2019

HUNZA: In this district in northern Pakistan flanked by soaring mountain ranges and glaciers, plastic shopping bags are now illegal. In late April, the provincial government banned their use, purchase, export or import in an effort to cut plastic waste and pollution, and rolled out first deliveries of cloth shopping bags.

Now those hang in shops, and many customers have started bringing bags from home — though not everyone is happy with the change.

“The use of plastic bags is not only handy, but also very cheap as compared to cloth and paper bags,” said Ikram Jamal, a trader in the city’s main market.

It is a challenge for customers as well as for traders to instantly ban plastic bags, amid the lack of availability of an alternative option, he said, noting only a limited supply of cloth bags was so far available.

But 50-year-old Shamim Begum, a shopper in the market, said she was adjusting. “After shopkeepers refused to give us polythene bags, I now myself bring a cloth bag to take groceries home,” she said.

Carrying cloth bags for all shopping can be a challenge, but people need to obey the government’s decision, she added.

Around the world, cities, regions and countries are trying to cut back on plastic waste, banning the use of items such as throwaway plastic shopping bags and drinking straws.

The pioneers of the movement, however, are not just in richer nations, but in many developing ones as well, from Tanzania to Bangladesh and now Pakistan’s Gilgit-Baltistan region, the country’s northernmost territory.

Hunza was the first district in Pakistan to ban plastic shopping bags, said Malik Amin Aslam, the prime minister’s adviser on climate change. But the bans are now spreading, with Punjab province and the city of Quetta now outlawing bags as well, and Islamabad set to do the same in August.

In Hunza, the authorities worked with the Gilgit-Baltistan Environmental Protection Agency and the Karakoram Area Development Organisation to launch the pilot ban, which aims to clean up the narrow, mountain-flanked valley that attracts more than half a million tourists a year.

The scenic Karakoram Highway, which connects Pakistan with China, runs through the district.

At least some tourists stopping in Hunza said they thought the bag ban was a good idea.

“The shopkeeper declined to give me plastic bag when I purchased a bottle of mineral water from his shop in a market in Hunza. This is a positive change,” said 30-year Ishtiaq Bhatti, visiting Hunza’s Sikandarabad village from Lahore.

Kamaluddin, chief executive of the Karakoram Area Development Organisation, said the ban came about after his group and the city of Hunza discovered in a survey that about 70,000 plastic bags were used and discarded each month in the valley.

Kamaluddin said using cloth bags for shopping is hardly an innovation — until the arrival of cheap plastic bags it was the norm in the area, he said. Restoring the use of cloth bags can also provide jobs.

At least 50 local women and more than a dozen disabled people have been hired to stitch bags, he said.

An initial 10,000 shopping bags, carrying slogans about the anti-plastic campaign, were provided by the government and distributed free locally, said Shahzad Shigri, director of the environmental protection agency.

But additional bags will be produced locally, Kamaluddin said.

Local people and traders say the plastic ban is a good step toward greater environmental protection — but the changeover is proving a bit of a headache.

“We appreciate the initiative for a good cause,” said Taj Muhammad Rumi, a trader in Sust market near the Chinese border. He said population growth and a large number of tourists have had an adverse impact on the area’s environment.

“But the challenge is still there that no proper and systematic mechanism is in place to provide cloth bags,” he said.

Qasim Ejaz, Hunza’s assistant district commissioner, said the plastic bag ban needs to be expanded to all plastic throwaway items. But policing even the bag ban will be challenging, he said, with tourists often bringing in bags from outside.

The valley sees 600,000 to 700,000 visitors a year, he said.

Shigri, of the Gilgit-Baltistan environmental protection agency, said his agency now aims to expand the plastic bag ban to all national parks in the northern territory.

For now, despite the ban, plastic bags still lurk in the region’s markets.

A young trader in the main Aliabad city market said that shop owners are still parceling a few out to customers who come without a shopping bag, particularly if cloth bags are unavailable.

Though there is no open display of plastic bags in the market due to fear of administrative curbs, yet they are still in use in some areas amid unavailability of cloth and paper bags, he said.

Kamaluddin, of the Karakoram Area Development Organisation, said that’s to be expected. “It is a huge task and will take some time to completely phase (plastic) out,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1490676>

STUDY DEPICTS THREAT POSED BY PLASTIC POLLUTION

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter June 28, 2019

KARACHI: Plastics are impacting our air, soil and water quality and polluting our food systems. They are even pushing our aquatic and other life to extinction and damaging ecosystems. The issue of plastics has become so pervasive globally as well as in every large city of Pakistan that a collaborative and proactive approach is needed to address it.

The World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan (WWF-P) shared these concerns on Thursday in the light of a recent study which finds that an average person in the world could be ingesting approximately five grams of plastic every week, which is the equivalent weight of a credit card.

The study was commissioned by the WWF International and carried out by the University of Newcastle, Australia, on the impacts of microplastics on humans.

It's the first global analysis to combine data from over 50 studies on the ingestion of microplastics by people.

According to experts, its findings are an important step towards understanding the impact of plastic pollution on humans. It also further confirms the urgent need to address the plastic system so that it does not pollute ecosystems in the first place.

According to the study, the largest source of plastic ingestion is drinking water with plastic found in water (groundwater, surface water, tap water and bottled water) all over the world.

Inhalation, it says, estimates represent a negligible proportion of microplastics entering the human body but may vary heavily depending on the environment.

“Plastic pollution is a major threat to wildlife, not only through microplastic ingestion, but via entanglement and habitat destruction. Plastic pollution also has damaging economic consequences, with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) estimating its annual economic impact on the ocean economy at US\$8 billion,” it says.

Of the consumables studied, those with the highest recorded plastic levels include shellfish, beer and salt. Leakage of plastic into our environment and food chain has been met so far with an inadequate global response by governments.

“The long-term effects of plastic ingestion on the human body are not yet well documented. But studies have shown that beyond a certain exposure level, inhalation of plastic fibres seems to produce mild inflammation of the respiratory tract. In marine animals, higher concentrations of microplastics in their digestive and respiratory system can lead to early death.

“Research studies have demonstrated toxicity in vitro to lung cells, the liver, and brain cells. Some types of plastic carry chemicals and additives with potential effects on human health,” it says.

Sharing his concerns, Hammad Naqi Khan, director general, WWF-P emphasised the need to promote alternatives as well as to develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure zero plastic waste in Pakistan.

“Policies about banning plastic products should be implemented in letter and spirit and community awareness programmes can be helpful to discourage use of plastics in our daily lives,” he said.

Pakistan could learn from the examples of countries like Rwanda where such bans had been introduced, he added.

Muhammad Moazzam Khan, technical adviser on marine fisheries, WWF-P, said the current study depicted a realistic picture of how plastics were damaging the environment and harming human life.

Referring to a recent local study, he said it found that more than 300 pieces of microplastics in one gram of sand along the Clifton beach.

“This is alarming as microplastics consumed by marine animals find their way to humans through seafood,” he said, suggesting the need for more research to assess the situation of plastics including microplastics in Pakistan.

Sharing some data, he said around 13,000 tonnes of garbage was generated in the city and only 8,000 tonnes was lifted by the civic agencies to the dumpsites. However, the remaining 5,000 tonnes of garbage was unaccounted for which went into the sea or remained on land.

“The large quantity of garbage becomes part of the ecosystem and pollutes the urban environment,” he said.

The present study, the WWF International says, should serve as a wake-up call to governments.

“Not only are plastics polluting our oceans and waterways and killing marine life — it’s in all of us and we can’t escape consuming plastics. Global action is urgent and essential to tackling this crisis,” said Marco Lambertini representing WWF International.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1490783/study-depicts-threat-posed-by-plastic-pollution>

BILLION TREE TSUNAMI PROJECT MAY INCREASE FORESTS BY 1%

By Shabbir Hussain Published: June 28, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has estimated a one per cent increase in forest area in the country from the Billion Tree Tsunami Project.

Around 0.8 million hectare land would be required for this purpose.

The cost of Rs125 billion has been estimated for first phase of the project which would be generated by both, the federal and provincial governments. The funding will be done on a 50 per cent basis; however, the federal government will fully fund the project in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B). The second phase would be completed under public-private partnership.

According to the documents available with The Express Tribune, a survey conducted by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in 2017 found that only 5.7% of land in the country had any forest cover.

Moreover, it noted that Pakistan had lost up to 43,000 hectares of forest every year from 2000 to 2010. This is half the size of the total land in Islamabad and is the highest rate of deforestation in Asia. During the first phase, around 4.5 billion saplings will be planted in the country while the remaining target would be met in the next phase.

The sources said that the project still has still not gotten approval from the related institutions while the Ministry of Climate Change (MoCC) had sent the Project Concept 1 (PC-I) of the project to the planning commission.

The forest departments of all the provinces, after exhaustive research selected different samples of trees for plantation with varying costs, keeping in view the environmental and ecological impact on different variety of trees.

According to the PC-I, the Punjab province would plant 0.53 billion saplings at a cost of Rs58 per sapling, Sindh would plant 2 billion saplings at a cost of Rs5 per saplings, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) would plant a billion saplings at a cost of Rs27 per saplings, Balochistan would plant 0.25 billion saplings at a cost of Rs64 per saplings, Gilgit-Baltistan would plant 0.17 billion at a cost of Rs41 per saplings, AJK would plant 0.70 billion at a cost of Rs29 per sapling and National Highway Authority (NHA) would plant 1.4 million plants at a cost of Rs1,675 per plant.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2001818/1-billion-tree-tsunami-project-may-increase-forests-1/>

LRH HANDLING OVER 800KG OF INFECTIOUS WASTE DAILY

By Our Correspondent Published: June 29, 2019

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhawa's leading health facility Lady Reading Hospital in Peshawar produces approximately 800 kg of infectious waste including that which is collected from operation theatres and different wards each day, while the LRH has a fully-fledged waste management department working under the facility manager disposing the waste scientifically .

This statement was issued from the office of the spokesperson of the hospital Muhamad Asim on Friday, to dispel and refute propaganda being circulated on social media about the hospital waste management.

While speaking to the media Asim pointed out that there were 370 full time housekeeping staff hired merely to collect the waste produced on regular basis while hospital waste is being collected from all 84 wards, hostels and general areas of the hospital to keep the environment neat and clean.

The housekeeping staff of the LRH has been trained to collect and dispose of hospital waste in designated spots safely.

The house keeping staff have also been imparted training as to how to keep themselves safe from infectious disease during waste collection and transportation.

The municipal waste is handed over to cantonment board as per a MoU signed with them and the infectious waste is incinerated according to the standard, he said.

LRH Director Dr Khalid Masud said that LRH has installed a state-of-the-art and the largest incinerator of K-P which has the capacity to incinerate the infectious waste not only of LRH but the facility will be offered to other hospitals to incinerate their waste as well.

He said that waste collection process is strictly monitored and we have zero tolerance policy as far as cleanliness of the hospital is concerned. Dr. Khalid further said that huge number of patient's relatives and attendants come to LRH on daily basis and they often throw eatables, plastic bags and plastic bottles in hospital which is not an ideal situation. He added that there are dust bins fixed in all parts of the hospitals but most of the attendants still do not use it.

He further added that it is the responsibility of the attendants also to keep LRH neat clean by cooperating with hospital administration.

Dr Masud said that we are trying hard to provide healthy environment to our patients and we are working for it round the clock.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2002490/1-lrh-handling-800kg-infectious-waste-daily/>

July 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 1ST TO JULY 7TH 2019

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT GETS LITTLE ATTENTION IN BUDGET

By DR MANZOOR AHMAD Published: July 1, 2019

ISLAMABAD: In his recent address to the Karachi Council on Foreign Relations, Adviser to Prime Minister on Finance Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh noted that "historically, Pakistan has never been able to perform well economically".

He then went on to explain the three common factors, which enabled 15 to 20 developing countries to gain prosperity since the Second World War. These included focusing on their people, forming alliances with other countries for trade facilitation and moving towards private-sector dynamics instead of depending on government support. The obvious implication was that for Pakistan to succeed, it would have to follow the same route.

Now that Shaikh has another opportunity to put Pakistan on the path to progress, one would have hoped that in his first budget, he would at least make a start in the above direction. Unfortunately, indications from the recent budget are that the country would be moving in exactly the opposite direction. Let us look at the first factor mentioned by Shaikh – the people. A look at the budget would

reveal that human development has received no special consideration. The allocation for education, instead of being increased, has been cut by over 20% to Rs77 billion from the previous year's already meagre amount of Rs97 billion.

Pakistan's public expenditure (federal as well as provincial combined) on education, at 2.4% of gross domestic product (GDP), is the lowest even in the region. Similarly, allocations for the health sector have been drastically cut from about Rs14 billion in 2018-19 to Rs11 billion, a reduction of over 28%. If the budget had given any importance to human resources development, the allocations would have been increased instead of being cut.

Since the country is going through a difficult economic situation, such budgetary cuts could be understandable. However, the fact is that the total outlay of the budget 2019-20 at Rs8,238 billion is almost 39% higher than the budget estimate for 2018-19.

Furthermore, no other sectors (except some symbolic ones such as 10% reduction in ministers' salaries) faced any reduction. The only sectors singled out for reduction are education and health. This clearly shows that the government does not see them as of any importance for economic welfare.

As for forming trade alliances with other countries, which is the second factor mentioned by Shaikh, the budget would further hinder rather than facilitate it. The two regional trade alliances that Pakistan is part of have not been functional since the day they were formed. These are the South Asian Free Trade Area (Safta) and the Economic Cooperation Organisation Trade Agreement (ECOTA), which were signed over 10 years ago.

With its small market size, Pakistan is not likely to succeed in becoming part of any major trading alliance. Perhaps, the only significant alliance with which it can have some form of free trade is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

Nevertheless, with the current trade and tariff policies, it is not likely that Pakistan would qualify to be part of this alliance. It bears mentioning that India has a successful free trade agreement with Asean.

The World Bank rates World Bank as the seventh most trade protectionist country in the world. In the recent budget, while some duties on raw material were reduced, this measure was more than offset by raising duties on over 3,000 other tariff lines, thus making Pakistan an even more inward-looking country. With such high tariffs, it is not likely that Pakistan can form any trade alliances.

Finally, for Shaikh's third factor – moving towards dependence on private-sector dynamics rather than government support, the budgetary measures again point in the opposite direction. Government subsidies have been increased from Rs174 billion to Rs271 billion or an increase of over 55%.

Loss-making entities such as Pakistan Steel Mills are eating up government funds of billions of rupees. The steel mill has been closed for over four years and its liabilities are now over Rs465 billion and rising as the employees are regularly paid Rs400 million in monthly salaries.

Similarly, annual losses now incurred by Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) are in excess of Rs60 billion and accumulated losses exceed Rs400 billion. There seems to be no immediate plans to privatise them. It is not understood why such entities are still considered as national assets and not national embarrassment. All in all, it seems that the government is fully aware of what needs to be done to make Pakistan prosper but it has no political will or knowhow to take any steps to achieve this goal.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2003603/2-human-development-gets-little-attention-budget/>

EXPERTS CALL FOR STEPS TO CURB PANGOLIN TRAFFICKING

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter July 03, 2019

KARACHI: Experts at a meeting held on Monday expressed their concerns over a steep decline in pangolin population in the country and underscored the need for creating awareness particularly among communities living in areas home to the mammalian species.

The meeting was organised by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Pakistan, to discuss conservation of pangolins in the light of worrisome media reports indicating that the population of the scaly mammalian has reduced to a point that if its poaching and illegal trade wasn't checked, it could become extinct within a few years in the region.

The meeting chaired by Abdul Rahim Soomro, provincial forest and wildlife secretary was attended by IUCN representatives, officials of Sindh and Balochistan forest and wildlife departments, zoological survey department, World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan, biodiversity experts, academicians and independent consultants.

Sharing his concerns, provincial secretary of forest and wildlife said that while various stakeholders were making efforts to control poaching and smuggling of pangolins in Pakistan, there was a need for capacity building.

“There is a need to properly train the Customs staff as well as the police force to check wildlife smuggling,” he said during the meeting, regretting how hunters were destroying biodiversity by killing important wildlife species.

In his welcome remarks, IUCN country representative Mahmood Akhtar Cheema said that the organisation was striving for pangolins' conservation and consulting the federal and provincial governments as well as relevant stakeholders to comprehend the key challenges in this regard and come up with concrete measures to address this issue.

“Pangolin population is on the decline and if proper measures are not taken in time, the loss can be irreversible,” he feared.

Dr Javed Ahmed, a conservationist, emphasised the need for research to identify pangolin hotspots and gaps in the relevant laws to ensure fulfilling of legal obligations towards conservation.

Conservator wildlife Sindh Javed Mahar said that trans-boundary species which were confiscated should be given the same protective status that these species were accorded in their own countries.

He expressed his concern for lack of published material on pangolins and urged stakeholders to publish appropriate awareness material on the species.

He also cited reports indicating a steep decline in pangolin population in Sindh and Balochistan border areas such as Chotiari desert and the Nara desert.

The meeting participants agreed on the development of communication material and raising awareness on the role of pangolins in the ecosystem.

They also stressed the importance of working with local communities and providing them with economic incentives as it had been found that people involved in poaching were often forced by poverty to take up the illegal business.

There was also consensus to develop close coordination among all stakeholders and formation of a working group to take this initiative forward.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Indian pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) is the only pangolin species found in Pakistan out of a total eight species reported from all the tropical regions of Asia and Africa.

The species is a natural pest controller while their burrowing behaviour improved soil's nutrient quality.

According to experts, the species is hunted for its scales, which are sold for illegal trade and exported from Pakistan at high rates to countries like China and Vietnam. The scales are reportedly crushed into powder to make traditional medicines.

One major obstacle in conservation efforts, they say, is the low amount of fine imposed on poachers.

Published in Dawn, July 3rd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1491697>

LG MINISTER GRANTS ONE WEEK TO CLEAN UP KARACHI

By Our Correspondent Published: July 4, 2019

KARACHI: Sindh Local Government Minister Saeed Ghani has directed local government authorities to take immediate measures for cleaning garbage and unblocking drains in all districts of Karachi, before the onset of monsoon.

He also ordered municipal commissioners to submit a report to him within seven days after the completion of the assigned tasks and instructed the managing director of Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) to cooperate with the management of all district municipal corporations (DMC) in undertaking cleanliness measures. Additionally, he directed the managing director of SSWMB to seek a report on the progress of work from municipal commissioners daily.

Ghani issued these directives while addressing a meeting at his office on Wednesday.

Expressing dissatisfaction with the state of cleanliness in the city, he reprimanded district officials for their inefficiency. He said that multiple complaints by citizens in this regard indicate that district officials were not fulfilling their responsibilities.

Granting a week's extension to municipal commissioners for the removal of garbage piles and cleaning the city, Ghani asked them to begin cleanliness work on an immediate basis, after consulting the SSWMB, Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) and deputy commissioners. He said that in case the officials face any difficulty in carrying out cleanliness measures, they should approach the provincial government.

Ghani warned the officials that he would pay surprise visits to different areas of Karachi after one week and would take strict action against municipal commissioners and managing director of SSWMB in case he observed any mismanagement or negligence on their part.

During the meeting, municipal commissioners informed the local government minister that garbage from different areas, falling under the jurisdiction of the cantonment board, was dumped in localities within their jurisdictions. Officials from SSWMB too complained that there weren't enough trucks to collect garbage from the city.

Addressing these issues, the provincial minister said that deputy commissioners should register an FIR against the cantonment board if they receive any complaint regarding the dumping of garbage, from other parts of the city, in areas under their control and shift the garbage truck, used to transfer garbage, to a police station.

Speaking with reference to complaints against KWSB, Ghani said he had already communicated the problems to the managing director of KWSB and is in constant contact with KWSB officials to get the issues resolved as soon as possible.

Sindh Local Government Secretary Syed Khalid Haider Shah, managing director of SSWMB AD Sanjrani, municipal commissioners of all DMCs and officials from SSWMB and KWSB attended the meeting.

Published in The Express Tribune, July 4th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2005585/1-lg-minister-grants-one-week-clean-karachi/>

CM SINDH ORDERS CANCELLATION OF CONTRACTS OF FIRMS ENGAGED FOR PICKING GARBAGE

By Our Correspondent Published: July 5, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh government, it seems, is finally waking up to the fact that Karachi – the largest city of Pakistan – practically looks like one big garbage dump. A day earlier, the local government minister, Saeed Ghani, warned municipal authorities to clean up the city within a week or he would take “strict action” against them. On Thursday, it was the chief minister who “took notice” of the growing filth and garbage in the city.

Addressing a special meeting convened to discuss the city's pressing issues, CM Murad Ali Shah directed the Sindh Solid Waste Management Authority (SSWMA) to cancel the contracts of those private firms that had failed to deliver, besides urging the local government department to remove inefficient and lethargic municipal commissioners from the DMCs.

“This is unacceptable and I can't tolerate this inefficiency on the part of these officers,” said the CM. The meeting was attended by Local Government Minister Saeed Ghani, Adviser to CM Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah, Karachi Commissioner Iftikhar Shallwani, LG Secretary Khalid Hyder Shah, SSWMA Managing Director Dr Attar Das Sajani as well as all six deputy commissioners of the city.

The chief minister said that the roads, though most of them have been reconstructed recently, present a dirty look because they were not swept properly. “Wherever I go, I see garbage lying on the roads

and no officer, including municipal commissioners and deputy commissioners, bothers to take action,” he said, adding that some trees had also been chopped down near the Clifton bridge in District South. “If anybody dares to cut a tree, they must be booked – I want to see them behind the bars,” he said, directing the DCs to protect trees in their areas and plant as many trees as possible.

Shah told SSWMA MD that he was unhappy with the performance of the firms engaged for cleanliness of District West. The performance of the private company hired to clean District South was also not up to the mark, he said.

He directed the LG minister to personally intervene and get the contracts of the firms engaged for sweeping, cleaning and lifting of garbage in the city cancelled at the earliest. He also directed the minister to start removing inefficient and lethargic municipal commissioners and officers. ‘We don’t need any officer who is not sincere with their work,’ he said.

The CM constituted committees under deputy commissioners to monitor sweeping and lifting of garbage. “I want this must be done at the sub-division level where assistant commissioners must be assigned to keep their areas neat and clean,” he said, adding that the municipal commissioners of DMCs would be responsible to their deputy commissioner as far as the cleanliness work is concerned.

The meeting was informed that District Central was generating 2,200 tonnes of garbage, of which hardly 1,600 tonnes were transported to landfill sites. Similarly, District West generates 2,500 tonnes of garbage and hardly 1,000 tonnes are lifted.

Groundwater has become contaminated all over Sindh, says CM

At this, the CM expressed displeasure and directed the relevant DCs to start lifting the garbage and procure the services of additional dumpers for removing the backlog.

Shah also directed Commissioner Shallwani to personally monitor the cleanliness efforts and start lifting the backlog of garbage. “I will start paying surprise visits to different areas of the city from the beginning of next week and will take strict action if any negligence is found,” he warned.

The chief minister also directed the commissioner, deputy commissioners and other local bodies’ officers to start tree plantation drives in their respective areas. “The plantation of a tree is not enough. The sapling must be protected and grown with proper care,” he said.

Published in The Express Tribune, July 5th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2006187/1-cm-sindh-orders-cancellation-contracts-firms-engaged-picking-garbage/>

MARKHOR POPULATION GROWS WITH CONTROLLED TROPHY HUNTING

Monitoring Desk July 06, 2019

KARACHI: The introduction of trophy hunting programme for the markhor has led to an increase in its population, as enormous incentive for the local communities in Gilgit-Baltistan from their share of the trophy hunting licence encourages them to protect Pakistan’s national animal but it has also given rise to monetary disputes.

Many villagers say the wild goat can often be seen climbing down the perilous terrain although the markhor is still on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) list of the near threatened, according to a report of The Third Pole.

Under a trophy hunting licence, which replaced a complete ban on wild goat's hunt, only four male old markhors are permitted to be hunted every season (that begins in October and lasts till April) after payment of the licence fee.

The money that came with the business of hunting the wild goat had brought prosperity to the poverty-riddled villages, the report says.

It highlights that 38 community areas have been notified as hunting spots by the government. These comprise different areas, sometimes including just one hamlet, and sometimes — like the three villages of Skoyo, Krabatang and Basingo in GB — marked for trophy hunting.

It says trophy hunting has brought money, but things have not worked out smoothly. For the last year, Rs6 million earned from the hunting of one markhor was stuck in the bank, 35-year-old Akbar Hussain told The Third Pole. Hussain runs a meat shop in Skoyo, and is also currently the president of the SKB village organisation, named after the first letter of each village.

Formed in 2012, the organisation comprises one person from every household from the three villages. There is a smaller committee of six people nominated by the members that handles the funds generated through the trophy hunting programme.

Since 2012, some SKB members have begun noticing “siphoning” of some funds by some senior members of the committee. Requesting anonymity talking over phone from their villages, some community elders said it could not have happened without the collusion of the wildlife department.

Mehmood Ghaznavi, the conservator with the government of GB's Parks and Wildlife Department, said the disbursement of the 80 per cent of share was so clear that no government official could rob from it.

“The bidding process is transparent after which the amount is deposited to the government account by the hunter. At the end of the season, depending on where the hunting happened and the amount collected in the auction, the money is divided and cheques are sent to that community,” he said.

The markhor was a popular game animal during the days of the British Raj, and the practice continued after the birth of Pakistan in 1947. By the 1990s the markhor had been driven to the brink, and the government instituted a total ban on hunting. Since then, the numbers had revived, according to the report.

The ban, it added, was then replaced by controlled trophy hunting, a programme often cited as a huge success in biodiversity conservation.

Under the trophy hunting programme, said Mr Ghaznavi, the communities received 80pc of the licence fee with the government keeping the rest. The amount varied as there was a bidding process involved, the report noted.

Aware of the conflicts within communities, Mr Ghaznavi said the government wanted to help resolve them.

“We plan to sit with the community members and revise the programme to make the process of funds (sharing) even more transparent than it presently is. At the same time, we want them to have their accounts audited,” he said. Being a regulatory body, the government had every right to demand this from the villagers,” said Mr Ghaznavi.

Published in Dawn, July 6th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1492403>

GREEN INITIATIVE: GOVT TO OFFER OVER 5,000 SITES FOR TREE PLANTATION IN SINDH

By razzak abro Jul. 07, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh Public Health Engineering and Rural Development (PHERD) Department is going to offer over 5,000 sites throughout the province for the plantation of trees. Top officials are optimistic that the project will help reduce climate change threats within a span of just a few years.

The department is ready to provide these sites to non-governmental organisations, civil society groups, environmental activists, neighbourhood organisations, and private companies who are willing to play their role in improving the environment. Besides land, the department will also provide them with water required for plantation and other facilities such as access to seeds, plants, and gardeners.

According to PHERD Secretary Roshan Shaikh, the department has already identified over 5,000 sites for this project. Talking to The Express Tribune, he said these sites are located all across the province, and most of them are in districts other than Karachi.

The sites are of different sizes, ranging from a few hundred yards to tens of acres. Depending on the size, these sites could accommodate a handful of trees, a few hundred plants or thousands of plants and trees.

“Provision of water will be guaranteed for these sites,” said Shaikh when asked about the availability of water.

The Public Health and Rural Department has vast experience in handling water-related projects in the province. The department has been operating water supply schemes, filtration and reverse osmosis plants and wastewater drainage and treatment plants in several areas of the province.

Shaikh said that the department was very serious about implementing the project because improving the environment is a top priority for the world.

According to him, they are going to finalise their preparations very soon. The department will soon invite NGOs, companies and other groups for joint ventures with the government through a formal advertisement.

He said the department has notified the formation of community and monitoring groups for all the designated sites.

These groups will comprise of three representatives of the area community, an engineer of the department, and one pump operator. Shaikh said these groups will be responsible for designing the plantation and its maintenance for three years.

The secretary said that the total cost of the project is Rs290 million, adding that the required funds are available and will be spent on the project over a three-year period.

He said that the department will also try to convert bigger plantation sites into picnic sites with having educational facilities relating to nature and the environment.

Published in The Express Tribune, July 7th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2007921/1-green-initiative-govt-offer-5000-sites-tree-plantation-sindh/?amp=1>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 8TH TO JULY 14TH 2019

FOREST FIRE DESTROYS PRECIOUS PINE TREES IN LOWER DIR

By Our Correspondent | 7/8/2019 12:00:00 AM

TIMERGARA: Despite hectic efforts by local residents, police and civil defence teams the fire erupted in Dewlai forest of Talash could not be put out till late Sunday night.

Residents said the wildfire erupted in the dense forest two days ago had engulfed a large part of the jungle.

Eyewitnesses said that large trees of pines and other species were also damaged in the fire, adding though the intensity of the flame had been reduced yet it had not been fully controlled.

Divisional forest officer Ijaz ur Rehman along with firefighters also took part in the operation, but to no avail.

District police officer Arif Shahbaz Wazir told Dawn on contact that police teams had been sent to the site on the request of divisional forest officer, but due to lack of proper equipment they could not succeed in extinguishing the fire.

Owners of the forest have demanded of the government and district administration to make serious efforts to put out the fire.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=08_07_2019_009_001

‘KP’S FOREST COVER INCREASED BY 5 PERCENT AFTER COMPLETION OF BTTP’

TAHIR AMIN JUL 8TH, 2019 ISLAMABAD

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s (KP) forest cover has increased by around 5 percent, bringing the total to 25 percent, following the completion of Billion Tree Tsunami Project (BTTP), contributing to the fight against climate change.

This was claimed by KP Forest Department during an exposure visit of mainstream media persons to billion tree afforestation project which, according to the officials, achieved the highest survival ratio of over 80 percent compared to the global rate of around 50 percent.

Furthermore, the project proved to be a driver for creation of over 0.5 million green jobs mostly for rural women and unemployed youth, who are owning 13,000 nurseries as well as community chosen forest “Nigehbaans.” The BTTP attracted praise within Pakistan as well as abroad and that is the reason ambassadors of Germany, France and other European countries and international media visited the forests sites.

The officials revealed that German government has agreed to support the BTTP by extending a grant of €13.5 million (over Rs 2 billion) to supplement KP government’s efforts for green growth initiative. In this regard, a survey has been tasked to WWF to determine the area for intervention and a PC-1 would be prepared on the basis of that survey.

Pakistan’s overall forest cover is 5.1 percent, where KP stands first with 25 percent, Punjab, around 5 percent, Sindh, less than three percent, and Balochistan, less than one percent. Under the BTTP, 593,292 hectares of land were covered with 1.208 billion seedlings.

The KP has become the first-province globally to take up forest target under “Bone Challenge” and first entity amongst the 45 countries to achieve its target.

The success of BTTP has encouraged the federal government to launch the initiative 10 Billion Trees across the country and around 5 billion trees would be planted in the first phase.

KP Minister for Forestry, Environment and Wildlife, Syed Muhammad Ishtiaq Umar, Secretary Forestry Shahidullah Khan, Project Director Mohammad Tehmasim, Chief Conservator Peshawar Niaz Ali, Chief Conservator Malakand Mohammad Riaz, Divisional Forest Officer Malakand Asghar Khan, former DFO Malakand (currently posted at Reduction Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) Pervez Manan and other senior officials of the Forest Department briefed media persons. The department arranged site visits to Garhi Chandan, Peshawar, Hero Shah, Malakad division, and Bhuldehr, Haripur, and appraised the media persons of the targets, achievements and challenges of the BTTP. They talked about the misconceptions being spread by some of the critics of the project including less number of trees, plantation of water-consuming trees like eucalyptus and other related matters.

According to forest experts, eucalyptus roots do not go beyond 22 feet and it was noticed that it was growing in a very dry area with almost xerophytic conditions. As far as biodiversity is concerned, it was clarified by officials that it is not harmful to other species and was noticed in the visit that other species were growing well along it. The landscape, which was deforested previously, is being restored naturally by the project and will help in efforts to combat climate change and mitigate the risks posed by higher temperatures.

The Forest Department officials pleaded that it can help in transitioning to a greener economy for Pakistan and the project has already been commended on an international level as an example of how to deal with the impacts of climate change.

According to the Provincial Forest Resource Inventory (PFRI) 2000 report, 78 percent of KP forests were under-stocked, 74 percent forests were incapable of regeneration and after 25 to 30 years from

the year 1999, both industrial and firewood would not be available any more from local forest resources.

Climate Risk Index ranked Pakistan as the 7th most vulnerable country to ill-impacts of climate change, where KP is exposed to extreme climatic vagaries, weather events and disasters. The BTTP was launched on 14th November 2014 with the objectives to increase area of forests by 2 percent in five years, rehabilitate area of degraded forests, conserve KP forests as valuable natural asset for future generations, establish rules for REDD+ to assign carbon value to forests, skill development, awareness about climate change impacts and sensitisation of rural community for forest conservation and development.

Initially the project was designed for 5 years with a total cost of Rs 28 billion where financial support from donors was to be explored but later on the project was formulated on the provincial ADP. The PC-I was redesigned for Rs 22 billions for 4 years.

The PC-I was redesigned again and split in phases, while project cost was reduced to Rs 19.448 billion and a target of one billion trees to be planted was set. The project has exceeded the target and 1.208 billion trees were planted with planting and sowing, 311 million, farm forestry, 165 million, and enclosures, 732 million.

To achieve the project target, the department had prepared implementation modalities including awareness campaigns, developing nurseries (departmental & private nurseries), departmental/block planting all categories, planting through land owners/woodlots, planting through hashers on communal land, planting through outsourcing (phase-I), enclosures involving local communities, free distribution of plants and planting by community, all formations of FE&W department were mobilised (Wildlife, EPA, PFI & FDC), GIS technology was utilised for mapping, planning and measurement of plantation area, and the project was implemented apolitically and transparently.

Further 80 percent planting stock was raised through private nurseries and 13,260 nursery units were established with each unit produced 25,000 plants.

Under the project, departmental nurseries were established where intensive care and sophisticated techniques were required and these raised 20 percent planting stock, while the nurseries were used as demonstration and training sites for private nursery growers. To ensure transparency in BTTP, monitoring was conducted through departments (internal), Project Management Unit monitors (internal), FP&M Circle of Forest Department (internal), M&E Directorate of P&DD (external), third party monitoring (external, WWF), SSU Chief Minister's Secretariat, special audit (physical & financial) through AGP and by SUPARCO through satellite images and drones, which visited 500 sites and detected 88-95 percent change in forest cover.

During the project implementation, eleven people were martyred, six got injured and three were incapacitated. Further 350 officials were punished for negligence during the project implementation.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/07/20190708495331/>

DESPITE LEGISLATION, MANY SPECIES CONTINUE TO DECLINE: EXPERTS

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter July 09, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has developed the required legislation to protect and safeguard its diverse wildlife and invaluable resources. However, many of the charismatic species continue to decline or even have gone extinct.

This raises questions about management policies and there is a growing consensus that conservation policies should be based on applied research, says a statement issued by Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU).

It said realising the challenges in the management of wildlife and the potential role a scientific community could play, the department of animal sciences at the QAU organised a symposium on “The role of science in wildlife management” on Monday.

Addressing the inaugural session, Prof Dr Mohammad Ali, the QAU vice chancellor, said biodiversity was under assault globally due to the population growth and ever-increasing use of natural resources.

The species extinction rate has greatly increased in recent decades, largely due to unsustainable human developments. He urged the youth to play their role in wildlife conservation efforts as they have responsibility to deliver a better world to future generations.

During the technical session, Dr Orjan Johansson, Grimso Wildlife Institute, Sweden, shared the findings of a study in Tost Mountains, Mongolia on “Snow leopard prey selection of ibex.” He discussed environmental and behavioral factors that influenced predator-prey relationships. He also spoke about wildlife captures, developing more efficient and animal-friendly capture techniques.

Dr Byron Weckworth from University of Montana talked on “Conservation genetics in practice” and shed light on wide spectrum of ecological and evolutionary questions pertinent to successful conservation.

Taking example of wolf, he elaborated on applications of genetics in answering various ecological questions. His research experience has involved fieldwork across a variety of ecosystems from North Carolina swamps to the high alpine regions of Asia on an equally varied number of species, including wolves, black bears, caribou, moose and snow leopards.

Dr Byron Weckworth was of the view that rigorous scientific research should be accessible and applicable to the people and partner organisations that have the influence to impact the conservation of wild cats.

Dr Chris Sutherland, department of environmental conservation, University of Massachusetts, USA, joined the audience through skype. In a presentation on “The promise of spatial capture-recapture”, he explained how large-scale biological patterns could be explained by an understanding of how and why organisms use space at a variety of spatial and temporal scales.

Dr Mohammad Ali Nawaz, the chief organiser of the symposium from the department of animal sciences, QAU, shared his research work and recommendation in the talk “monitoring of large carnivores in Pakistan — lessons learned.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1492863>

320 SPECIES TO BE DISPLAYED AT BIRDS OF SINDH EXHIBITION

By our correspondent July.10, 2019

KARACHI: The fifth Birds of Sindh photography exhibition will be held at Alliance Française de Karachi from July 12. The exhibition aims to create awareness about bird species endemic to Sindh and the importance of preserving their habitats, which are endangered. The two-day exhibition showcases the work of 14 photographers who document more than 320 species of birds found in different areas of the province.

The exhibition will be inaugurated by Pakistan UNICEF Chief Financial Officer Christina Brugiolo and Sindh Wildlife Department Conservator Javed Ahmed Mahar.

Speaking ahead of the event, Brugiolo appreciated the photographers' efforts and said, "Pakistan is indeed blessed with an abundance of natural treasures, with wildlife playing a pivotal part, and hence is worth cherishing."

While highlighting the need for creating a safe haven for the country's avian species, Mahar said, "It's about time that we worked together towards conserving our

natural environment to make it conducive for our bird population to thrive. The Birds of Sindh exhibition has continued with its legacy to educate the audiences about birds they didn't know existed in our country."

This exhibition, in particular, is organised under the supervision of Mirza Naim Beg, an avid birder, who has taken several emerging wildlife photographers under his wings.

He runs a Facebook group called Wildlife with Dream Merchants and organises photography trips that document the country's bird species.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2009818/1-320-species-displayed-birds-sindh-exhibition/?amp=1>

ENVIRONMENT: PROVINCES SHOULD PROVIDE RESOURCES: JAVED JABBAR

RECORDER REPORT JULY 11TH, 2019 KARACHI

Former Federal Information Minister, Javed Jabbar has said, "The provinces should strengthen their institutions and provide resources to protect the environment in the light of the powers they gained after the 18th Constitutional Amendment. Nobody is stopping the provinces from doing so."

Speaking at the Annual Environment Conference-2019 organised jointly by National Forum for Environment and Health (NFEH) and Environment Management Consultant, he emphasised that provincial governments before wasting any more time should assume their responsibilities pertaining to the protection of environment in the light of 18th Constitutional Amendment as there is no obstruction in the way of the provinces to do their part to contain the phenomenon of climate change.

He said that the provinces had no choice other than to play this role in the light of the responsibilities passed on to them after the 18th Amendment. "There exists environment department in the provinces

and it needs to be strengthened. Till now the situation is such that the ministry of environment in the provinces is given to someone either as an act of punishment or charity. This trend needs to be changed,” he said.

The former federal minister said that provinces should enact more effective laws for serving the cause of the environmental protection in best of the manner. Jabbar said that population welfare was another aspect whose responsibility should be assumed by the provinces in the light of their increased role in governance.

He said that population growth rate had a direction relation with the situation of environmental degradation in terms of availability of resources, which are vital for human life. “It would be grave oversight on the part of the authorities concerned, if they ignored the impact of population on the environment,” he said.

He said that only 35 percent of the married couples in Pakistan use contraceptives, which is way too less practice of population control methods as compared to much higher prevalence of contraceptives in the nearby countries of Iran, Turkey, and Bangladesh all having Muslim majority population.

“One should keep in mind that Pakistan was one of the earliest countries in the Asian region, which adopted a population control policy in the decade of 1960s,” he said.

Department of Architecture and Planning, NED University of Engineering & Technology, Professor Dr Noman Ahmed mentioned a recent statement of Commissioner Karachi according to whom there are 1578 designated public parks in the city and nearly half of them are encroached.

He said that clearing these parks of encroachments was not an easy task as human settlements were involved in many of such instances whose eviction would cause a major social uproar.

He said that if in case all the proposed seven lines of the Bus Rapid Transit Service were built and made operational in Karachi then they would only cater to eight percent passenger traffic that had to rely on commuter services daily in the city.

He said that a fresh city-wide plan should be adopted at the earliest so to tackle the ever exacerbating civic issues of Karachi in view of its depleting resources.

He said that Karachi had been once gifted with strong leaders in the pre-partition era who acted as mayors of the city. “The institutions of the city were also strong in that era, which is no more the case. Now Karachi lacks both strong leaders and municipal institutions,” he said.

Former Administer Karachi Captain Fahim Zaman Khan said the census of 1998 showed that there were just 300,000 four-wheelers in Karachi whose number had increased to 3.5 million in the census of 2017. Similarly there were 1.4 million two-wheelers in Karachi whose number had increased to 3.1 million in 2017.

While the census of 1998 had showed that there were 22,000 public buses in Karachi whose number had decreased to 10,000 to 12,000 in the census of 2017.

Dr Mirza Ikhtiar Baig said that fuel mix being used in the country to generate electricity is proving to be too costly for the national economy and also causing damage to the environment due to heavy reliance on conventional resources of energy.

He lamented that work on the K-IV bulk water project for Karachi had been stopped for last eight months as the design and cost of the scheme was being re-evaluated and in such a situation people of the city had to gravely suffer due to the shortage of the water resource.

Advocate Shahab Usto emphasised that Supreme Court mandated commission on water and sanitation issues in Sindh should continue its work as projects initiated by it would go a long way in serving the cause of environmental conservation.

He said that the Water and Sanitation Commission had identified 750 points all over the province where sewage was being mixed with fresh water resource and 190 of them already been addressed.

He said that owing to the efforts of the Water Commission, industries of the province had given written undertakings to install pre-treatment effluent plants at their sites individually as earlier the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency had completely failed to discharge such responsibilities.

NFEH President Naeem Qureshi urged the provincial governments to empower their respective environmental protection agencies so that a cohesive nation-wide action could be initiated to tackle the damaging phenomenon of climate change.

Sindh Chief Secretary Mumtaz Ali Shah said that provincial governments of Pakistan were very much onboard in the efforts being done nationally and all over the world to address the issue of climate change.

He said that one instance of such efforts was that no development project sponsored by any of the provincial government could be launched without conducting its prior Environmental Impact Assessment Study.

He said that Sindh government would allocate maximum resources and do best of its efforts to ensure best environmental practices in all development projects being undertaken in the province.

Sindh Chief Secretary also awarded 16th Annual Environment Excellence Awards-2019 to some 52 companies and organisations for observing best environmental practices during one last year.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/07/20190711496286/>

WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANTS YET TO BE INSTALLED

By Afzal Talib Published: July 11, 2019

LAHORE: Pollution levels in River Ravi keep rising steadily, harming the organisms living underwater and contaminating groundwater. Due to the apathy of past governments and the current, wastewater treatment plants have not been installed to tackle this growing problem.

The cost of the project has increased by Rs10 billion, coming to a grand total of Rs50 billion which is to be funded by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). However, over the past 27 years, national and international companies have managed to extract millions of rupees in the name of 'consultancy'. But the project has still not been approved.

Past governments, as well as the current, had made tall claims regarding measures to control pollution levels in River Ravi. However, no practical steps have been taken in this regard. Housing societies,

factories, residential areas and even localities can be spotted on the river bank. These structures have been built without any kind of planning, without keeping in mind the possibility of flooding.

Further, effluent and sewage from factories and residential areas is flowing into the river without being treated. Waste from sewerage drains all across the provincial capital is flowing into River Ravi, polluting the water and making it uninhabitable for fish and other under water life.

Vegetables cultivated around the river, and irrigated by the contaminated water, also pose a threat to citizen's lives. The food department has declared these vegetables harmful and has disposed of crops being grown on the river bank.

In 1992, AIIB presented a proposal regarding establishing wastewater treatment plants in different areas of the city including Babu Sabu, Mehmood Boti, Shadbagh and Shahdara. The estimated cost of the project was Rs40 billion at the time. However, as the situation has deteriorated, the cost for the project has gone up to Rs50 billion.

Previously, the services of foreign companies from Singapore, France, Austria and England were taken for consultancy. Under the project, 912 acres of land has been purchased in Babu Sabu while there are plans to purchase 60 acres in Shahdara and 250 acres in Mehmood Boti.

In 2013, National Engineering Services Pakistan (NESPAK) was brought in as consultants but no decision was taken. Now, work on the project has begun once again and the company has been brought in to consult on the scheme for Rs130 million. In this regard, they will submit a report in three months.

Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) MD Zahid Aziz said that the project is of prime importance. After NESPAK presents their report, federal and provincial governments will have to approve the proposal.

Once approval is given, AIIB will provide Rs50 billion needed for the project and work can begin on installing wastewater treatment plants in the city, he explained.

Once the treatment plants are set up, pollution levels in River Ravi and the contamination of groundwater can be curbed. Not only will this help in protecting life in the river but it can also help in preventing a shortage of groundwater in Lahore, he added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2010536/1-wastewater-treatment-plants-yet-installed/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 15th TO JULY 21st 2019

SENATORS CRITICISE FEDERAL, PROVINCIAL GOVTS FOR FREQUENT FOREST FIRES

Jamal Shahid July 17, 2019

ISLAMABAD: A parliamentary committee on Tuesday criticised the federal government and the governments of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for an unprecedented number of fires this summer.

Senator Sitara Ayaz, chair of the Senate Committee on Climate Change, said uncontrolled and frequent fires in KP, Punjab and the Margalla Hills have wreaked havoc.

“Forest fires engulfed some jungles for the first time,” she said.

The committee discussed the reasons for the frequent fires in KP, Murree and the Margalla Hills National Park, blaming the federal and provincial governments for not putting in enough effort to prevent and fight fires every year.

Members said that huge fires had devoured old trees, while the government’s primary focus was increasing tree cover to mitigate the effects of climate change.

KP Chief Conservator Azhar Ali Khan told senators that there were natural, accidental and deliberate fires. He claimed most of the fires were deliberately set by pyromaniacs who enjoyed watching forests burn down.

He said the law, made during British rule, bound local communities to assist fire departments in fighting fires and finding those responsible.

“Villagers in the vicinity used to help, but not anymore. The topography of the land is harsh and firefighters cannot reach easily,” he added.

He said that seven firefighters had died last year and two this year.

A forest conservator from Murree attributed this year’s forest fires to high temperatures due to a prolonged dry season.

In addition to centuries old firefighting methods, the committee was also informed of the ineffectiveness of hiring helicopters, which are also very expensive.

The lack of coordination between concerned departments was also mentioned as a major reason for delays in putting out fires.

The committee also took up the decrease in greenbelts at the cost of developing roads.

An official from the Capital Development Authority (CDA) told members that the greenbelts they see today were earmarked for roads in the city’s master plan.

To a question, CDA Chairman Amer Ali Ahmed told senators about plans to move slums out of the city to suitable locations with a proper transportation system. He said some 3,000 to 4,000 housing units will be required to resettle residents of recognised slums in the capital.

He also shared plans to develop parking spaces in F-6, F-8 and F-10, for which the CDA now has sufficient funds.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1494494/senators-criticise-federal-provincial-govts-for-frequent-forest-fires>

CABINET APPROVES PLASTIC BAG BAN

By Our Correspondent Published: July 17, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet on Tuesday approved ban on use of plastic bags in the limits of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) to ban plastic bags in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) is scheduled to come into force from August 14. After the deadline, use of polythene bags will be allowed only conditionally for specific purposes like industrial packing, primary industry packing, municipal packing, hospital waste and hazardous waste after due permission from the competent authority. Adviser to Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam Tuesday said the Federal Cabinet approved the Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) to ban plastic bags in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). “The federal capital will celebrate its freedom from polythene bags on August 14,” he told the media during the briefing on cabinet meeting. Plastic bags had become a menace for the society. “Around 80 per cent of the drains across the country are choked due to plastic bags and are a potential cause of urban flooding and various diseases among the masses. Every city and village has the same issue where plastic bags are proliferating. It will remain in our ecosystem for 1000 years as polythene bags do not decompose,” he added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2014973/1-cabinet-approves-plastic-bag-ban/>

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT A MUST TO OVERCOME POLLUTION: MINISTER

RECORDER REPORT JULY 18TH, 2019 ISLAMABAD

Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mahmood has said that solid waste management is necessary to overcome pollution and clean environment. The minister expressed these views on Wednesday while addressing a seminar on “Prime Minister Imran Khan’s Vision to make Pakistan Green and Clean and Social Responsibilities of the Youth.”

He said that there is a need of recycling plants for clean environment. He said that now solid waste is also being used for making furniture and producing electricity. He said, “There is a serious issue of water scarcity in our country and the government is paying attention to recycle polluted water and use it for agriculture sector. We can overcome the shortage of water in the country by using recycling process.” The minister said that the ratio of trees in the country is very low as compared to other countries.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/07/20190718498344/>

CHIEF SECRETARY INAUGURATES SARSABZ PAKISTAN CAMPAIGN

By Our Correspondent Published: July 19, 2019

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Secretary Syed Mumtaz Ali Shah inaugurated a tree plantation campaign, Sarsabz Pakistan, by planting a Neem tree at the National Museum on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the activity is a part of the province-wide tree plantation drive initiated by the Sindh CM Syed Murad Ali Shah.

Mumtaz emphasised that planting trees is the only way to save the world from the effects of global warming. He said that trees can play an important role in reducing the impact of climate change in Sindh, and particularly in Karachi. He said the campaign will produce good results as the entire

government machinery is working to make it successful. He also said that the Sindh Forest Department plans to plant one billion trees in the province, with the help of the federal government.

The chief secretary asked the members of civil society, media persons and students to contribute to the Sarsabz Pakistan tree plantation campaign. Monsoon is just around the corner and it is the right time to plant trees, he said.

Replying to a question about water shortage in Karachi, Mumtaz said that the problem will be resolved after the completion of the K-IV project. He further said that Sindh government has taken stern action against illegal water hydrants in Karachi and as of now only Karachi Water and Sewerage Board's hydrants are operational in the city.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2016521/1-chief-secretary-inaugurates-sarsabz-pakistan-campaign/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 22nd TO JULY 28th 2019

REAPING BENEFITS OF WILDLIFE HUNTING

Mohammad Hussain Khan Updated July 22, 2019

Sindh has considerable potential for wildlife conservation and community-based trophy hunting that can bring prosperity to its underdeveloped areas. But trophy hunting is only seen in four game reserves of the Sindh Wildlife Department (SWD) located in Thana Bula Khan taluka of the mountainous Kohistan region in the Jamshoro district.

These game reserves are Eri, Sumbak, Surjan and Hothiano. Technically, they are four separate game reserves but they are counted as one by the SWD. Trophy hunting — considered a source of income for the rural community of the least developed villages — has been flourishing there for a long time under SWD regulations. And it is not without the community's and the tribal chief Malik Asad Sikandar's participation.

All four game reserves are located near but outside Kirthar National Park — a protected area — stretching over around 1,192 square miles in Dadu, Jamshoro and Malir districts. It is said to be Pakistan's second largest park after Hingol National Park. No hunting is allowed there but SWD officials concede that violations do take place.

Trophy hunting generates income. Revenue generated out of it is disbursed on an 80-20 basis with the community keeping 80 per cent and 20pc going to the provincial kitty. Rural communities utilise these funds for the area's upliftment through the construction of wells, tracks, schools, etc.

Controlled trophy hunting helps conserve species like urial and ibex in Kohistan. Only international hunters are allowed to hunt urial whereas ibex can be hunted by national hunters as well as their foreign counterparts.

An annual census for wild animals is done by the end of September to identify older males whose hunting is allowed after an auction. Community's watchers identify animals from the size of their trophies which are measured in inches.

During the 2018-19 season foreigners killed 13 ibexes and one urial. Price of an ibex closed at \$5,600 and an urial's price at \$14,100. A Pakistani hunter — the brother of a former information minister — had hunted an ibex for Rs400,000.

In the last hunting season, Rs13,204,483 was generated of which the community's 80pc share was calculated at Rs10,563,586 and the government's 20pc share stood at Rs26,408,97. The season begins in November and ends in the January-February period.

The SWD's records also reported the killing of reptiles, chinkara, wild cats, foxes and that a jackal had killed some goats of the community recently.

“A hunter is allowed to kill only a single animal otherwise he would be fined,” said an SWD official.

“Only older males are allowed to be hunted. If this culling did not take place, the older males would not let the young ones mate with females to have offspring,” remarked a retired SWD wildlife officer.

Besides Thana Bula Khan, there are 12 other game reserves listed by SWD. But Kohistan's successful trophy hunting model is yet to be replicated in these government-run reserves. This can only be done with the revival of forests which are the natural habitat of wildlife.

Newly appointed chief game warden — nominated by the Sindh chief minister — and Chairman Sindh Wildlife Management Board Usman Almani is a professional hunter with international hunting exposure. He believes forests' revival, a ban on illegal poaching, hunting and netting of wildlife and birds and strict enforcement of SWD regulations is essential for wildlife conservation in game reserves other than those in the Kohistan region.

“We need to revive whatever forests are left to restore wildlife's habitat. Only then community hunting can be considered,” he said. Mr Almani is trying to assert himself as the board's chairman and has put forward proposals for wildlife conservation to the chief minister. However, he is having some issues with the SWD hierarchy that believes his post is ceremonial and only the board can frame a policy. New members of the board are being notified.

“We can start from Khipro forests, Pai forests in Sakrand and the riverine area of Indus for the revival of forests,” he said. Species of hog deer — known as pharah in the local language — could be promoted for trophy hunting in Khairpur's Nara area and Khipro forests. Blue bulls could be conserved in the Thar Desert and poaching of quails should be checked, he added.

The SWD officials agree trophy hunting helps curb illegal poaching that otherwise goes unnoticed. The SWD remains understaffed and under-resourced to enforce its writ. Political, tribal and government influences discourage the department to check such illegal activities as well.

Destruction of forests and wildlife's habitat doesn't happen in a jiffy. Influential people in Sindh, and forest and SWD officials have all contributed towards it over the years. Political families, however, maintain game reserves where one can't kill a bird sans their permission.

For instance, Khairpur's Mir Ali Murad Talpur is maintaining his famous game reserves called mahrano where he has increased the population of blackbucks that otherwise faced extinction.

Growth in wildlife remains a distant dream in the absence of planning. Politicians and government functionaries need to understand that human activity includes crops' cultivation that disturbs wildlife habitat.

Proper planning alone ensures the provision of food, shelter and protection to wild animals in their natural habitats. Their commercial-oriented use could be allowed later with stricter regulations on the pattern of Gilgit-Baltistan. Sindh should take a leaf from the GB government's book to manage controlled trophy hunting.

The hunting of markhor — Pakistan's national animal — in GB was started with a community controlled hunting area (CCHA) in the early 1990s. Now there are 48 such CCHAs where hunting of ibex, blue sheep and markhor is allowed every year after its twice-a-year population survey.

“It is due to the communities' involvement that the number [of animals] is increasing. They protect markhor and blue sheep because of the incentive they get out of annual community hunting,” said a GB's conservator Mahmood Ghaznavi.

Last year, markhor's maximum bidding price ranged from \$95,000 to \$110,000 in different CCHAs for foreign hunters, against a base price of \$75,000. Price of blue sheep closed at \$8,500 against the base price of \$8,000.

GB government has three different categories of hunters for ibex. Estimated population of markhor in GB stands at over 2,000, ibex at 15,000 and blue sheep at 6,900.

“We are now framing rules for communities to encourage them to participate in upliftment schemes for their areas and spend money on animals' habitat,” said a GB forest department officer, Khadim Abbas.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1495528/reaping-benefits-of-wildlife-hunting>

USE OF PLASTIC BAGS TO BE BANNED IN ICT FROM AUGUST 14: MINISTER

RECORDER REPORT JULY 24TH, 2019 ISLAMABAD

State Minister for Climate Change Zartaj Gul Tuesday announced that use of plastic bags would be banned in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) from August 14. Speaking at a presser here, she said that according to a survey, about two million people in the capital use three to four bags daily and this is quite alarming for the environment.

“The Ministry for Climate Change is on board with district administration and Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency in this regard and we're going to completely ban use of plastic bags in the capital from August 14,” she declared.

Gul continued that it has now officially been decided that there would be complete ban on use of plastic bags as it was approved in a cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan.

She said that the draft policy was shared with the participants and suggestions and inputs were taken to work on the final draft during its preparation process.

She said that the government is working to implement a complete ban on use of polythene bags in the capital from 14th of next month where its manufacturing, trading and sale will be stopped permanently.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/07/20190724499778/>

IMPORTED PLANTS: PRETTY BUT DANGEROUS

By Asif Mehmood Published: July 24, 2019

LAHORE: Restrictions on the illegal import, sale, and purchase of foreign plants has caused the prices of existing stocks at nurseries to increase manifold. This is despite the fact that some of the plants can cause health issues for people and are also harmful to local flora and fauna.

One can see different species of plants at nurseries around Lahore. Many of these were imported illegally. The foreign plants are sold alongside local ones, with many of them used indoors, or in gardens and terraces.

The majority of imported plants come from regional countries such as China, Thailand, India, and Sri Lanka, while a few species also come from Europe. The most popular imported plants are olive trees, Chinese evergreens, laceleaf, ficus, Ilex, and lucky bamboo.

Plant Protection Department Deputy Director Abid Saif said that there is no outright ban on the import of any plant, explaining that a person can import plants by fulfilling the legal requirements specific to the plant. He said that the governments of plant- exporting countries provide all necessary details about the plants, such as feasible environments and protection requirements for them.

“After getting the details, we monitor the location, climate, and environment. We do not permit import if we find that an imported plant cannot grow or would affect the local environment, crops, and other plants,” he added.

He said it is unfortunate that millions of plants, which damage our local species and environment, have been imported. He added these plants also cause the growth of weeds and the spread of diseases.

Diamond Nursery Manager Ashfaq said that the government has restricted the imports of some foreign plants due to the diseases they carry. “We only have plants which were imported two years back,” he said, explaining that most imported varieties are not harmful. He said the prices of some imported plants have shot up so much that to the general range of one imported plant cost is between Rs1,000 and Rs100,000, while a few plants can cost as much as Rs250,000 to Rs300,000.

Muhammad Arshad, a gardener who has been work at a local nursery for years, said that he makes organised charts to manage the upkeep of the imported plants, with details such as what time to water them and change the soil. He said that most imported plants cannot bear extreme temperatures, so they use green netting to protect them.

There are no precise records on plant imports, but it is estimated that there are more than 700 species of imported plants in the country, many of which are harmful to local plants and animals.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2019901/1-imported-plants-pretty-dangerous/>

SC ANNOYED OVER DELAYS IN INSTALLING SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANTS

By Our Correspondent Published: July 26, 2019

ISLAMABAD: If the government does not have a few million rupees to install a sewage treatment plant, it should go beg on D-Chowk for funds, said Supreme Court Justice Azmat Saeed. The

Supreme Court on Thursday summoned the interior federal secretary in a case regarding the Bani Gala encroachments.

Moreover, a three-member bench of the apex court comprising Justice Sheikh Azmat Saeed and Justice Umar Ata Bandial heard the case. During the course of proceedings, the court expressed annoyance over non-installation of sewage treatment plants.

The court also sought a copy of the proposed suggestions from the Capital Development Authority (CDA) regarding changing of Islamabad's master plan.

Justice Bandial remarked that the civic body had to submit a report regarding changing of master plan but it still was not submitted.

He asked how much time would be required for installation of treatment plant at Korang Nullah.

The counsel for CDA said that three treatment plants have been approved which would be installed in the next two years.

Justice Saeed inquired about whether there were any temporary plans for water treatment, and questioned why the government allowed people to build homes near the Korang Nullah. He remarked that people would also have to take steps to keep Korang Nullah clean.

The state counsel said due to a large number of illegal settlements along the Korang Nullah it cannot be abolished.

Justice Bandial remarked that if the law was implemented these illegal encroachments could be removed. Justice Saeed observed that the government showed its helplessness over removal of illegal populations.

The Environment Department director general said the Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation (IMC) did not implement recommendations of the Environment Department.

Justice Saeed asked the interior secretary to assist the court over the matter.

He directed the government to take short term initiatives to resolve the matter regarding changing of the capital's master plan and to remove encroachments. The hearing of the case was then adjourned for one week.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2021554/1-sc-annoyed-delays-installing-sewage-treatment-plants/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 29th TO AUGUST 04th 2019

TSUNAMI REDUCED TO ASH – OVER 1.2M TREES LOST TO FOREST FIRES

By Umer Farooq Published: July 29, 2019

PESHAWAR: Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa lost more than 1.2 million trees to forest fires in the 2018-19 fiscal year, suffering a blow of over Rs27.2 million, the province's forest department has confirmed.

The department has already carried out a departmental inquiry into the development, according to senior officials associated with the provincial government wing. However, due to rhetoric from opposition parties that the trees burnt were part of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's much-vaunted 'Billion Tree Tsunami' project, the department wants the matter probed again by a joint investigation team (JIT).

"Our department carried out a departmental inquiry already, but we have still requested K-P Chief Minister Mehmood Khan to form a JIT so that a comprehensive inquiry is conducted by independent people," a senior official dealing with the forest department told The Express Tribune.

The forest department has divided the forests of K-P into three regions, namely Central Southern, Hazara and Malakand. According to official forest department documents available with The Express Tribune, as many as 88,708 trees were reduced to ash by fires in the Central Southern region which comprises the Peshawar, Mardan, Charsadda, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Lakki Marwat and Nowshera districts.

"If we calculate the amount, the loss is around Rs27million with Rs9.8million inflicted in the Central Southern region, Rs17million in Hazara and Rs360,000 confirmed from the Malakand Region," the official said.

Requesting anonymity since he was not entitled to speak to the media, he said that the forest department has registered 27 cases against various suspects even though the department is not tasked with protecting trees from fires. Nine of these cases were registered in the Central Southern region, 13 in Hazara and five in Malakand. Fires have also been reported in meadows and grasslands in Swabi and Nowshera, he added.

Official documents revealed that the number of fire incidents has increased in 2018-19 compared to 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18. According to them, fires occurred at 139 sites affecting a total area of 1,735.46 hectares in 2018-19. In contrast, fires only affected 370 hectares in 2015-16. The number grew to 1,414.2 hectares and 2,793.2 hectares in the two years that followed.

To cope with the threat of forest fires, the forest department has framed standard operating procedures for blazes at ground and canopy levels. Prevention and containment of such incidents in both state forest land and other areas with vegetation will be overseen by a divisional forest fire management team headed by the commissioner concerned. The team will impose Section 144 from May to September every year to ban fireworks, campfires and any other activity that increases risks of forest fires.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2023578/1-tsunami-reduced-ash-1-2m-trees-lost-forest-fires/>

PLAN BEING EVOLVED TO CURB ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

July 29, 2019

LAHORE: A plan with the active participation of stakeholders is being evolved to control illegal wildlife trade in the country.

Zoological Survey of Pakistan sources told APP that on the direction of PTI government, effective and steering initiatives under the umbrella of Revival of Forestry & Wildlife Resources in Pakistan were being taken.

The government directed the departments concerned to take concrete steps to develop a proposal and immediately undertake inventory of endangered wildlife species and their habitats across the country, they informed.

They further said that the government had also issued directions for the revival and management of internationally recognized wildlife habitats including Khunjab National Park (GB), Khirthar National Park (Sindh), Hingol National Park (Baluchistan), Chitral Gol National Park (KPK), Lal Suhanara National Park and Salt Range area (Punjab), Machiara National Park (AJK) and Margalla Hills National Park (ICT).

WWF former senior official Dr Ijaz while lauding the government measures, said that institutional and administrative steps of the PTI government for protection of habitat and inventory for endangered wildlife species would help a great deal to achieve the desired goals.

He said that WWF-Pakistan as its initiative for combating illegal wildlife trade initiative had been working closely with relevant government departments towards effective tackling poaching and illegal trade of wildlife in general.

Punjab wildlife department senior official said the Punjab government had taken serious measures through building capacities of the relevant law enforcement agencies to monitor and control wildlife crimes.

The Punjab government through its current initiatives is supporting the conservation of reptiles by creating awareness on the ecological importance of turtles, reducing by-catch of turtles, and introducing sustainable fishing practices, he said.

To a question, he said that provincial wildlife departments were also making notable efforts towards protection of wildlife such as enhanced protection to reptiles, effective vigilance over poaching and illegal trade. "Freshwater turtles are legally protected in Pakistan due to which their capturing and selling either alive or their body parts/derivatives or keeping them as pets is illegal," he added.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/505407-plan-being-evolved-to-curb-illegal-wildlife-trade>

KP CM KICKS OFF MONSOON TREE PLANTATION DRIVE

Bureau Report Updated July 31, 2019

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan on Tuesday inaugurated the monsoon tree plantation campaign by planting an oriental chinara tree on the premises of the Peshawar Zoo.

A statement issued here said that the step would be followed by a comprehensive plantation campaign at regional and district levels.

Figures provided by the forest department indicate that 12.5 million saplings would be planted during the current monsoon season, out of which 3.451 million would be planted in the central southern

region-I, 4.152 million in northern forest region-II Abbottabad, 0.843 million in Malakand forest region-III and 4.935 million in the merged districts.

Speaking on the occasion, Mahmood Khan said 1.208 billion plants had been raised against a target of one billion during the previous tenure of Pakistan Tehreek-Insaf government in the province which was made possible by the efficient management, dedicated teamwork and active participation of the community.

He said the federal government had embarked on a challenging task to plant 10 billion saplings during the next four years, out of which the KP government would plant one billion trees.

The chief minister said in addition to plantation, the government had also taken pragmatic steps against timber mafia, thus bringing to halt deforestation in the entire province.

Mahmood Khan said thanks to the previous billion tree project of the provincial government, the forest cover in KP had increased by 6.3 per cent along with provision of job opportunities to over 500,000 people.

He said a committee had been formed to investigate the incidents of forest fires and fix responsibility accordingly.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1497137/kp-cm-kicks-off-monsoon-tree-plantation-drive>

BUZDAR LAUNCHES TREE PLANTATION DRIVE IN PUNJAB

RECORDER REPORT JULY 31ST, 2019

LAHORE: Launching the monsoon tree plantation drive by planting a sapling at the Punjab House on Tuesday, the Punjab chief minister Sardar Usman Buzdar said that the target of plantation of millions of trees will be achieved and hopefully clean and green program will be helpful in combating the growing challenges arising due to climate change.

“Trees are true friend of the human beings and the children should be especially sensitized about their importance for promoting green environment in the society,” he said, adding: “I am personally monitoring the progress made on this campaign.” He said that increasing forests’ size will be helpful in combating environmental degradation and recent rains are beneficial for the plantation of trees. The CM directed that every department should plant maximum number of trees and citizens, especially the youth, should also be involved in this activity through social forestry. He said that forest department will provide plants to the people for in-house plantation while tree-plantation is made compulsory in housing societies in the province so that climate change impacts could be dealt with.

Provincial minister for sports and tourism Taimoor Khan Bhatti, excise minister Hafiz Mumtaz Ahmad, ACS and others were also present on the occasion.

Moreover, the CM Sardar Usman Buzdar has expressed grief and sorrow over the loss of precious human lives in army aviation plane crash incident in Rawalpindi and extended sympathies to the bereaved families. He has directed the administration to provide best healthcare facilities to the injured.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/07/20190731501680/>

POLYTHENE BAGS WILL BE BANNED IN CAPITAL FROM AUG 14

Syed Irfan Raza Updated August 01, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul said polythene bags will completely be banned Islamabad from Aug 14.

Ms Gul was addressing an event for the 'Plastic Bags Se Azadi' campaign at NHA headquarters.

MNA Sumera Khan, Climate Change Senior Joint Secretary Hammad Shamimi, NHA Member (Admin) retired Capt Mushtaq Ahmed and senior NHA and communications and climate change ministry officials were also present.

Ms Gul said eliminating plastic waste is an integral part of the Prime Minister's Clean Green Pakistan Programme.

"It is alarming that 55 billion plastic bags are being used annually in the country. That amounts to consumption of 275 bags, per person per year," she said. She added that plastic bags not only affect the environment, but also cause flooding in cities.

She urged government organisations, civil society and the media to cooperate so the campaign is implemented effectively.

Environment-friendly bags were distributed among the participants of the ceremony.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1497352/polythene-bags-will-be-banned-in-capital-from-aug-14>

GOVT CLAIMS 6.3PC INCREASE IN FOREST COVER

Bureau Report August 02, 2019

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa environment minister Syed Mohammad Ishtiaq on Thursday claimed that the province's forest cover had increased by 6.3 per cent due to the 'successful completion' of the Billion Trees Tsunami afforestation project.

"The successful completion of the gigantic afforestation project earned us praise from a number of countries and international conservation bodies," the minister told a presser here about the six-year efficiency of the environment department.

He also claimed that the plantation of one billion saplings also enhanced the country's forest covered area by one per cent and that the afforestation programme had added 1,208 million trees to the province's forests.

The minister said the German government had pledged to provide €13.5 million for the forestry sector, while the federal and provincial governments would plant one billion additional saplings in the province under the 10 Billion Trees Afforestation Programme, 2018-23.

"Sixty per cent saplings will be planted in the merged tribal districts," he said.

The minister said the Billion Trees Tsunami Project was completed at a cost of Rs14 billion against the estimated cost of Rs22 billion and thus, saving the provincial exchequer Rs8 billion.

He said the plantation of one billion saplings under the BTAP programme would cost Rs27 billion to be funded by the provincial and federal governments on 50:50 sharing basis.

Answering a query regarding huge difference in the cost of the Billion Trees Tsunami Project and 10-BTAP, the minister said the price escalation was one of the major reasons.

He said afforestation would be carried out at 16,994 hectares in the merged tribal districts under the 10-BTAP, while the department had established 1,632 enclosures across the province.

“Twenty-six million plants will be distributed among communities free of charge,” he said.

Mr Ishtiaq said the department had begun inquiry into the recent forest fires, while standard operating procedures had been framed to cope with such fires in future.

He said 60 people found involved in illegal cutting of trees had been arrested, while 141,000 kanals of forest land had been retrieved in Malakand, Hazara and Dera Ismail Khan divisions during the last five years.

“Effective measures have been adopted against timber mafia, which is evident from the fact that 19,968 cubic feet timber was seized in 2018-19,” he said.

Regarding achievements in the wildlife sector, the minister said the population of Markhor (wild goat) had reached 5,511, while the strength of ibex in northern parts of the province had touched the 3,876 mark.

“The population of wild animals increased mainly due to the conservation of habitats and involvement of local communities. The department generated \$342,000 by auctioning four trophy hunting permits of Markhor.

The minister said three permits of trophy hunting of Ibex were auctioned to foreigners for \$9,300, while two permits were sold to two locals for Rs250,000.

He said the wildlife department also issued 566 small game shooting permits in 2018-19 generating Rs1.698 million.

The minister said the department issued 6,389 small game shooting licences during the last financial years and earned Rs12.778 million.

He said the Pakistan Forest Institute had started mapping for the non-timber forest products (NTFP) in selected districts of the province.

“The Environmental Protection Agency has issued legal notices to 697 industrial units, while 761 notices had been submitted to the Environmental Tribunal,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1497554>

PAKISTAN FACES PLASTIC WASTE DELUGE THANKS TO POOR MANAGEMENT

AFP August 03, 2019

CHITRAL: From the once pristine rivers of Hindu Kush to the slums of Islamabad, Pakistan is being smothered by plastic due to a lack of public awareness, government inertia and poor waste management.

Plastic bags are a large part of the problem — the nation uses some 55 billion of them each year, according to the Pakistan Plastic Manufacturers' Association.

Beaches deluged with plastic waste and dying marine life entangled in bags have shocked other countries into action — around 120 have implemented some form of single-use plastic ban.

Pakistan is among them but struggles with enforcement. There is no cohesive national policy and regional efforts often fail to consider the importance of educational outreach — with many in rural areas claiming to be unaware of the damage single-use plastic can wreak.

“Fighting for the environment? We have no knowledge about that,” says salesman Mohammad Tahir, who uses plastic bags to wrap vegetables for his customers.

The 42-year-old hails from the mountainous Chitral district, which first banned the use of such bags two years ago — but with little effect.

“I like plastic bags,” shrugs resident Khairul Azam, while shopping at a local market.

“Once home, I throw them away... I know it is not good, but we don't have waste bins in my neighbourhood,” he adds.

Instead such waste litters the roadsides and hillsides. It also clogs the streams that feed into the Indus River, which is now the second most plastic polluted river in the world, behind only the Yangtze River in China, according to a study by the German Environmental Research Centre Helmholtz.

Plastics swamp the Arabian Sea coastline, where the sewers of the sprawling port city of Karachi spew its waste.

According to the United Nations, single-use plastic bags kill up to one million birds, hundreds of thousands of marine mammals and turtles, along with countless fish each year.

And yet in Pakistan, authorities say the amount of plastic used is increasing by 15 per cent each year.

Recycling options are limited and waste disposal is often woefully mismanaged — even in the capital garbage is often simply burned in the street.

“Plastic doesn't degrade. It only becomes smaller and smaller,” says Hassaan Sipra, an environmental researcher.

“Animals eat it. You eat them. Then it generates liver dysfunctions, diabetes, diarrhoea. But because it is cheap and convenient, people don't see the health consequences,” he adds.

A new report by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) estimates that an average person ingests up to five grams of plastic a week — roughly equal to the weight of a credit card.

Plastic bags have become part of the “culture” in Pakistan, says Nazifa Butt, a researcher with WWF.

“We would never use a cup of tea without a saucer. You will never be sold anything without a plastic bag. It is considered insulting,” she adds.

In Chitral, authorities first tried to ban plastic bags in 2017, with an additional measure passed earlier this year stating that only biodegradable bags — also criticised for their environmental impact — can be used in the area.

Authorities have also backed new environmental awareness campaigns in schools, according to a local official.

But many shops still do not use biodegradable bags and enforcement against single-use plastics remains minimal.

“The local government is not sincere,” said Shabir Ahmad, chairman of the Chitral traders union.

He explains: “They never check the market. They don’t fine the shopkeepers.”

“I can confiscate all the plastic bags in one hour. But then, what is the alternative?” says Khurshid Alam Mehsud, a district administrative officer in Chitral, who insists more time is needed to address the issue.

Provincial governments in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa along with municipal authorities in Lahore have issued similar bans. But little has changed on the ground due to lack of law enforcement.

However, Prime Minister Imran Khan’s government — which has long vowed to make environmental issues a priority — is hoping to reverse the plastic tsunami, says climate change minister Malik Amin Aslam.

As of August 14, plastic bags will be banned in Islamabad, with violators subject to heavy fines.

“This love affair with plastic has to end in Pakistan,” says Aslam, who hopes that the ban in Islamabad will serve as a “model” for the rest of the country.

Some shopkeepers who spoke to AFP in Islamabad appeared prepared for the move — but others said they were unaware of the new measure.

Plastics manufacturers — who say up to 400,000 people work directly or indirectly in the industry — have also raised concerns.

But the government says action is necessary regardless.

Aslam says: “It’s a health menace, it’s an economic menace, it is an environmental menace. It is something that we need to get rid of.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1497826>

AIR QUALITY IDEAL IN CAPITAL, SAYS PAK-EPA

APP August 03, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Pollution level comprising particulate matter of 2.5 microns (PM2.5) has plummeted to 18.68 micrograms per cubic metre (mg/m) which was below the permissible ratio of 35 mg/m.

The 24 hours average recorded ratio of other environmental pollutants has been recorded below permissible limits with healthy ambient quality in the capital.

The atmospheric pollution increased at times due to high vehicular emissions emitted by automobiles on the roads.

According to the daily ambient air quality report of the federal capital by Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA), the 24 hours average ratio of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and Sulphur dioxide (SO₂) were 11.43 mg/ m and 5.72 mg/m respectively against the respective National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS) of 80 mg/m and 120mg/m.

The data was recorded by calibrated air quality monitors fixed at particular positions with proper readings.

However, concentrations of PM_{2.5} during the day and evening times were recorded slightly high, whereas the overall ambient air quality of the federal capital was healthier today.

Any other data from any source presenting ambient air quality of Islamabad was neither verified nor approved by the Pak-EPA, the report added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1497745/air-quality-ideal-in-capital-says-pak-epa>

PM IMRAN CALLS FOR PROTECTING GREEN AREAS OF CAPITAL

Kashif Abbasi Updated August 03, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday called for protecting green areas of Islamabad and directed the Capital Development Authority to complete the new building bylaws soon.

He was chairing a meeting with the proposed new members of the commission, which is supposed to carry out revision of the Islamabad master plan. He said that revision of the master plan should be made in accordance with the present day needs. He said that increase in population and protection of green areas should be kept in view while revising the master plan.

The meeting noted that unauthorised constructions and unplanned growth of the city had been creating environmental and administrative issues.

“In past, growth of population, unplanned growth of city and administrative issues remained neglected, which resulted in the mushroom growth of unplanned buildings and reduction of green areas,” according to an official handout issued by the PM office after the meeting.

The handout quoted the prime minister as saying that climate change and environment were major issues of the country, which needed attention of the government. The participants were told that steps were being taken to provide better housing facilities to the slum dwellers of Islamabad.

CDA Chairman Amer Ali Ahmed briefed the prime minister about the progress made by the commission so far.

A few days ago, the federal government had decided to extend deadline for the commission formed in December last for revising the master plan. The 12-member commission had prepared a 270-page report, which is currently being consolidated.

A few days ago, CDA and the ministry of interior in a summary had proposed changes in the commission, proposing deletion of four names of experts and addition of nine new names.

However, the federal cabinet in its last meeting did not decide fate of the said summary as the prime minister had decided that before giving approval to the summary he wanted to hold a meeting with the new members proposed for the commission.

The Friday's meeting was held in line with the said decision of the premier. In the said summary, the CDA wanted that names of Syed Ayub Qutab, Javed Ali Khan, Jehangir Khan Sherpao and Abdul Haleem Paracha should be removed. It had also suggested addition of new members such as renowned architect Nayyar Ali Dada, Ali Asghar Khan, Aziz Aslam, Khurram Fareed Bargatt, Nayyab Hassan Gardazi (lawyer), environmentalist Humaira Qasim Khan, Asma Khalil, Naveed Aslam and Salman Mansoor.

The prime minister held the meeting with the newly-proposed members and now in the upcoming cabinet meeting a decision would be about them.

The commission, which was formed in December last year, was supposed to complete the task of first-ever revision of the master plan within six months by July 13 deadline. Sources said that the commission completed its report within deadline, highlighting the major issues. Meanwhile, it was decided that a consultant would be hired to complete the studies in the light of commission's findings. However, the consultant is yet to be hired.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1497756>

'500M TREES TO BE PLANTED IN PUNJAB IN FIVE YEARS'

By Our Correspondent Published: August 4, 2019

LAHORE: As many 500 million trees will be planted across Punjab in five years, while nine million trees will be planted during the current year, said Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar.

He expressed these views while inaugurating the monsoon tree plantation by planting a sapling at China Park near Saggian Interchange on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister said that it is the responsibility of every Pakistani to make the tree plantation campaign a success.

"Currently, there are 21 trees per acre in Punjab. Our goal is to increase this ratio to 28 trees per acre by 2025," he revealed. Around 5.1% of the country is covered in forests. Out of this, 3.27% is in Punjab, he added.

He maintained that merely planting more trees is not the solution. Instead, we should focus on looking after the trees that exist. The forest department will give a subsidy of 70% on tree plantation on an area of 3,950 acres under the Social Forestry Project, he said.

He appealed to the people to plant more trees in order to make the country green. The chief minister also inspected the stall set up by the forest department. He was also briefed on the tree plantation campaign. Speaking to the media, he said that the scope of the Sehat Insaf Cards will be expanded to the entire province.

The prime minister has directed that government employees should also be provided with Sehat Insaf Cards, he added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2027591/1-500m-trees-planted-punjab-five-years/>

August 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 05th TO 11th 2019

GOVT WORKING ON ALTERNATIVES TO PLASTIC BAGS, SENATE BODY TOLD

Aamir Yasin Updated August 06, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The number of shopping bags produced in Pakistan has increased from 10 million in 199 to 55 billion in 2018, the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change was told on Monday.

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam also told senators that the use of plastic bags is a serious concern for the country because they pollute rivers and negatively impact human health.

He said the Indus River is the second-most polluted river in the world because of plastic bags. Plastic contamination of food and water affects people's health, he said, and every Pakistan is consuming plastic equivalent to the size of a credit card.

Mr Aslam also said that using polythene bags will be banned in Islamabad from Aug 14, and the provinces will be informed of the policy so they can legislate for themselves.

As an alternative to plastic bags, he said the government is working to adopt the Kenyan model of making shopping bags from plants which will be biodegradable.

He said that in addition to plastic bags, bags used for potato chips are also a pollutant. He said that the government has asked manufacturers of such bags to collect and recycle them, or they too will be banned in the capital.

In response to a question, Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul said the ban on plastic bags is only for Islamabad. The subject of the environment has been transferred to the provinces under the 18th Amendment, and they will decide whether to ban plastic bags in their regions.

Ms Gul said the federal government's jurisdiction is limited to the capital, adding that the provinces will be informed of the policy and "will also adopt the policy of the federal government but they should make legislation of their own".

When asked about the effect on manufacturers, who say that 8,000 industrial units will be closed and a million workers unemployed, she said the ban will not shut down the industry and leave people unemployed but will create a new industry.

"An alternate source will be developed soon. Paper, cloth and jute bags will increase employment for women in home-based industry," she said.

Representatives of plastic bag manufacturers were also at the meeting, and told senators that increasing the thickness of polythene bags from 15 to 50 microns will reduce their use and end pollution.

They said bags that are 10-12 microns thick cost 25 paisas to produce, while 50 micron thick bags cost Rs3.5 per piece and will reduce use, as people will reuse such bags many times and will not dispose of them out in the open.

They also claimed that more trees will be cut down to make paper bags as an alternative for plastic bags.

Climate change ministry officials challenged the figures of industry and workers, saying there was no registration of plastic bag manufacturers and representatives had shared different figures from those presented before the committee.

Committee chair Senator Sitara Ayaz said the ministry should form a technical committee to find a solution to the industry shutdown and the loss of employment for workers, while introducing alternatives to plastic shopping bags.

Climate change officials told the committee that seven months of deliberation and negotiation were held with all the stakeholders, mainly the plastic bags association, recycling association and academia. They said experts and scientists guided the ministry on legislation to ban plastic bags.

Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency Director General Farzana Altaf Shah said Islamabad has a population of 2m, and three to six bags are used per person every day.

She said there are seven environment protection agencies across the country, and meetings will be held on plastic bag alternatives and harm to the environment in order to regulate plastic bags in all the provinces.

The committee also discussed wrapping luggage in plastic at airports, but Aviation Division officials said wrapping luggage in plastic is not mandatory except for pilgrims travelling under the Road to Makkah programme.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1498374>

PREMIER LAUNCHES PLANTATION DRIVE TO ‘SAVE FUTURE GENERATIONS’

By Our Correspondent Published: August 6, 2019

ISLAMABAD.: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday said increasing Pakistan’s forest cover was essential to save it from the imminent disaster of climate change, while urging citizens to take part in the nationwide tree plantation drive.

“Plantation is not an option, but a necessity to save the country for future generations,” he said at the launch of the monsoon tree plantation campaign at Shakarparian.

Addressing a gathering with an overwhelming majority of schoolchildren, he said that the country’s youth must become part of the drive to avert the dangers posed by climate change, including high temperatures, glacial melting and desertification.

The prime minister announced that August 18 would be marked as 'Plant for Pakistan' day, where citizens, government departments and the armed forces would plant trees as a gesture of caring for the country.

"Together, we will make effort to reverse the ills of climate change by persistently planting trees for the next four years," he said.

He asked the schoolchildren to make a pledge to plant at least two saplings each on August 18, which they affirmed by loud, enthusiastic cheers.

The prime minister said high pollution in big cities was leading to health risks such as lung infection and mentioned that in Lahore alone, the area covered by trees had been reduced to five per cent as compared to that in 1990s.

Prime Minister Khan mentioned that the provincial government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) increased forest cover by six per cent during five years, which was also acknowledged by international organisations.

"By turning Pakistan green, we can emerge as an exemplary state. Our Clean and Green Pakistan initiative in K-P has received global acclamation. The Forest and Agriculture Department based in Rome has acknowledged K-P efforts of increasing six per cent forest coverage. We did it with dedication, and with fewer funds," said the premier.

Shedding light on the efforts of the K-P government to achieve the objective, the PM shared that 10 officials of the forest department had embraced martyrdom to uproot the most powerful timber mafia prevalent in KP.

Earlier, the PM also planted a pine sapling at the venue.

Federal Minister and Adviser to PM on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam said that for the first time in the country's history, the concept of urban forestry was taking root through public-private partnership and with the support of civil society organisations.

"Almost 200,000 saplings have been distributed free of cost at 30 points in Islamabad on Monday under the monsoon plantation campaign, whereas 10,000 have been planted over an area of 100 acres in one day," said Aslam.

He added that 900 acres of land had been recovered at Maragalla hills for forestation.

In July, the federal government had set a target of planting 140 million saplings across the country during the campaign that began in the first week of August.

Earlier this year, the Ministry of Climate Change planted around 95 million saplings across the country under the "Plant for Pakistan" programme.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2028531/1-pm-imran-launches-plantation-drive-save-future-generations/>

CLEANING OF ALL STORM-WATER DRAINS IN SINDH ORDERED DAYS BEFORE EXPECTED DOWNPOUR

Dawn Report Updated August 07, 2019

HYDERABAD: Commissioners of the Hyderabad, Sukkur, Lar-kana and Mir-pur-khas divisions have issued necessary directives to their respective deputy commissioners to make arrangements to cope with any emergency arising out of the heavy rains forecast to start in Sindh within the next few days.

The directives came amid widespread complaints of the failure of almost all district administrations to deal with flooding and other issues that cropped up after the recent downpour in the province.

Hyderabad Commissioner Abdul Waheed Shaikh has also asked the management of Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa) to carry out desilting of storm-water drains and sewers before the expected start of the next spell on Friday or Saturday.

Presiding over a meeting here on Tuesday to review the aftermath of the previous downpour that unleashed flooding in Hyderabad district, the commissioner said that all storm-water drains and sewers be cleared of garbage and filth to ensure a smooth drainage of rainwater.

The commissioner also directed the officials concerned to ensure removal of all encroachments from the storm-water drains. He stressed that the issue be resolved on a permanent basis.

He also asked the departments concerned to take appropriate measures for the lifting and disposal of offal during the Eid days.

The commissioner asked the Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (Hesco) management to improve its distribution system and hold back its load management regime during the Eid days.

Hyderabad Deputy Commissioner Syed Aijaz Ali Shah informed the meeting that in view of the expected downpour, the district administration had already sounded a 'high alert' and cancelled leaves of the staff of all the departments concerned.—Agencies

Minister warns officials against negligence

Hanif Samoon in Badin adds: Sindh Minister for Agriculture Mohammad Ismail Rahu has asked officials of both the irrigation department and Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority (Sida) to make all required arrangements for coping with aftermath of heavy rainfall which had been forecast to hit lower region of the province within next few days.

He told this reporter that there was an urgent need to reinforce vulnerable dykes and embankments of both irrigation canals and drains in Badin district since weather websites including Pakistan Meteorological Department had predicted that a strong rain system was likely to hit southern districts of Sindh including Badin from Friday onward.

He said that he, together with the district administration, was busy round the clock to ensure that dykes did not suffer any damage in case of heavy rainfall in the district. "We are ready to provide every available relief and other facilities to people in case of the predicted heavy rainfall," he said and asked the district administration officials to remain on high alert as per directions of Sindh government's functionaries.

Mr Rahu warned officials who failed to perform their duties honestly and diligently during heavy rains of stern action.

"We could not complete repair work at certain points of drains and irrigation minors due to lack of funds despite our sincere efforts," he said.

He claimed that all departments of Sindh government faced financial crunch because the federal government had stopped releasing funds to the provincial government.

He said that recent rains had given great boost to agriculture in Thar, mountainous areas of Dadu and Jamshoro districts and the areas which faced water crisis. People of Thar might get abundant yield of their traditional crops if the region received expected heavy rains in coming weeks. Now almost all tail-end areas of the district were being provided ample quantity of water, he said.

He said in answer to a question about latest reshuffle in the provincial cabinet that it was a routine move made on the direction of top leadership of the party.

He praised political acumen of Pakistan Peoples Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari with regard to worsening situation in India-held Kashmir and suggested that all political forces should sit together in a joint session of parliament to mull over naked aggression by the Indian government.

Mr Rahu said that any move by the federal government to tinker with the 18th Amendment to the Constitution regarding provincial autonomy would be resisted by people of Sindh and other provinces.

“This is not the right time for the federal government to create unrest among people by playing dirty tricks with political rivals,” he warned.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1498457/cleaning-of-all-storm-water-drains-ordered-days-before-expected-downpour>

PUNJAB CS LAUNCHES MONSOON TREE PLANTATION CAMPAIGN

RECORDER REPORT AUG 7TH, 2019 LAHORE

Punjab Chief Secretary Yousaf Naseem Khokhar on Tuesday launched monsoon tree plantation campaign by planting a sapling on the premises of Civil Secretariat. The Punjab government has set a target to plant nine million saplings during the ongoing drive. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Secretary said that the campaign should be made successful by exceeding the fixed target. He mentioned that protection of environment is a national cause, adding that tree plantation is imperative to control the growing pollution and the federal government is paying special attention to this issue.

He said providing clean environment to people is a priority of the government and practical steps are being taken for this purpose. He also asked the relevant provincial departments to keep close coordination with federal institutes and play their due role in making the tree plantation a success. He remarked that controlling environment pollution is a service to humanity and there is need to work for environment on emergent basis.

The Chief Secretary urged people to actively participate in the drive to make it a success. He also underlined the need for launching a community mobilization and awareness campaign regarding benefits of trees. He directed that after plantation effective arrangements should also be ensured for protection of a sapling so that it could reach its full stature.

The secretary forest department briefed that all arrangements are in place to successfully run the campaign. The forest department has 31 million saplings in stocks and 363 sale points have been

established for the ongoing drive, he added. He said 15 million saplings were planted against a target of 12 million during the spring plantation and rate of success remained 128 percent. Those among present were additional chief secretary, additional chief secretary (home), and secretaries of different departments including finance, local government, education and information.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/08/20190807504883/>

KMBL PLANTS 6,000 TREES IN CHANGA MANGA

RECORDER REPORT AUG 7TH, 2019 LAHORE

True to its principal of preserving the natural environment, Khushhali Microfinance Bank has taken the initiative of the plantation and maintenance of 6,000 plants at Changa Manga, near Lahore. This initiative has been taken in partnership with the Punjab Forest department. The tree plantation, which covers 8.5 acres, will entail plantation of approximately 800 trees per acre, equalling a total of 6,000 trees to help afforestation.

Afforestation is highly important to maintain biodiversity and ecological balances. The plantation drive will be participated by the bank's staff from its branches in Lahore, Kasur, Pattoki and adjacent areas who have volunteered for the tree plantation activity. As part of the drive, Khushhali Bank will also be paying for the maintenance of trees over the next 5 years by the administration of Changa Manga.

President KMBL, Ghalib Nishtar, expressed his views on the occasion "KMBL has taken a leading role in embracing a greener future with its consecutive environmental initiatives across the country. This venture to plant 6,000 trees at Changa Manga is our small contribution to help afforestation, prevent global warming and pollution.-PR

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/08/20190807504884/>

THAR FOUNDATION TO DONATE 0.1M SAPLINGS TO SINDH FOREST DEPT

RECORDER REPORT: AUGUST 08,2019

KARACHI: In a major push for increasing green cover, Thar Foundation—the CSR front for Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) & Engro Powergen Thar Limited (EPTL)—has announced to collaborate with the Sindh Forest Department for plantation of 100,000 saplings across the province.

In this connection, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Thar Foundation and Sindh Forest Department (SFD). Under the terms of agreement. Thar Foundation, along with SECMC will provide 100,000 plants to Sindh Forestry Department to increase greening factor in Sindh. The collaboration has been done under the larger 'Thar Million Tree Programme' initiative of Thar Foundation which plans to plant one million trees in Thar by end of 2019. Under the agreement, the total count of trees stands over 700,000.

The agreement was signed by Syed Murtaza Azhar Rizvi, Director Site Operations of Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company and Riaz Wagan, chief conservator, from Sindh Forest Department.

As per collaboration between SECMC and Sindh Forest, SECMC will provide 100,000 different types of indigenous plants to SFD which will then develop a multi-scale plan for 100,000 saplings' plantation across the Sindh province. The SFD will also be responsible for continuous monitoring and supervision of these plants across the province.

Speaking on the occasion, Syed Murtaza Azhar Rizvi of SECMC, said his company was vigorously working for making clean and green environment in district Tharparkar.

“We attach great importance to health, safety and environment (HSE) initiatives. Keeping in view this approach, now we have decided to expand horizon of such activities from Thar, our main area of operation, to the entire province.”

“The Thar Million Tree Programme, which is our flagship environmental stewardship programme targeted at a vision of a greener, more prosperous Thar,” he said.

Earlier SECMC established Sindh's largest private sector nursery spread over 80 acres of land and having a capacity to nurture 0.5 million saplings at a time. The nursery has contributed saplings of different local species like Sarhain, Moringa, Bairi, Babur, Neem and Kandi. The programme is aimed at contributing towards carbon footprint reduction and promoting a green and healthy environment in Tharparkar.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/08/08/4-page/795412-news.html>

SINDH GOVT IMPOSES BAN ON PLASTIC BAGS, URGES PEOPLE TO START USING CLOTH BAGS

Imran Ayub August 09, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh government on Thursday announced a ban on plastic bags across the province in a third such move taken to protect the environment, which, unfortunately, had never met any success in earlier attempts.

This time the announcement came amidst much media fanfare and huge claims at a press conference addressed by Barrister Murtaza Wahab, spokesperson for the government of Sindh, who also holds the portfolio of CM's adviser for environment and climate change. Mr Wahab said the recent ban was different from the past ones as it was imposed across the province.

Before making it effective, he said, the provincial government would run a massive campaign to convince consumers as well as traders about the benefits of such a step.

“The Sindh government will be enforcing a complete ban on plastic bags throughout the province with effect from October 1,” he said. “The decision has been taken by the provincial environment department. The provincial government has simultaneously kicked off an awareness campaign about the harms of using plastic bags and in connection with this drive, cloth-made bags have been distributed among people of Karachi to encourage their use.”

The move from the Sindh government came days after the Adviser to the Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam had told senators attending the meeting of the Standing Committee on Climate Change that using polythene bags would be banned in Islamabad from Aug 14 and the provinces would be informed of the policy so they could legislate for themselves in this regard.

The provincial government spokesperson said that the previous bans had never been imposed across the province.

Secondly, Barrister Wahab added that the provincial government would use the gap between today's announcement and date of implementation to convince the people about the use of bags other than of plastic and polythene.

“We have more than 50 days in which we would campaign to make this ban effective,” he said. “We would reach out to people in every city and district to make our point. It's in everyone's interest and we firmly believe that the people will appreciate the government move and play their role to protect our environment. We have to move now before it's too late.”

He said the Sindh government on one hand was expecting positive response from the people of the province and on the other devising strict measures under which after the Oct 1 deadline, the violators of the ban would face legal proceedings.

When asked about the negative impact on the business of certain industries producing such bags and offering employment to hundreds of people, he said some issues demanded immediate moves for the larger interest.

“In the days to come we would definitely move to the industry and talk to them as well. There is always a solution to any problem and we hope that our business community would sort out the issues in larger interest of the province and its environment,” added Barrister Wahab.

Meanwhile, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah in a video message urged the public to avoid using plastic bags as they were a key element in creating pollution.

He said that the government would encourage the use of cloth-made or paper bags and appealed to the masses to join the campaign.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1498836/sindh-govt-imposes-ban-on-plastic-bags-urges-people-to-start-using-cloth-bags>

K-P TO BUY MONITORS TO HELP CHECK AIR POLLUTION

By our correspondent Aug.09,2019

PESHAWAR: With the issue of air quality in the province getting worse, the provincial government has decided to purchase and install air quality metres across the provincial capital to check the level of air pollution, collect data and devise mitigation plans.

This was disclosed by Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) Chief Minister Mahmood Khan on Thursday during a meeting with environmentalist and lawyer Ahmad Rafay Alam.

During the meeting, Mahmood stated that air pollution and climate change are two of the biggest public health issues which currently face the province. Clearly, he said that significant changes need to be implemented to make a strong impact on reducing air pollution rates.

In this regard, he pointed out that the government had already made efforts through the Green Growth Initiative and the Billion Tree Tsunami afforestation project. Despite that, Mahmood said that they need to do more to curb air pollution and climate change.

Noting that the provision of clean air is one of the government's most important jobs, Mahmood said that they are very clear about taking measures to improve air quality in the province as a whole and will install air quality monitors in Peshawar and other districts of the province affected by air pollution.

Alam extended his full support in providing his expertise for reducing air pollution in K-P.

Among the many environmental challenges faced by urban areas of the country, Alam said that air quality is especially difficult to manage. The negative impacts of pollution include elevated risk of cardiovascular problems such as heart diseases, stroke and acute diseases, he warned.

The environmentalist said that installing air quality monitors will help distinguish between areas where pollutant levels violate an ambient air quality standard and areas where they do not.

Using the data produced by these monitors, he said, cities can develop smarter, timely responses to pollution and help ensure cleaner air for all of its residents.

Provincial Finance Minister Taimur Saleem Jhagra said that apart from the provincial environmental protection agencies, the government is also taking solid measures to control air pollution.

“We will do what it takes, we are committed to buying the necessary equipment and we will work to reduce emissions, and to educate people,” Jhagra said, adding that the air we breathe cannot be replaced or bought.

One of the biggest air pollution challenges which Peshawar faces is from construction work on the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project in the city and the corresponding traffic jams on key thoroughfares. The other major air pollution problem stems from the annual phenomenon of smog in the city which comes about in the last quarter of the year.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2031308/1-k-p-buy-monitors-help-check-air-pollution/?amp=1>

RUSSIANS RUSH TO BUY IODINE AFTER BLAST CAUSES RADIATION SPIKE

Agencies Updated August 10, 2019

MOSCOW: Residents of two northern Russian cities are stocking up on iodine that is used to reduce the effects of radiation exposure after a mysterious accident on a nearby military testing site, regional media reported.

The Ministry of Defence has given few details of the accident, saying only that two people were killed and six injured by the explosion of a liquid-propelled rocket engine at a test site in Russia's north.

Although the ministry initially said no harmful chemicals were released into the atmosphere and radiation levels were unchanged, authorities in the nearby city of Severodvinsk reported what they described as a brief spike in radiation.

No official explanation has been given for why such an accident would cause radiation to spike.

“Everyone has been calling asking about iodine all day,” one pharmacy was quoted as saying by 29.Ru, a media outlet that covers the Arkhangelsk area.

It said the run on iodine had occurred in the northern port cities of Arkhangelsk and Severodvinsk and that several pharmacies had run out. Severodvinsk is the site of a shipyard that builds nuclear-powered submarines.

“We still have iodine left ... but a really large number of people have come in for it today,” another pharmacy was quoted as saying.

Authorities have shut down an area of the Dvina Bay in the White Sea to shipping for a month near the accident site, without explaining why.

An unidentified naval officer quoted by Kommersant newspaper said the accident could have occurred at a testing site at sea and that the explosion of a rocket could have caused a toxic fuel spill.

Russian media have said that the rocket engine explosion may have occurred at a weapons testing area near the village of Nyonoksa in Arkhangelsk region.

Those reports say an area near Nyonoksa is used for tests on weapons, including ballistic and cruise missiles that are used by the Russian navy. Some reports have speculated that the test may have involved a new hypersonic missile called Tsirkon.

Greenpeace cited data from the Emergencies Ministry that it said showed radiation levels had risen 20 times above the normal level in Severodvinsk around 30 kilometres (18 miles) from Nyonoksa.

More explosions have injured nine more people at a military depot in Russia’s Siberia region, where massive blasts earlier in the week left two dead and 13 injured.

The Friday explosions at the ammunition depot near the city of Achinsk in eastern Siberia’s Krasnoyarsk region were caused by lightning, the Russian Defence Ministry said, according to state news agency Tass.

The blasts and fire on Monday at the depot reportedly damaged the facility’s lightning-protection system.

Russian news agencies cited local health officials as saying that nine people were taken to the hospital after the new explosions, but there was no information on their conditions.

An official probe has been launched to determine the cause of Monday’s fire, the latest in a series of blazes at Russian military arsenals over the past few years.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1499104>

FIRST-EVER BALOCHISTAN MINERAL POLICY LAUNCHED TO ATTRACT INVESTORS

By Mohammad Zafar Published: August 10, 2019

QUETTA: For the first time in its history, the provincial government has unveiled the Balochistan Mines and Mineral Development Policy in a bid to win the confidence of national and foreign investors.

Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Aliyani unveiled the policy during a ceremony in Quetta in which provincial ministers and advisers including Zahoor Buledi, Engineer Zamrak Khan Achakzai, Saleem Khosa, Noor Muhammad Dummar, Naseeb Ullah Marri, Mitha Khan Kakar, Senator Naseebullah Bazai, Mines Secretary Zahid Saleem, Planning and Development Additional Chief Secretary Abdul Rehman Buzdar, Bushra Rind and provincial government spokesperson Liaquat Shahwani were present.

“Without reforms and effective policy, we won’t be able to attract investors to the province. That is why the current government has undertaken steps to uplift the mineral sector as it would greatly stimulate the provincial economy,” the chief minister said.

Lauding the efforts of the provincial mines and mineral department, the CM said that all stakeholders were taken into confidence for the finalisation of the new policy that had unanimously been approved by the provincial cabinet.

“Though our province is replete with natural mineral resources investors have been reluctant to come here due to lack of an effective mineral policy.” Jam Kamal slammed previous regimes for neglecting province’s mine and mineral sectors.

He pointed out that the department had already exceeded its revenue target, having generated Rs2.8 billion last year against a target of Rs2.4 billion.

Kamal added that the only way the provincial government could deliver on its mandate of across-the-board development and provide relief to the masses was by improving the revenue streams of government department and make them profitable.

“Unfortunately, Balochistan still had old policies in place, which was a deterrent for national and foreign investors. But now we are optimistic that the new policy will make the difference and attract foreign financing and large-scale projects.”

Earlier, Secretary Mines Zahid Saleem informed a high-level meeting chaired by the CM that the mines and mineral department had been established in 2002. However, despite the passage of almost two decades, we didn’t introduce any reforms, he added.

“Each and every element of the Mines and Mineral Policy 2019 has been comprehensively reviewed in order to make sure there is a 10 per cent increase in the department’s revenue,” Saleem said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2032185/1-first-ever-balochistan-mineral-policy-launched-attract-investors/>

PLASTIC BAGS BANNED IN MINISTRY

Our Correspondent August 11, 2019

Islamabad: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Sayed Zulfikar Abbas Bukhari announced a ban on the use of plastic bags in his ministry.

The announcement was made during a meeting between Zulfikar Bukhari and Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul who visited the ministry to launch plastic bag free drive there.

Pakistan is set to become the 128th country to ban the use of plastic bags on August 14 to check pollution by non-recyclable waste.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/511252-plastic-bags-banned-in-ministry>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 14th TO 18th 2019

WILDLIFE DEPT TO DECLARE 15PC OF EX-FATA PROTECTED AREA

Zulfiqar Ali Updated August 14, 2019

PESHAWAR: The wildlife department, which recently extended its jurisdiction to the newly- merged tribal districts, has planned to declare 15 per cent of the total territory of the defunct Fata as protected area to protect and utilise natural resources.

Officials told Dawn that the department was set to start its activities in merged districts from 'zero level' because the wildlife sector did not exist in the former Fata.

"The department is starting activities from zero level in merged districts and under the plan, at least 15 per cent area of the total territory will be declared as protected," said an official, who deals with the conservation of natural resources in the province.

"All protected areas will be connected with each other through corridors. This will provide baseline for launching activities," he said, adding that multiple surveys would be conducted in the next two years to explore biodiversity in the region.

Sources said the provincial government had allocated around Rs800 million, including Rs635 million, under the Tribal Decade Strategy to the wildlife department for the current financial year to be utilised for the protection and conservation of fauna.

Officials said after the release of funds, the department would hire expertise of the Federal Zoological Survey Department and Pakistan Museum of Natural History to conduct resource assessment survey to get data about reptiles, mammals and insects in the tribal region.

They said the department in second phase would conduct survey to understand social issues in respect of wildlife, protected areas and dependency of local communities on natural resources including wildlife.

In third phase survey for development of protected areas would be conducted and these areas would be connected through corridors.

"These surveys will provide direction for future planning for conservation of natural resources," said one senior conservator, adding that initiating any activity without surveys would result in wastage of financial resources.

The defunct Fata which was merged with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in May 2018 spread over a reported area of 27,220 square kilometers. Over 20 departments and around 40 directorates have been

extended to seven tribal districts. The region also serves the main route for migratory birds from Siberia to South Asia and back.

After extending its activities to the merged districts, the wildlife department formally took over three pheasantries in Bajaur, Mohmand, Kurram districts and one at the Governor's House in Peshawar. The forest department had set up pheasantries in the former Fata.

An amount of Rs60 million has been allocated in the annual development programme for the maintenance of four pheasantries.

Under the plan, four new pheasantries will be established in Orakzai, Khyber, North Waziristan and South Waziristan merged districts.

It is learnt that Rs113 million has already been spent in the name of conservation of fauna in the former Fata under the Sustainable Conservation of Wildlife project.

The total cost of the project was Rs120 million but it went up by Rs37 million under the revised estimates.

Conservators said major challenge for the department in the merged districts is public awareness of wildlife, ecotourism and implementation of the relevant laws.

The department has planned to conduct a programme to educate local communities about environment, conservation of natural resources and wildlife.

“Local communities may not familiar with conservation of natural resources and wildlife and therefore, the department will emphasise awareness instead of the enforcement of laws,” said an official, adding that education officers would be recruited to visit schools and colleges to educate youth about the importance biodiversity.

The department has requested the government to provide trained staff to be deputed in merged districts.

Under the plan, there will be one district forest officer (wildlife), one sub-DFO, one range officer, one deputy range officer and three watchers in every tribal district.

The department has also requested the government to provide double-cabin pickup trucks, jeeps and motorcycles for field visits of the staff.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1499408>

SEPA APPROVES COAL STORAGE PROJECT AMID SERIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Faiza Ilyas Updated August 15, 2019

KARACHI: Ignoring court directives and its own law that calls for subjecting a project likely to cause adverse effect to a process of environmental impact assessment (EIA) followed by a public review, the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) recently granted approval to a coal storage facility, sources told Dawn.

The environmental watchdog, sources said, approved the 23-acre coal storage project on the basis of an Initial Environmental Examination (IEE), a preliminary environmental review meant for projects with no significant adverse impacts which require no public review.

Located in Bin Qasim Town's area of Deh Ghangiyaro, the project was proposed by the Pakistan International Bulk Terminal (PIBT) — which is presently handling the country's largest quantity of coal of about 8m tonnes at its jetty out of a total of 20m tonnes the country is importing annually.

Sources said that the PIBT was operating with a storage facility of one million tonnes planned expansion following the 2018 decision of the Supreme Court, which restrained coal imports at the Karachi Port Trust as it lacked a system to safely handle and store coal consignments.

The court directed importers to use PIBT solely dedicated with a mechanised system to handle coal, cement and clinker. More than two dozen companies are reportedly engaged in coal imports.

“We also direct all the authorities in Karachi that open coal shall not be stored anywhere in the city of Karachi. It should only be stored in warehouses and if transported, proper blankets and moisture should be provided to the coal so that the dust should not spread in the air and cause pollution,” the June 2018 order reads.

After this decision, according to lawyer Zubair Abro, storage of coal and its handling became a project that falls in the category K (2) of Schedule II of Sepa 2014 regulations, which calls for an EIA of all projects that may cause adverse impacts.

An EIA, he argued, would also provide an opportunity to all stakeholders including local residents of the area to raise their concerns related to the project.

It is important to mention here that Sepa has often been accused of approving projects requiring an EIA through an IEE.

In one such case in 2014, the environmental watchdog approved a traffic improvement plan through an IEE.

“But, the high court in a much celebrated decision interpreting Schedule I & II of the 2014 Sepa regulations had held that if a project falls in both schedules an EIA would be carried out to achieve the purpose of the environmental law,” Mr Abro recalled.

He also referred to some other pending cases in which the Sindh High Court had directed the KPT and a coal handler to carry out two separate EIAs on coal handling, emphasising that Sepa violated its own act and that the approval (to the project) must be cancelled.

Upon contact, Sepa deputy director Munir Ahmed Abbasi justified its decision, arguing that the project was (only) of a warehouse and could have been approved (under Schedule III) through a ‘check-list’.

“But, we didn't do that because of environmental concerns related to coal. That's why we asked the proponent to prepare an IEE report, which was reviewed by an expert committee and approval was granted.” He also cited several conditions Sepa had attached to the approval, including an environmental management plan, to ensure that coal was safely handled and stored at the facility.

When contacted, the PIBT declined to share any specific details of the new storage facility.

After the court's decision allowing coal imports only through the PIBT, the number of illegal stockpiles of coal earlier restricted to district South in the city has increased dramatically.

Sources said that this was done by coal importing companies to cut costs as the PIBT had a limited coal storage facility for 15 days only, for which they charged.

The areas where hazardous consignments of coal were dumped in open over the past one year included Landhi, Bhains Colony, Razzaqabad and a site near Rehri Goth.

Recent information gathered from different sources indicate that while most of these sites have either been cleared of coal or relevant companies served notices by Sepa, illegal stockpiles of coal have now appeared at two locations in Deh Ghangiyaro.

A recent visit to this specific area, located within one kilometre of PIBT and an under construction coal-fired power plant, showed that coal was being dumped close to a residential area at one site.

The particular site was also being used as a dumping site for coal residues.

"Yes, at times the air is heavy with coal dust, making breathing difficult," said a woman, whose house was located just few yards away from the coal dumps.

She identified the locality as 'Gulshan-i-Iqra' and, according to her, coal stockpiles had appeared two months back there.

Sharing his concerns over Sepa's decision and dumping of coal in open, Saquib Ejaz Hussain, a senior environmentalist, said the manner in which coal and coal combustion residues were being handled in open in the city and the consequent destruction of environment (through air and marine pollution) had severely compromised the basic rights of citizens.

"Handling of coal is a sensitive public interest matter that needs a detailed environmental impact assessment followed by a public review," he said, adding that the court had given clear directives on coal matters and Sepa's decision was tantamount to contempt of court.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1499641>

MAYOR VOICES CONCERN OVER COAL STORAGE PROJECT

RECORDER REPORT AUG 17TH, 2019 KARACHI

Expressing concern over approval of coal storage project in Bin Qasim area by Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar stated that it would increase environmental pollution in the city. Mayor Karachi said SEPA did not have authority to take any step in contrast to the Supreme Court directives which had in its 2018 decision restrained coal imports at the Karachi Port Trust as it lacked a system to safely handle and store coal consignments and directed all authorities in Karachi that open coal shall not be stored anywhere in the city.

He expressed concern that storage of coal in Bin Qasim town would cause danger not only to people residing in surrounding localities but to other parts of city as well. SEPA should have consulted the environmental protection associations and public before approving such a sensitive project. We,

therefore, in the larger interest of city, demand SEPA to review its decision to save the city and province from dangerous environmental impact due to air pollution.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/08/20190817506596/>

PLASTIC BAN CAMPAIGN STARTS IN 10 DAYS IN THE FEDERAL CAPITAL: ASLAM

By Our Correspondent Published: August 17, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Government has retreated from the August 14 deadline to ban single-use plastic bags in the federal capital.

“A campaign will be started in Islamabad in the next 10 days to implement the ban on plastic bags,” Adviser to Prime Minister on Climate Change (MoCC) Malik Amin Aslam said replying to a question by The Express Tribune during a press conference on Friday.

The MoCC had set about on Quixotic drive to make Islamabad plastic-free declaring August 14 to be the day from freedom from plastic.

However, the day came and passed and nothing happened.

The government had even announced that after the ban on plastic bags if a violation is made by a manufacturer, importer or wholesaler, penalty will be Rs100,000 for first time, Rs200,000 for second time and Rs500,000 for more than two violations.

However, it failed to implement the ban on given deadline.

Aslam told the media that plastic bags ban in the federal capital and said shopkeepers and polythene bags sellers would be fined heavy on violation.

“Polythene bags are a curse as they have choked 80 per cent of the drains in Karachi which is the main cause of urban flooding in the country’s biggest metropolis. There is a complete ban on plastic bags in the federal capital whereas cotton bags as alternatives have been introduced which will be environment friendly as well as a symbol of cleanliness and economic for household use.”

Meanwhile speaking at the press conference Asalm sent the nation on another wild goose chase telling every person to plant two trees at different locations.

Pakistan faced threat of desertification, he said explaining 70% of the country could turn into a dust bowl if more and more trees were not planted.

He said on this year’s Plant for Pakistan Day each individual will plant one tree for Kashmir and another for Pakistan with the slogan ‘Har Bashar Do Shajar’ (every person to plant two trees).

Prime Minister Imran Khan’s vision is clean and green Pakistan where every individual would be encouraged to plant one tree for Pakistan and the other for Kashmir to show solidarity with the Kashmiri brethren.

“This monsoon plantation is part of 10 Billion Tree Tsunami (10BTT) which is our flagship project and we have planted a billion trees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.”

Amin said 10BTT was Rs125 billion worth project where the government had identified seven new sites for plantation across the country under this project.

PM Imran would be in the field on this Plant for Pakistan Day to be marked on August 18. “If Pakistan did nothing to mitigate climate change risks in the region then 70 per cent of the country’s area would reduce to desert. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s forest cover has increased to six per cent,” he said.

Amin said due to PM Imran Khan’s leadership international donors have given non-refundable grants for Clean Green Pakistan project where Rs24 billion had been given for five different projects which was non-refundable.

He noted while sharing the future development projects of the country that electric vehicles would be introduced in the country which would decrease the harmful smoke and gaseous emissions of automobiles. It would also put a dent in the fossil fuels import bill of the country, he added.

By 2030, Aslam said, 30 per cent of all vehicles in Pakistan will be electric powered.

Adviser on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam has said an electric vehicle policy has been formulated to give a new direction to the transport sector.

Amin Aslam said 30 per cent of the vehicles will go electric by 2030 under this policy.

The special assistant said that a special economic zone will be established where electric rickshaws, cars and buses will be manufactured. This will also create immense job opportunities for our youth.

He said the government is focused on making Pakistan an exporter of electric vehicles within a period of five years. A vehicle examination system is also being introduced in the transport sector to check the condition of vehicles, he said.

The adviser while discussing Kashmir situation said that Modi was the Hitler of 21st century and the world had envisioned the dark side of India.

Modi’s black face has been exposed to the world by India’s elimination of Kashmir’s special status. It was a matter of hope that the Kashmir issue would be resolved, now Kashmir would be free and India would be fragmented.

The Kashmir issue has revived after five decades where the Occupied Kashmir would soon get freedom and Indian state would fall into pieces.

“The Two Nation Theory has become clear before the world and it is for sure that every sacrifice will be rendered for the Occupied Kashmir’s Freedom,” he added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2035640/1-plastic-ban-campaign-starts-10-days-federal-capital-aslam/>

URBAN FOREST PLANNED FOR FAISALABAD

RECORDER REPORT AUG 18TH, 2019 FAISALABAD

Following the 10 billion tree Tsunami program, the district administration has plan to establish urban forest around the city and comprehensive strategy is being devised for planting a number of trees and

their nourishment. This was disclosed during a meeting held here under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Sardar Saifullah Dogar to discuss the modalities for the establishment of urban forest.

It was informed during the meeting that the 15 acre land at Niamuana on Samundri road, 12 acre land at Millat road and 5 acre land near Chak Jhumra had been selected for the forestation.

The Deputy Commissioner said that maximum trees were imperative at urban areas to combat the air pollution due to the industrial development and burden of traffic. He informed that cooperation of community would be sought to promote the forestation in the urban areas so that the wealth of trees would be increased to overcome the issue of climate change. The Deputy Commissioner maintained that the urban forest would be considered to use as recreational parks for which administrative and technical aspects would be reviewed.

He asked the DG PHA to prepare layout plan immediately for deliberating to the sponsoring agencies so that urban forest project could be implemented without delay.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/08/20190818506869/>

TREE PLANTATION DRIVE BEGINS IN KP TODAY

RECORDER REPORT AUG 18TH, 2019 PESHAWAR

Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan will formally launch 'Plant for Pakistan Drive in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa today at Shahkas Area (Adjacent to Masood Scouts) of District Khyber under which 5 million saplings will be planted throughout the province.

According to details 150,000 sapling will be planted in Peshawar alone whereas similar plantation drive will be carried out by the district administrations, forest department, education department and all concerned line departments in all the districts of the province.

It is pertinent to mention here that under the previous PTI led provincial government; one billion afforestation project was successfully completed due to which the forest cover of the province has increased by 6.3%.

Additionally the project also provided job opportunities to more than 500,000 individuals, whereas according to the reports of World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the survival rate of the plantation i.e. 88% was reported highly satisfactory

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/08/20190818506878/>

ONLY FOUR OF 13,000 TONS OF CITY'S GARBAGE PROPERLY DISPOSED OF, SAYS ALI ZAIDI

Our Correspondent August 18, 2019

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali Zaidi has said that of 13,000 tons of garbage being collected from Karachi, hardly three to four tons are properly disposed of, whereas, the rest makes its way to roads and drains of the city.

He said this while addressing an event on Saturday at the Karachi Chamber of Commerce (KCCI) and Industry to promote the Clean Karachi Campaign. The campaign had been initiated by Zaidi when the

city faced severe issues after the first monsoon rain spell of 2019 in the last days of July. He pledged to clean trash from the city in two weeks as he announced the campaign.

In a tweet, he said, “with the help of the citizens of this great city, we will clean up Karachi from trash in next two week. #LetsCleanKHI.” The move came after Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar wrote to him about the miserable condition of the city due to torrential rain.

The federal minister said Karachi belonged to everyone and no one should behave as if they had exclusive control over the city. The cleaning operation started a week before Eid and the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, MPAs, MNAs, elected representatives of the local government, the Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) and the National Logistics Cell participated in the drive.

The FWO identified five major drains in the city that needed to be cleaned and started the cleaning work.

On Friday, Zaidi inaugurated the campaign’s second phase from Lyari; however, he did not set any deadline for it. In the second phase of the Clean Karachi Campaign, he said, the focus would be on all the garbage dumps of the city which would be cleaned.

Zaidi shared that from the Mehmoodabad nullah in District East they had taken out a dozen bikes during the cleaning work. “From certain drains, we have taken out sandbags and blocks,” he said.

Commenting on a video that went viral on social media in which Zaidi was seen reprimanding a resident of Defense Housing Authority for sacrificing his camel by blocking the road, the federal minister said the law had to be applied equally to all the citizens. Some people purchased expensive animals and sacrificed them on roads to show off, which was a wrong practice, he said. “After the incident, I got calls from the neighbourhood appreciating me for what I did,” he said.

Speaking on the incidents of electrocution, Zaidi said he was deeply sad over the incidents.

Regarding Clean Karachi Campaign, he said they had formed town committees to make sure that garbage was not dumped into the drains anymore. He advised people to make videos of those who threw garbage on roads. “We have to stop them,” he said. He informed the audience that people were donating money heavily for the cleanliness campaign. Until August 9, Zaidi said they had collected Rs89.164 million for the campaign.

Zaidi also discussed the new shipping policy at the event. He said a new shipping policy had been approved which would be announced next week.

KCCI President Junaid Ismail said all the business communities were happy with the federal government’s initiative to clean the metropolis. In previous governments, he said, Karachi was not on the list of priorities. Had the drains not been cleaned, the city would have been completely drowned in the recent rainfall, he remarked.

Referring to the earlier Clean and Green campaign that was launched in 2018, he lamented that it did not yield expected results. Speaking on the performance of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB), he said the organisation had completely failed to clean garbage from the city.

Businessmen Group Chairman Muhammad Zubair Motiwala said it must be determined who was responsible for the menace of garbage in the city.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/513514-only-four-of-13-000-tons-of-city-s-garbage-properly-disposed-of-says-ali-zaidi>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 19th TO 25th 2019

BALUCHISTAN CM KICKS OFF TREE PLANTATION DRIVE

The Newspaper's Staff Correspondent August 19, 2019

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani kicks off tree plantation campaign on Sunday.—Dawn

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani on Sunday kicked off the Pakistan Day tree plantation campaign in the province.

“Tree plantation has been termed Sadqa-i-Jariya in Islam. Every individual of our society should participate in the Pakistan Day plantation campaign in order to secure environment for future generations,” the chief minister said while speaking at a ceremony.

The provincial government has planned to plant one million saplings during the campaign and 100,000 saplings have already been planted.

“Prime Minister Imran Khan's initiative of planting one billion saplings has been progressing rapidly across the province, which would increase forest cover in Pakistan,” Mr Alyani said. “In order to mitigate climate change effects we have to plant more trees.”

He said due to lack of rains a majority of areas in Balochistan had been hit with drought so “we should participate in the tree plantation campaign with a pledge of taking good care of saplings”.

Adviser to the CM on Sport, Culture and Tourism Abdul Khaliq Hazara and tribal elders also attended the ceremony.

The chief minister reviewed progress on various plantation campaigns in the Alamdar Road area and Marriabad organised by local volunteers and lauded their efforts to secure environment.

Meanwhile, the Frontier Corps launched the tree plantation campaign across the province.

The main ceremony of the campaign was held at the FC headquarters where Balochistan FC IG Major General Fayaz Hussain Shah planted a sapling and prayed for a green Pakistan.

Speaking at the ceremony, he said every single soldier of Frontier Corps had been taking part in the campaign in order to make Balochistan green.

“Trees and saplings will secure our environment from climate effects and it will restore beauty of Balochistan.”

Major General Fayaz called upon all citizens to plant saplings in their houses or streets.

“We can't escape by planting trees and saplings but their nourishment and good care also comes in our responsibilities.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1500360>

MINING FOR YEARS IN KHAIRPUR DISTRICT STIRS CONTROVERSY

Mohammad Hussain Khan August 19, 2019

HYDERABAD: Mining in what is known to be the Takkar wildlife sanctuary in Khairpur district has been continuing unnoticed for years although the MNA from the area has twice drawn the attention of the authorities concerned to the issue in an attempt to make them to intervene and put an end to the activity.

The department is reluctant to stop the activity on the grounds that it is yet to be determined first whether the area where mining is undertaken indeed falls within the wildlife sanctuary. According to mines and minerals secretary Zulfiqar Shah, demarcation to determine the status of mining area will be done soon.

The wildlife department is said to have recently proposed to Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah that “either the status of wildlife sanctuary [Takkar] be withdrawn to justify mining ... or directives be issued for declaring the area “Takkar National Park” on the pattern of the Khirthar National Park...”.

“Let’s first determine whether mining is going on within the sanctuary’s area and if it so we will be cancelling those permits/licences to avoid any activity that was affecting the wildlife site,” said Mr Shah while speaking to Dawn over phone on Friday evening.

Takkar Wildlife Sanctuary is said to be stretched over an area of 107,520 acres (or 44,000ha) in Khairpur district and perhaps also covers the historical Kotdiji Fort.

Sources in the wildlife department claim that MNA Nafisa Shah has sought attention of the Sindh government, for a second time, as she also wants the area be declared a national park. The is also said be a reserved forest where no activity is allowed to take place but the mines and mineral department, on the basis of its own rules, has allowed mining and the activity has been continuing for several years. “We don’t see any end to it,” said a wildlife department source.

It is learnt that the wildlife department has conveyed to the chief minister that the mining operations and blasting nullify the very purpose of wildlife sanctuary considering the fact that such operations are illegal. The activity also violates the Sindh Wildlife Protection Ordinance, 1972.

Takkar area falls within Nara tehsil of Khairpur district. It was declared ‘protected forest’ vide Sindh government gazette notification of Jan 15, 1960 and subsequently it was declared a ‘reserve forest’ through the West Pakistan gazette notification dated Jan 17, 1967.

Sources said that the forest department has also taken up the matter with Sindh government through some correspondence, mentioning that “despite forest department’s objections, mines and mineral department is issuing mining leases in Takkar area on the basis of Presidential Order No. 8 of 1961 and The Sindh Mining Concession Rules, 2002 and its section 11 and sub-section-3”.

The department contends that after the Jan 17, 1967 notification, reserve forest sections of Forest Act 1927 become applicable and section 26 sub-section (g) read as “quarries stone, burns lime or charcoal,

or collects, subject to any manufacturing process, or removes, any forest produce” these activities within reserve forests are prohibited and punishable.

Sindh Wildlife Management Board’s chief game warden/chairman Sardar Mohammad Usman Ali has also sent a communication to Sindh Mines and Minerals Minister Shabbir Ali Bijarani urging him to help stop the illegal mining activity. He stated that he had received complaints from elected representatives of the area in this regard. He urged the minister to take action through the law-enforcement agencies in the larger interest of indigenous wildlife.

M Ali, through another communication dated Aug 8, has suggested formation of a joint team for the demarcation of Takkar Wildlife Sanctuary. Such demarcation should be jointly carried out by the revenue, mines & minerals and wildlife departments, he suggested.

In her letter written to Mr Bijarani in the last week of July, MNA Nafisa Shah expressed her concern over “vandalism of natural and historical heritage of Kotdiji due to indiscriminate and illegal mining in the area”.

She pointed out that Kotdiji had magnificent ancient and scenic geological hills in the Takkar area. “Over 200 sites are leased out by the mines and minerals department for more than 99 years with utter disregard for natural heritage of area...,” she noted.

She urged the Sindh government to impose a ban on mining in the area and restrict such activity to the areas outside the protected zones. “In addition, Takkar natural reserve may be upgraded to Takkar National Park and financial resources allocated to restore natural beauty of the area,” said her letter.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1500319>

30,000 SAPLINGS PLANTED ACROSS FAISALABAD

RECORDER REPORT AUG 19TH, 2019 FAISALABAD

Plant for Pakistan Day was observed throughout Faisalabad division with new zeal and passion and more than 30 thousands plants were planted by govt departments and private institution in one day.

The theme of “Plant for Pakistan Day” was “One person – two Tree” and officers of divisional/district administrations and other departments planted two tree in this regard, one tree for Pakistan and one tree was dedicated for Kashmir Solidarity. Divisional Commissioner Mehmud Javed Bhatti inaugurated the Tree for Pakistan Day by planting two trees at Gutwala Forest Park. Later, he also planted plants at Municipal Corporation Complex, Park of PHA at Samundri road and Agriculture University.

Vice Chancellor Agri. University Professor Dr Muhammad Ashraf, faculty members, DG PHA Asif Ch, Divisional Forest Officer Wajeeh ud Din Ahmad, CO Municipal Corporation Sardar Naseer, AC Musawar Khan Niazi, Municipal Officer Malik Ashraf, Divisional Sports Officer Tariq Nazir and other officers/staff were also present on the occasion.

Expressing his views, Divisional Commissioner Mehmud Javed Bhatti highlighted the significance and importance of trees and said that new passion had been emerged in the nation for planting trees so as Prime Minister Imran Khan announced the 10 billion Tsunami programme to achieve the glorious objectives of Green Pakistan. He said that now the every citizen of Pakistan was following tree plantation campaign by realising its importance. He emphasised upon increasing the wealth of forest

to provide pollution free environment to the coming generation. He urged upon the proper and regular care of the plants and said that trees should be looked after like the children for its nourishment so that real objective of tree plantation could be achieved.

He informed that officers of all departments in Faisalabad division had been directed for planting the plants at the available sites and post planting care must be done. He said that regular monitoring of the trees planted during the campaign would be made by the divisional administration and performance in this regard could be highlighted in the annual evaluation report of the officers.

VC Agri University Professor Dr Muhammad Ashraf informed that the tree plantation campaign was properly implemented at all the sub campuses as well and Agri University was actively taking part in the Green Pakistan campaign which would be made a success. DFO Wajeeh ud Din informed that the target has been set to plant the 0.8 million trees in Faisalabad division by December 2019. He said that Forest department had taken elaborated measures for planting maximum trees and a number of saplings were being provided to the citizens during this campaign.

DG PHA Asif Ch said that big trees were being planted at the public parks, green belts and other available sites in the city. He hoped that Faisalabad would be made green by planting maximum trees.

CO Municipal Corporation Sardar Naseer said that the special attention was being given on providing civic facilities to the citizens besides taking part in the tree plantation campaign.

Meanwhile, 700 plants were planted by the officers of Faisalabad Development Authority at FDA City in connection with the Tree for Pakistan Day. DG FDA Amir Aziz, ADG Mian Jameel, Director Ch Sarwar and other officers were present on the occasion. DG FDA Amir Aziz informed that 10,000 plants would be planted during the monsoon tree plantation campaign.

He expressed his commitment that FDA would play its role to make the Green Pakistan Campaign a success. In connection with the Tree for Pakistan Day, Deputy Commissioner Sardar Saifullah Dogar and other officers of district administration planted plants at DC Complex.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/08/20190819507058/>

WILDLIFE DEPT FOILS DEER SMUGGLING BID

By Our Correspondent Published: August 19, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh Wildlife Department foiled a bid to smuggle four deer from Umerkot to Karachi, arresting four persons in a raid in Tando Jam, Hyderabad. Deputy Conservator Wajid Ali Shaikh said that they received a tip-off regarding a car transporting the deer in its trunk.

He identified the arrested men as Qurban Ali Rahimo, Abdul Majeed Rahimo, Rafiq Rahimo and Abdul Ghani Rahimo. "When I was a field officer in the wildlife, I caught Qurban Ali smuggling meat of deer. He had paid Rs100,000 fine for that offence," recalled Shaikh.

He informed that an FIR has been lodged against the four men at Hussainabad Police Station and they will be produced in court for remand on Monday.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2036833/1-wildlife-dept-foils-deer-smuggling-bid/>

SINDH CHIEF SECRETARY CANCELS CHINESE FIRM'S GARBAGE-LIFTING CONTRACT OVER 'POOR PERFORMANCE'

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated August 20, 2019

KARACHI: The tall claims of the ruling party and key members of the Sindh cabinet about the state of cleanliness in Karachi suffered a major blow on Monday when the Sindh chief secretary issued directives to cancel the contract of a Chinese company responsible for lifting of garbage in one of Karachi's six districts for its "poor performance".

The decision came at a meeting presided over by Chief Secretary Syed Mumtaz Ali Shah held to review the performance of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB).

The chief secretary also linked all future funding or payment to Chinese companies with a certificate of deputy commissioners concerned.

"The chief secretary has expressed his displeasure over performance of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board and directed its managing director to cancel the contract of the Chinese company working in district East due to poor performance," said a statement issued after the meeting. "The chief secretary also assigned the deputy commissioners to monitor the performance of Chinese companies and stated that these companies would be provided funds after certification of deputy commissioners concerned."

The chief secretary, it said, also directed the SSWMB to increase the number of dustbins in Karachi.

It was suggested that at least 4,000 dustbins should be placed on various locations of the city within three days.

Mr Shah said that it was high time to make coordinated efforts for cleanliness in the city together with members of civil society, schoolchildren and scouts amid the "Blue Jacket" campaign launched by the provincial government for Karachi, the statement added.

Briefing the meeting, Karachi Commissioner Iftikhar Shallwani said multiple events including monsoon rains, Eidul Azha and Independence Day celebrations made the cleanliness drive a challenge.

"But despite all hurdles and tough circumstances, the government mobilised all available machinery and manpower. The ongoing effort will end only after the target is achieved," he said, according to the statement.

The chief secretary presided over another meeting regarding a flood-like situation emerging after India released water into the Sutlej and Indus rivers without any prior information.

The statement said that the meeting discussed in detail about steps being taken for relief work and precautionary measures.

"Sindh Irrigation Secretary Saeed Ahmed Mangnejo informed the meeting that 400,000 to 500,000 cusecs water is expected in Sindh and it will be a medium-level flood in Indus River," said the

statement. “The chief secretary has directed all commissioners to monitor weak points of embankments in different areas of the Indus.”

He also directed the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) and district authorities to make sure safe evacuation of the people from the katcha area if needed and all available resources be utilised to facilitate the people.

The PDMAs of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa issued flood alerts after India released water into River Sutlej and Alchi Dam.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department also issued a flood/weather advisory.

According to the department, “Very heavy to extremely heavy rainfall has been observed over the upper and lower catchments of Rivers Sutlej, Beas and Ravi during the last 72 hours.”

The chief secretary, the statement said, had also stated that the matter pertaining to the OGDCL bund of Ghotki would be taken up with the federal government.

The meeting was attended by senior member Board of Revenue, secretaries of irrigation and rehabilitation and Karachi commissioner. Other divisional commissioners attended the meeting via a video link.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1500454/cs-cancels-chinese-firms-garbage-lifting-contract-over-poor-performance>

SC ISSUES NOTICES OVER ALLEGED ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AT PORT QASIM

By Our Correspondent Published: August 20, 2019

KARACHI: The Supreme Court (SC) issued notices on Monday to the local government secretary, Pakistan railways, Sindh environment department and others over the contempt of court petition against the Port Qasim chairperson pertaining to unsafe transportation of coal and environmental pollution at the port.

A two-member bench comprising Justice Faisal Arab and Justice Sajjad Ali Shah heard the case at the SC’s Karachi registry.

The petitioner’s counsel maintained that environmental pollution was a grave problem for the metropolitan city. Former chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar had directed the management of Port Qasim to store coal safely, said the counsel. However, he argued, despite court orders, the coal at Port Qasim remains under the open sky while the unsafe transportation of coal was leading to the spread of dangerous diseases.

Justice Shah remarked that the court had bound them to a specified limit of coal at the terminal and to not keep more coal than the specified limit. “We will also summon the civil administration and ask what arrangements have been made,” he said.

The bench issued notices to the relevant parties and granted time to Pakistan International Bulk Terminal (PIBT), the coal handling company, to submit their response by the next hearing.

Petitioner Venu Adwani maintained that coal was being transported from Port Qasim in open vehicles. The petition stated that despite requests to all authorities, none was willing to take action. The petitioner prayed the court that contempt of court proceedings be carried out against the Port Qasim chairman for neglecting court orders.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2037541/1-sc-issues-notice-alleged-environmental-pollution-port-qasim/>

BRAZIL'S PRESIDENT BLAMES NGOS FOR AMAZON FIRE

Reuters Updated August 22, 2019

SAO PAULO: Brazil's right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro on Wednesday accused non-governmental organisations of setting wildfires in the Amazon rainforest to damage his government's image after he cut their funding.

Bolsonaro, who has shocked environmentalists with plans to open the Amazon to business interests, said NGOs could be behind the record number of wildfires this year, although he presented no evidence to backup his claim.

Bolsonaro said "everything indicates" that NGOs are going to the Amazon to "set fire" to the forest. When asked if he had evidence to back up his claims, he said he had "no written plan," adding "that's not how it's done."

Bolsonaro said the slashing of NGO funding by his government could be a motive for them burning down the forest as they seek to bring his government into disrepute.

"Crime exists," he said during a Facebook Live broadcast. "These people are missing the money." Bolsonaro's latest comments enraged environmentalists, who are increasingly concerned by his administration's attitudes towards the world's largest rainforest, a vital bulwark against climate change. Brazil is home to more than half of the Amazon.

"This is a sick statement, a pitiful statement," said Marcio Astrini, Greenpeace Brazil's public policy coordinator. "Increased deforestation and burning are the result of his anti-environmental policy." Bolsonaro, a longtime sceptic of environmental concerns, wants to open the Amazon to more agriculture and mining, and has told other countries worried about rising deforestation since he took office to mind their own business.

Congressman Nilto Tatto, leader of the lower house environment caucus, said Bolsonaro's "stunning" attack on the NGOs was a smoke screen to hide his dismantling of Brazil's environmental protections built up over 30 years

Bolsonaro on Wednesday said the administration is working to control fires currently raging in the Amazon rainforest, which have reached a record number this year. Brazil's space research center, INPE, has detected 72,843 fires so far in 2019.

When asked about the spread of uncontrolled fires, Bolsonaro has brushed off criticism, saying it is the time of the year of the "queimada" or burn, when farmers use fire to clear land.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1500981/brazils-president-blames-ngos-for-amazon-fire>

CITY NEEDS SOLID WASTE RECYCLING`

By Our Staff Reporter 8/22/2019 12:00:00 AM

KARACHI: There is an urgent need to focus on recycling of solid waste presently being dumped onto streets and drains, eventually making its way into the sea. Waste should be treated as an economic asset for which the society needs to come out of the katchra kundi mindset and learn to segregate waste at homes and institutions as being done in the civilised world. Waste should be collected and picked up from source.

This was stated by Dr Moazzam Ali Khan, a senior professor at the Institute of Environmental Studies (IES), in a seminar organised at Karachi University (KU) on Wednesday.

Titled `Environmental Awareness and Plantation Drive 2019`, the seminar was organised to create awareness of the city`s environmental issues and the role of masses to make it clean and green.

Giving a presentation on the subject, Prof Khan highlighted the numerous civic challenges Karachi faced and said that 75 per cent of the total solid waste generated from various parts of the city `could be recycled and reused and there is no harm in reusing those recycled items.

`People should learn to segregate their waste by keeping colour-coded bins (for different types of waste) in their homes and institutions and hand it over to vendors engaged in recycling business. Domestic waste must not be mixed with medical waste for which the government needs to devise a system ensuring collection of biological waste from healthcare facilities,` he explained.

He also spoke about the city`s chronic water shortages and said that Karachi`s water requirement in 2015 was over 1,100MGD but it had been getting 650MGD water.

`The city faces multiple issues including increasing air pollution and absence of an efficient sewerage and drainage system. Most of the solid waste the city daily generates, estimated to be 20,000 tonnes, is either left unattended or burnt.

These problems affect every one of us and we all need to act as a responsible citizen,` he said.

Citizens should not wait for the government to step in but rather take ownership of their area and take initiative to make their area clean and green, he added.

Sharing similar concerns, Adviser to the Chief Minister on Law, Environment and Coastal Development Barrister Murtaza Wahab, the chief guest, explained how the public was damaging environment and negating government efforts.

`During the recent rains, the staff found it difficult to clear drains and sewerage lines as most of them were filled with piles of plastic bags and solid waste material, choking the whole drainage system.

`Once used, plastic bags are carelessly thrown away which later become a menace for departments and agencies concerned. There is a dire need for awareness in this regard,` he said. Speaking on the government`s role, he said the state alone couldn`t improve environmental conditions and required public support to successfully run and implement its decisions and campaigns.

`For instance, the ban on polythene bags would be meaningless unless people start reducing use of these bags, he said, emphasising that people should also support plantation campaigns as plants were the prime source of environmental purification and beautification.

Acting Vice Chancellor of KU Prof Khalid Mahmood Iraqi highlighted how degrading environmental conditions had endangered public health and said environment was everyone's business and its related issues should attract public attention. '(Unfortunately) our development and economic growth have also jeopardised natural resources, putting man's own survival at risk,' he remarked.

He also spoke of the KU's commitment towards a better environment and said the university had set an example by banning the use of polythene bags on campus.

'The university is also developing linkages in the field of environment and exploring the possibility to install pollution control devices on the campus through consultation and technical guidance,' he told the audience.

Later, the chief guest accompanied by KU VC, the deans and Vice Chancellor of Iqra University Dr Waseem Qazi launched a three-day tree plantation drive on campus.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailNews.php?StoryText=22_08_2019_116_001

SBP HAS PLANTED 73,417 TREES SO FAR

Our Correspondent August 22, 2019

The State Bank of Pakistan through its subsidiary, Banking Services Corporation (BSC), has participated in the government's initiative of a tree plantation campaign by planting 73,417 trees so far across the country.

In a recent monsoon tree plantation drive, the SBP and BSC across Pakistan and Muzaffarabad (AJK) celebrated August 18 as the "Plant for Pakistan Day" and planted a total number of 6,472 trees on 18th and 19th August.

Dr Reza Baqir, governor, State Bank, participated in the drive by planting a tree on 14th August in Karachi. The SBP being the country's premier financial regulatory institution is alive to its corporate social responsibility and has been actively participating in making the country clean and green. So far through its field offices in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Quetta, Sialkot, Bahawalpur, Multan, Lahore, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, DI Khan and Muzaffar, AJK, the SBP-BSC has planted 73,417 trees under the government initiative across the count

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/515485-sbp-has-planted-73-417-trees-so-far>

BAHRIA TOWN SEEKS PEOPLE'S SUPPORT IN 'CLEAN KARACHI' CAMPAIGN

August 22, 2019

KARACHI: Bahria Town is the first one to lend its support in the need of the hour without charging a penny therefore Karachiites are requested to muster support and work alongside" Cdr Zulfiqar Memon, GM Bahria Town Karachi.

In just 2 days, about 2,250 tons of garbage was lifted from multiple areas in the Central and Korangi District Karachi. Bahria Town Karachi has once again commenced 'Clean Karachi' campaign following an appeal from Federal Minister Ali Zaidi and Mayor Karachi Waseem Akhtar to lift the

garbage backlog. The recent monsoon showers and urban flooding has wreaked havoc in the already garbage-laden city of Karachi.

Under the supervision of GM Bahria Town Karachi, Cdr Zulfiqar Memon, a highly skilled and motivated team of more than 100 members have geared up to clean the city with the help of a huge fleet of 100 plus dump trucks, excavators, loaders, bobcats, tractors, trolleys, water bowsers etc.

In the short span of just 2 days, Bahria Town Karachi cleared multiple areas in Korangi and Central districts namely Saudabad, Siraj-ud-daula GST, Peela School GST, surroundings of Agha Juice etc. and lifted more than 2,250 tons of garbage.

Speaking on the occasion, Mayor Karachi Wasim Akhtar thanked Bahria Town Karachi for taking up this task and showing commitment with Karachi and its residents.

GM Bahria Town Karachi Cdr. Zulfiqar Memon said that “whether it’s the fire incident or a case of boulder falling on houses or retrieving people from a collapsed building, Bahria Town Karachi has always been the first one to rise to the occasion”. He further said that “bringing betterment in the lives of people and to serve them is the sole purpose behind every such act of Bahria Town and people of Karachi are requested to support work alongside Bahria Town Karachi”.—PR

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/08/22/5-page/797335-news.html>

KU BANS PLASTIC BAGS ON CAMPUS

RECORDER REPORT AUGUST 22,2019

KARACHI: The University of Karachi (KU) has become the first varsity of Sindh which has imposed complete ban on using plastic bags within the KU campus premises. It was also among those few who have welcomed and implemented the Sindh govt’s initiative to stop using plastic bags.

By reducing the use of plastic bags and growing trees in large numbers, we can play a very vital role in minimizing the environmental hazards. The government cannot bring changes alone, it always needed public support to successfully run and implement its drive. These views were expressed by Sindh Adviser to Chief Minister on Law, Environment and Coastal Development, Barrister Murtaza Wahab, on Wednesday.

He was speaking as the chief guest at a seminar ‘Environmental Awareness and Plantation Drive 2019’ held at the KU Business Administration’s Auditorium. The seminar was organised to create awareness regarding Karachi’s environmental issues and what would be the role of masses to make environment clean and green.

Barrister Murtaza Wahab shared that during recent heavy rainfall he had witnessed that sewerage lines were unable to clear the rainwater as most of them were filled with pile of plastic bags and solid waste material due to which whole drainage system was choked.

“Public after using plastic bags carelessly throw it away and later it become problem for the governments and other concerned departments and agencies. We have to create awareness among masses that they should not use plastic bags anymore and put their garbage in the dumping centres,” Murtaza said.

The KU Vice Chancellor Prof Khalid Iraqi said, “Karachi University is committed for a better environmental future of the country. This University is a history setter and now we have set a history by following the right roadmap and setting healthy traditions in the campus.”

The VC added that the University of Karachi is developing linkages in the field of environment and working on installing pollution control technology through consultation and technical guidance in the campus.

He mentioned that trees and plants are the prime source of environmental purification and beautification, and play an essential role on a grand scale as well as local level.

Earlier, Prof Dr Moazzam Ali Khan, through his presentation highlighted Karachi’s civic problems. He informed the audience that 75 percent of total solid waste collected from various parts of the city could be recycled and reused and there is no harm in using those recycled items.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/08/22/5-page/797333-news.html>

ZTBL ACTING CHIEF LAUNCHES TREE PLANTATION DRIVE

August 22, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Acting President/CEO, Sheikh Aman Ullah, launched tree plantation campaign on Wednesday by planting a tree at the Head Office in Islamabad.

On the occasion, he said that Pakistan is ranked among the countries vulnerable to climate change & tree plantation is important to protect the environment from degradation. In conformity to the vision of the Prime Minister of Pakistan to address the challenges of climate change through plantation drive under the 10 Billion Sunami tree plantation campaign, the ZTBL has joined hands with the government to augment efforts in this regard, says a press release issued here on Wednesday.

He mentioned that the bank has earmarked a target of 1,60,000 trees for plantation in the five years and has already planted 18,000 trees out of annual target of 32,000 trees at different locations. The remaining target of 14,000 trees for the current year will be achieved by end of the year.

He advised all zonal offices & branches to plant tree for Pakistan across the country and play due role towards this noble cause.—PR

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/08/22/7-page/797360-news.html>

FOREST DEPT COLLECTING UPROOTED TREES

OUR CORRESPONDENT AUGUST 22,2019

RAWALPINDI: The chief conservator of forests has directed all divisional forest officials to clear up all uprooted trees after torrential rains. In a circular, the officials have been directed to transfer such trees to Timber Division Sihala until August 23 in order to clear up roads and other paths.

The auctioning of these uprooted trees would take place on a later date. The officials have been warned of a departmental inquiry in case of non-implementation of orders. Meanwhile, the Project Director of Sustainable Division of Forest Department Feroz Uddin told The express Tribune that

some 90,000 saplings have been planted so far under monsoon plantation drive. He added the drive would continue until September 15 and told that 0.9 million saplings had been planted so far across Rawalpindi Division. He said that saplings of length between 4-6 feet (ft) were being planted as they were more secured and grew more effectively than the smaller ones. ‘Ferozuddin said the division was distributing free saplings amongst the citizens. He expressed that billion tree tsunami project was important and essential to improve environment in the country while the forest department was playing a leading role in it.

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201908220208&EN_ID=11201908220068&EMID=11201908220036

BRICK KILNS ISSUED WARNINGS

By APP Published: August 22, 2019

LAHORE: The Environment Protection Department (EPD) has issued a warning to brick kilns which have failed to convert to zig-zag technology in order to avoid the threat of smog during the winter months. According to the EPD spokesperson, the department has evolved a strategy to combat smog, adding that an operation will be launched against smoke emitting brick kilns within the next few days. All brick kilns and production units using the old technology will be closed between October 1 and December 31.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2039078/1-brick-kilns-issued-warnings/>

WORLD BANK TO HELP REVAMP WATER SUPPLY, SEWERAGE SYSTEM IN CITY, SINDH ASSEMBLY TOLD

Hasan Mansoor Updated August 23, 2019

KARACHI: Local Government Minister Nasir Shah on Thursday informed the Sindh Assembly that the provincial government had planned to launch a project with the assistance of the World Bank to revamp the crumbling water supply and sewerage system of the city.

“This \$100-million project is being launched with the assistance of the World Bank in which the federal government will also make contribution,” said Mr Shah while responding to a calling-attention notice furnished by Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf’s Khurram Sher Zaman.

The PTI lawmaker sought reasons from the provincial government for the “failure of the local government department during the rainfall in which we witnessed urban flooding across Karachi”.

“When we questioned the K-Electric about such deaths because of their flawed system, they responded with a question of their own, asking us why the city was allowed to be affected by urban flooding,” said Mr Zaman.

He said the present provincial government had spent hundreds of billions of rupees on development during its reign over Sindh for more than a decade yet even basic facilities were mostly absent.

He said he would soon table a bill to amend the existing local government law for greater rights for the city’s mayor.

Minister Shah claimed the recent rains were the worst in decades. However, the situation was normalised in relatively lesser time than before.

“We have all witnessed in the past when normal rains would choke the routine life in the city, but this time around when Karachi endured 200mm rains, it hardly took us two to four hours to make the major arteries motorable,” said Mr Shah. However, he conceded, the issues remained in the low-lying areas and there was still much work to do by the authorities concerned.

He said garbage and filth piled on the banks of the city’s storm-water drains, in addition to encroachment, contributed to the woes of the city.

“The Sindh government paid Rs550m for the cleaning of the city’s nullahs to the KMC [Karachi Metropolitan Corporation], yet, all we saw was no improvement offered from that side,” said the minister.

He said apart from the \$100m project, another \$500m project was in the pipeline to revamp the entire system run by the KWSB. That project would also be supported by the World Bank.

He requested the opposition parties to join hands with the government to ensure a better infrastructure for the city.

He said every MPA, irrespective of one’s party affiliation, would be an active part of the government’s plans for improving water distribution system in the city.

He added that as per directive of the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party’s leadership, the government was vying to make desalination of water a reality.

Speaker Siraj Durrani suggested the minister to invite members belonging to political parties represented in the house in the KWSB’s board meetings as well.

In another calling-attention notice, PTI’s parliamentary leader Haleem Adil Sheikh claimed that the provincial government had little concern about the deteriorating law and order situation in Shikarpur district, where 40 persons had been killed in the past two months.

He demanded that the government launch an operation against dacoits in Sindh’s katcha terrain by getting the paramilitary Rangers on board as the incidents of kidnapping for ransom had “phenomenally increased”. He referred to the recent kidnapping of popular singer Jigar Jalal in Shikarpur, hometown of Speaker Durrani.

In the flow of his speech, Mr Sheikh made personal remarks against Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mukesh Chawla, who responded in a similar harsh tone. However, the chair succeeded in pacifying them and directed that all unparliamentary words used by the two lawmakers be expunged.

Energy Minister Imtiaz Shaikh corrected Mr Sheikh’s claim when he said a total of 22 people had been killed in Shikarpur in the past two months for various reasons, including honour killing, personal and tribal feuds. He said the police had arrested 12 suspects.

Besides, he added, four police officials, including a deputy superintendent of police and an SHO, had also been martyred.

He said it was not an extraordinary situation, as the government was making efforts to normalise the situation there, which, sometimes, for no specific reasons, worsened.

He said the government had not seized the police's powers, but the new police law had just ensured that the law enforcers should remain under the oversight of the chief minister. He said Rangers were present in every district and civil administration would call them whenever required.

Health Minister Azra Pechuho informed the house that so far 1,225 cases of dengue haemorrhagic fever had been recorded in the provincial capital of whom six persons had died.

She was responding to an adjournment motion moved by Khurram Sher Zaman, which the mover later withdrew.

She said the mosquito-borne fatal disease had become a routine health hazard in the province, Karachi in particular, which affected hundreds of people every year.

She said her ministry was making efforts to rein in the fatal infection for which Rs87m had been released for disinfecting all the neighbourhoods of the city and social mobilisation to inform the public about hazards of the disease.

“We have begun social mobilisation, internal residual sprays and disinfecting the areas where mosquito larvae have been detected,” said the minister.

She added that fogging and sprays were being carried out in the city. She suggested that there was a serious need for the removal of stagnant water in various neighbourhoods because of rains for which her ministry was making efforts.

Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal's Abdul Rasheed said on a point of order that nine of the 16 buildings in Lyari, which were sealed by the Sindh Building Control Authority, were illegally constructed with no action from the authorities in sight. He said such acts had clearly challenged the writ of the government.

He criticised Mayor Wasim Akhtar for asking the citizens not to pay tax to the provincial government while “some 350,000 vendors in the city are being forced every day to pay extortion”.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1501072>

NON-RELEASE OF FUNDS BY CENTRE BLAMED FOR DELAY IN INSTALLING FIVE CET PLANTS

Tahir Siddiqui August 23, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly was informed on Thursday that the Rs3 billion project for the installation of five combined effluent treatment (CET) plants in the industrial zones of the city was being delayed as the federal government had so far not released its share of funds.

Giving a statement and replies to the lawmakers' written and verbal queries during the Question Hour session in the house, Industries and Commerce Minister Jam Ikramullah Dharejo said that the scheme for the installation of five CET plants had been approved jointly by the provincial and federal governments.

He said that the project would be funded jointly by the Sindh and federal governments with shares of 67 per cent and 37pc, respectively.

Mr Dharejo said the provincial government had initially allocated Rs500 million for the project which was being executed by the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board under the administrative control of the industries and commerce department.

He admitted that the provincial government also had financial constraints, adding that the funds allocated by it would be released shortly.

However, the newly-inducted minister had to cut a sorry figure as he did not have the details of the funds to be spent on the project. He did not have answers to most of the verbal question posed by opposition members, promising them that he would furnish all details by next Monday.

Speaker Aga Siraj Durrani came to his rescue telling the opposition members that Mr Dharejo had recently taken charge of the industries and commerce ministry and he might not have been properly briefed by his department's secretaries. He advised the minister to obtain required details from the officials and later share them with the opposition members.

While asking a supplementary question, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf member Arsalan Taj said that the effluent treatment plant at the Korangi Industrial Area, the only plant in the city, was also not functional. The minister, however, said that he was told by the department that the plant was functional.

Mr Taj further revealed that a chunk of land in front of the treatment plant had also been encroached upon where a courier company had set up its warehouse.

"It's a matter of grave concern if the only plant in the city is not functional," said Speaker Durrani, advising the minister to visit the site with the opposition member.

Quoting the official website of a provincial government department, the PTI member said that 96pc industrial units did not have effluent treatment facility.

"I have recently assumed the charge of this ministry," was Mr Dharejo's reply when the opposition member asked him what action his department had so far taken in that regard.

The speaker asked the minister to get the required information and share it with the opposition members.

Grand Democratic Alliance's member Nusrat Seher Abbasi rose to ask a supplementary question, but made certain comments. Speaker Durrani interrupted her repeatedly asking her to focus on her supplementary question instead of making utterances irrelevant to the written question asked by PTI's Khuram Sher Zaman.

"Supplementary question should be brief, short and elucidative," he told the GDA member.

Answering another question asked by Mr Zaman, Mr Dharejo said there was no proposal to facilitate small and medium enterprises in obtaining loans to develop their businesses. "The provincial government cannot extend financial facilities to the businessmen due to its financial limits," he added.

The minister said that new industrial zones were being established in different districts of the province. "An industrial zone will be set up in Larkana shortly," he said, adding that such a zone would also be established in Dadu, Khairpur and Ghotki.

In reply to yet another written question by PTI's Zaman, he said that the poor financial state of Sindh Small Industries Corporation was mainly due to overstaffing. He said the provincial government had provided Rs300m during the current financial year to overcome the financial crisis of the SSIC.

In reply to a supplementary question by the PTI member, the minister informed the house that a large number of appointments were made when Rauf Siddiqui of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement was minister.

When Dr Seema Zia of the PTI asked why the provincial government did not get rid of excessive staff in the SSIC, Mr Dharejo said the Pakistan Peoples Party did not want to render people jobless.

In reply to a verbal question by Ms Abbasi, he said that the department provided infrastructural facilities, such as water, gas, electricity and roads, at the industrial zones.

Mr Dharejo said that those allotted plots at the industrial zones were required to establish their businesses within three years. "But when we take action against them for not starting businesses, they get stay orders from courts," he added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1501069/non-release-of-funds-by-centre-blamed-for-delay-in-installing-five-cet-plants>

HOW TO BRING INDUS DELTA BACK TO LIFE

Zofeen T. Ebrahim Updated August 23, 2019

KARACHI: Gulab Shah, 45, is having sleepless nights. He and his family are worried about their imminent migration from their village in Jhaloo to a major city, thanks to the continued ingress of seawater inland.

"That is all that I and my brothers discuss day and night," he told IPS over telephone from his village that lies near Kharo Chhan, in Thatta district.

He and his family also talk about what it "will mean living among strangers, in a strange place; adopting an unfamiliar lifestyle; losing culture and identity".

Of the nearly 6,000 acres of land that Shah's father inherited, over 2,500 acres have slowly been swallowed by the sea over the last 70 years. And even though they still have enough land to sell to enable them to set up their home in a city, "there are no buyers!" Shah proclaimed.

"Nobody wants to buy land that they know is going to be submerged soon," he said.

And if they stay, they do not have enough farmhands to work on their land. "Every year more and more people, mostly farmhands, are moving out of here as there is less work for them," Shah explained.

For millions of years, the River Indus sustained the marshes, the 17 creeks, miles of swamps, mangrove forests and the mudflats along with the various estuarine habitats in the fan-shaped Indus delta, before reaching its final destination and emptying into the Arabian Sea. It marks a journey of 3,000 km from the Himalayas.

Today this Ramsar site, a wetland of international importance, is parched and dying a slow death.

The dams and barrages on the river sucked the fresh water and stopped it from reaching the delta. It also resulted in a reduction of sediment deposition, giving the sea a perfect opportunity to ingress into the land.

Climate change has had an impact too here. The rains are unpredictable now, water levels don't increase and conversely over the years there has been an increased demand for water for both agricultural activities and a growing population.

If the delta gets 10 million acre feet (MAF) consistently over 12 months, or 5,000 cubic feet per second daily, as promised through the Water Apportionment Accord of 1991, the delta would thrive. However, that is not the case. "Along the way, from the mountains to the sea, there is shortage, pilferage coupled with losses due to an ageing distribution system," explained Usman Tanveer, the deputy commissioner of Thatta.

"We require a well-regulated water management system from the time the water leaves the mountains till it reaches the Arabian Sea," he said.

He pointed out that as a specialised subject, water needs to be looked into more scientifically. For example, said Tanveer, "first and foremost, we need proper research and experts to be able to plan for future water needs and this includes coming up with finding optimal conservation solutions, natural sites if small dams have to be built (instead of frowning upon whenever the D [dam] word is brought up)."

A 2018 report by the United States-Pakistan Centre for Advanced Studies in Water (USPCASW) at Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET), Jamshoro, using historical maps and field research, noted that back in 1833 the delta spanned some 12,900 square kilometres; today it was a mere 1,000 square kilometres.

"The human impact on the environment, the change in the natural flow of the river, resulting in reduction in sediment deposition, and sea-level ingress and climate change have resulted in the contraction of the delta," said Dr Altaf Ali Siyal, who heads the Integrated Water Resources Management Department (IWRM) at USPCASW, and is the principal author of the delta report. The study concludes the delta today constitutes just eight to 10 per cent of its original expanse.

But many living in the delta believed it would begin to die when man reined in the mighty Indus. The construction of the Sukkur Barrage (1923 to 1932) by the British, followed by Kotri Barrage in 1955 and Guddu in 1962, squeezed the life out of the once-verdant delta.

Prior to this, Sindh used to receive 150 MAF of water annually, now it is around 10 MAF annually. "It would be even better if it receives between 25 and 35 MAF water so that it can return to its past grandeur," Siyal said.

But Dr Hassan Abbas, an expert in hydrology and water resources, has both long- and short-term solutions to revive the delta.

"One would be to rejuvenate the natural course of the river the way United Kingdom, the United States and even Australia are doing by dismantling dams and adopting the free-flowing river model," he said.

“A free-flowing model is one where water, silt and other natural materials can move along unobstructed. But more importantly, it’s one by which the ecological integrity of the entire river system is maintained as a whole,” explained Dr Abbas.

The other, more imminent, solution is to address the way farmers irrigate. “We need to make agriculture water-efficient without compromising on our yield. The water saved thus can be allowed to flow back into its course and regenerate the delta.”

However, a quick and cost-effective manner of addressing water shortage in cities like Karachi, said Abbas, was through exploiting the riverine corridors of active floodplains.

“The Indus has 6.5km of floodplain on either side which has sweet sand under which is the cleanest mineral water you can get. Most of the big cities are not more than 3km away from the riverbed. All that needs to be done is to pump that water up from the depth of 300 to 400 feet using, say solar energy and supply it to the cities through pipes,” explained the hydrologist.

But what about the Shah’s village in the delta? “It is far, about 200km from the river,” agreed Abbas, conceding the people in the delta urgently needed to be supplied with drinking water.

“It would require a much longer pipeline, but would still be cheaper to transport the same water that way,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1501061>

MOBILE WATER TESTING LABS PROVIDED

By Our Correspondent Published: August 23, 2019

PESHAWAR: The Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) Local Government Minister Shahram Tarakai has said that provision of clean drinking water to the entire province is the prime duty of the local government department.

He said this during a handing-taking over ceremony of two mobile water quality testing laboratories in Peshawar on Thursday. The labs have been provided by UNICEF as a gift to the K-P local government department for functioning in different parts of the province. These labs will be sent to areas most affected by flood or any other natural disaster, particularly in Shangla area of Swat and Chitral.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2039964/1-mobile-water-testing-labs-provided/>

THOUSANDS LOSE JOBS DUE TO BAN ON PLASTIC BAGS

IMRAN ASGHAR AUGUST 23,2019

RAWALPINDI: The imposition of plastic ban in federal capital has brought starvation for thousands of people linked with the business, market sources said. The ban has directly and indirectly affected many households as most of the factories manufacturing them have either been shut down or their employees have become victims of downsizing, traders in the commercial hub of the city told The Express Tribune.

<https://fedium.com/news/thousands-lose-jobs-due-to-ban-on-plastic-bags-ai9j7d69a2s3d80/>

RUSSIA LAUNCHES FLOATING NUCLEAR REACTOR IN ARCTIC DESPITE WARNINGS

AFP Updated August 24, 2019

MOSCOW: Russia launched the world's first floating nuclear reactor on Friday, sending it on an epic journey across the Arctic, despite environmentalists warning of a "Chernobyl on ice".

Loaded with nuclear fuel, the Akademik Lomonosov left the Arctic port of Murmansk to begin its 5,000 kilometre voyage to Pevek in northeastern Siberia.

Nuclear agency Rosatom says the reactor is a simpler alternative to building a conventional plant in isolated places where ground is frozen all year round, and it intends to sell such reactors abroad.

The new reactor is part of the new floating energy and heat plant, which will be a "key element in the development of the Northern Sea Route" and will help Russia "realise large infrastructural projects" in the region, Rosatom said in a statement.

But environmental groups have long warned of the dangers of the project, dubbing it a potential "Chernobyl on ice" and a "nuclear Titanic".

A deadly explosion this month at a military testing site in Russia's far north caused a radioactive surge, prompting further concerns.

The reactor's trip is expected to last between four and six weeks, depending on the weather conditions and the amount of ice on the way.

Work began on the 144-metre Akademik Lomonosov in Saint Petersburg in 2006.

When it arrives in Pevek, a town of 5,000 in the Siberian region of Chukotka, it will replace a local nuclear plant, which will be decommissioned next year, and a closed coal plant.

It is due to go into operation by the end of year, mainly serving the region's oil platforms as Russia develops the exploitation of hydrocarbons in the Arctic.

Rashid Alimov, the head of the energy sector of Greenpeace Russia, said environmental groups had been critical of the idea of a floating reactor since the 1990s.

"Any nuclear power plant produces radioactive waste and can have an accident, but Akademik Lomonosov is additionally vulnerable to storms," he said.

The float is towed by other vessels, making a collision during a storm more likely, he said.

Because Rosatom plans to store spent fuel onboard, Alimov said "any accident involving this fuel might have a serious impact on the fragile environment of the Arctic". He added that there is "no infrastructure for a nuclear clean up" in the region.

Global warming and melting ice have made the Northeast Passage — which connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific along Russia's northern coast — more accessible.

When a reporter visited the Akademik Lomonosov in May 2018, it was a shabby brown colour. It has since been repainted in the red, white and blue of the Russian flag.

The vessel weighs 21,000 tons and has two reactors with a capacity of 35 megawatts each, close to that of those used by nuclear icebreakers. It has a crew of 69 and travels at a speed of 3.5 to 4.5 knots.

Alimov said the project was a missed opportunity as Chukotka, a region larger than Texas populated by only 50,000 people, “has a huge potential for the development of wind energy”.

“A floating nuclear power plant is a too risky and too expensive way of producing electricity,” he said.

The nuclear industry, seeking to reinvent itself in a gloomy market, is developing smaller, cheaper reactors to attract new customers.

They follow the examples of submarines, icebreakers and aircraft carriers, which have long used nuclear power, and are intended for isolated areas with little infrastructure.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1501326>

ANOTHER NAEGLERIA CASE REPORTED IN CITY

PPI August 24, 2019

KARACHI: Another case of *Naegleria fowleri*, commonly known as brain-eating amoeba, was reported in a private hospital in the city on Friday where 11 people have already died from this deadly infection in Karachi so far this year.

A 16-year old youngster, Mohammad Shoaib, is under treatment in the National Medical Centre (NMC), Karachi. Shoaib is a resident of Mehmoodabad area.

According to the directorate of general health services, the 11 deaths were reported from both private and public sector hospitals of Karachi from April 14 to July 27.

The brain infection occurs when contaminated water from sources such as inadequately chlorinated water of swimming pools or contaminated tap water enters the nose when people submerge their heads in water or cleanse their noses. The amoeba enters through a person’s nose and starts consuming brain tissues.

The amoeba thrives in warm water and can survive in high temperatures. The freshwater bodies such as ponds, lakes, swimming pools, as well as underground and overhead tanks are the most common points where it is found.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1501257/another-naegleria-case-reported-in-city>

NEW FIRES RAGE IN BRAZIL AS OUTRAGE OVER AMAZON GROWS

AFP August 25, 2019

PORTO VELHO: Hundreds of new fires are raging in the Amazon rainforest in northern Brazil, official data showed on Saturday, amid growing international pressure on President Jair Bolsonaro to control the worst blazes in years.

Multiple fires were seen across a vast area of the north-western state of Rondonia on Friday when journalists flew over the area.

Several people in the capital Porto Velho said on Saturday that what appeared to be light clouds hanging over the city was actually smoke from the blazes.

“I’m very worried because of the environment and health,” Delmara Conceicao Silva said. “I have a daughter with respiratory problems and she suffers more because of the fires.”

The fires in the world’s largest rainforest have triggered a global outcry and are a major topic of concern at the G7 meeting in Biarritz in southern France.

Official figures show 78,383 forest fires have been recorded in Brazil this year, the highest number for any year since 2013. Experts say the clearing of land during the months-long dry season to make way for crops or grazing has aggravated the problem.

More than half of the fires are in the Amazon, where more than 20 million people live. Some 1,663 new fires were ignited between Thursday and Friday, according to Brazil’s National Institute for Space Research (INPE).

The new data came a day after Bolsonaro authorised the deployment of the military to fight the fires and crack down on criminal activity in the region.

US President Donald Trump and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, both attending the G7 summit, have offered their countries’ assistance in fighting the fires.

“Any help is welcome in respect to the fires,” Brazil’s Defence Minister Fernando Azevedo e Silva told reporters.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1501502>

TREE PLANTATION ALONG MAI KOLACHI ROAD PLANNED

Dawn Report August 25, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh government has decided to turn the Mai Kolachi road into a “model” road by planting a long lane of trees on both sides of the road with the help of members of civil society.

It has also decided to make Karachi a pollution-free metropolis.

After successful completion of the project, a similar campaign will be launched elsewhere in the city, said Adviser to the Sindh Chief Minister on Law, Coastal Development, Climate Change and Environment Barrister Murtaza Wahab while talking to journalists on the occasion of inauguration of the campaign on Friday.

The adviser expressed gratitude to the members of the Bohra community for their active participation in the endeavour of the Sindh government, and urged other members of civil society to take part in the campaign to make the entire city green.

He said that the Sindh government's Green Karachi Programme was a great initiative which would have positive impact on overall atmosphere of the metropolis. He said that it was not only the government's responsibility to plant trees, but also the duty of every individual to plant trees.

He reminded that there would be a complete ban on use of plastic bags throughout the province from October 1.

A campaign against smoke-emitting vehicles would also be launched soon, he added.

Tree saplings of chiku, jamun, almond nut, berries, tamarind, Moringa, Amaltas and Gul Mohar lay on the grassy ground with their little roots bound in plastic but all ready to be planted before they could spread those roots in east peripheral area of a park near the Quaid-i-Azam's mausoleum on Friday morning.

"The trees we planted earlier are fruiting now," Amra Javed, executive member of Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment (CBE), told Dawn as she pointed in the direction of a young chiku tree about as tall as herself with small round fruit.

The tree plantation drive at the park organised by Shehri-CBE was actually part of a series of such plantations, which they started in 2015. "We planted the trees that are fruiting now back then after the terrible heatwave that year. We planted around 200 trees then," said Amra. "We also arranged for fresh soil and manure for them," she added.

"Earlier this year, we planted another 150 trees and today we got 50 more, 45 of which we planted as I took back five neem trees as there were already many of those there and we are focusing now on planting more fruit trees," she said.

"Last year, we planted some 65 coconut palms too along with some 150 kachnar trees. Kachnar is a flowering tree but you can eat the kachnar bud as a vegetable. It costs Rs300 per kilogramme in the market. I hope the kachnar, coconut and other fruit produced in the park would generate enough revenue that can help in the upkeep of the park and the trees there," said Amra.

"We had also planted some 20 to 25 nimbu or lime trees here which, unfortunately, could not survive because of the rocky ground," she shared her disappointment.

Meanwhile, the executive member of Shehri-CBE said that the much bigger and mature trees providing shade at the park were planted by the late social activist, philanthropist and newspaper columnist Ardeshir Cowasjee himself. "He also left behind some funding for this park," she said.

Engineer Mohammad Arif, resident engineer and director of the Quaid-i-Azam Mazar Management Board also joined in to plant trees with the volunteers. He said that he also maintained a plant nursery at the park.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1501432>

HUNDREDS OF NEW FIRES IN BRAZIL

RECORDER REPORT AUG 25TH, 2019 PORTO VELHO

Hundreds of new fires are raging in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil, official data showed Saturday, as thousands of troops were made available to help fight the worst blazes in years following a global outcry. Multiple fires billowing huge plumes of smoke into the air were seen across a vast area of the

northwestern state of Rondonia on Friday when AFP journalists flew over the area. Several residents in the capital Porto Velho told AFP on Saturday that what appeared to be light clouds hanging over the city of half a million people was actually smoke from the blazes.

“I’m very worried because of the environment and health,” Delmara Conceicao Silva told AFP. “I have a daughter with respiratory problems and she suffers more because of the fires.” The fires in the world’s largest rainforest have triggered a global uproar and are a major topic of concern at the G7 meeting in Biarritz in southern France.

Official figures show 78,383 forest fires have been recorded in Brazil this year, the highest number of any year since 2013. Experts say the clearing of land during the monthslong dry season to make way for crops or grazing has aggravated the problem. More than half of the fires are in the Amazon, where more than 20 million people live. Some 1,663 new fires were ignited between Thursday and Friday, according to Brazil’s National Institute for Space Research (INPE). The new data came a day after Bolsonaro authorized the deployment of the military to fight the fires and crack down on criminal activity in the region.

So far, six states, including Rondonia, have requested the army’s help in the Amazon where some 44,000 troops are based and available to combat fires, officials said. Firefighters and aircraft are also being deployed. US President Donald Trump and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, both attending the G7 summit, have offered their countries’ assistance in fighting the fires.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/08/20190825511410/>

CONCERN VOICED OVER UNCHECKED DEFORESTATION IN SWAT

Our Correspondent August 25, 2019

PESHAWAR: The members of the civil society organisations have expressed deep concern over the unchecked deforestation in the scenic Swat district and asked the government to take steps to stop the illegal felling of trees.

During a recent visit to a large Banr forest near the road leading to Mahodand Lake, the Sarhad Conservation Network team members comprising local activists and conservationists took pictures of the freshly felled trees and those marked for felling. They said that Swat was undergoing ruthless deforestation of ancient deodar (cedar) trees.

They alleged that forest officials, timber mafias, law-enforcement agencies were involved in massive deforestation in Kalam, Bahrain and Kumrat and adjoining areas and if urgent action was not taken it shall turn this paradise into a wasteland.

Quoting the locals, they maintained that the felling of trees took place mostly during the midnight.

Known activist and writer from Swat Fazal Khaliq reported felling of trees in Banr, Bouyn, Anakar, Ushu, Matiltan, Jalbarn, Jabral and Utror areas in Kalam and Lal Koh forest in Matta tehsil, which is home of the incumbent chief minister. He complained that there was a lot of media hype about the Billion Tree Tsunami project, but no steps were being taken to check the felling of the precious trees.

“As a first step to check deforestation, the government should hire enough guards with proper monitoring system,” he said, adding that the local forest communities must be activated.

He said that the committees must comprise young, educated and untarnished individuals. “Regular patrolling must be conducted by the forest officials to monitor illegal activities. There must be an effective mechanism to monitor illegal cutting during the nighttime,” said Fazal Khaliq.

He said that the government can easily develop satellite monitoring to save forests and ultimately save the environment. “Why is the government spending billions of rupees on media hype about the tree plantation drive,” he concluded.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/517041-concern-voiced-over-unchecked-deforestation-in-swat>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 26th TO 1st 2019

THICK SMOKE CHOKES BRAZIL’S NORTH AS FIRES RAGE IN AMAZON

AFP Updated August 26, 2019

PORTO VELHO: An aerial picture released by Greenpeace shows smoke billowing from forest fires in the Amazon basin of north-western Brazil on Saturday. — AFP

PORTO VELHO: Blackened tree trunks lay smoldering on the charred ground as thick smoke chokes the Amazon rainforest in Brazil, a scene of devastation that is being repeated across the “lungs of the planet.” In the northwestern state of Rondonia — one of the hardest hit areas by the worst fires in years — people are living under a blanket of smoke that has enveloped the remote region.

“I’ve lived here for 20 years and I’ve seen a lot of fires, but this smoke in recent days, I’ve never seen anything like that before,” Welis da Claiana, 25, said in the capital Porto Velho.

“The smoke has affected 100 percent of our daily lives. We wake up tired from breathing the smoke.” Da Claiana says the fires in recent days had even threatened the car hire company where she works and forced the cancellation of flights at the local airport.

“Visibility was horrible, no one could do anything,” she said, blaming “big farmers” for the blazes.

At one point, the fires began closing in on her home. She shut the doors and windows in an attempt to keep out the smoke, but she still ended up having to rush her daughter to the hospital after she began having difficulty breathing. A colleague was also hospitalized with respiratory problems.

The cause of the air pollution can be found a short drive from the city of half a million people: multiple fires devouring sections of forest that have been cleared to make way for cattle or crops.

Seen from above, the destruction is dramatic: walls of bright orange flames advance across the expansive forest as huge plumes of black smoke billow into the sky.

Swathes of forest have been stripped of vegetation in apparent preparation for burning. Journalists travelling by road and air in the state bordering Bolivia have seen others on fire or already burned to a crisp.

In some places, a single tree has been left standing, surrounded by scorched earth — a testament to the destruction of a forest the WWF says is home to hundreds of threatened animal and plant species.

More than half of the 79,513 fires recorded in Brazil this year are in the Amazon, and 1,130 were started between Friday and Saturday.

“It’s increasing every year,” Eliana Amorim said in Porto Velho, blaming deforestation for the fires. “But people’s awareness is not.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1501758/thick-smoke-chokes-brazils-north-as-fires-rage-in-amazon>

POLLUTION-FREE HYDROGEN: GREEN ENERGY BREAKTHROUGH?

AUGUST 26, 2019

PARIS: Scientists said on Tuesday they have developed a way of extracting hydrogen from oil without releasing greenhouse gases — a breakthrough they hailed as a “silver bullet” for cleaner energy and the climate.

Unlike petrol and diesel, hydrogen produces no pollution when burned. It is already used by some car manufacturers to power vehicles and may also be burned to generate electricity. But until now the wide-scale roll-out of hydrogen technology has been prohibited by the high cost of separating it from hydrocarbons. Currently the vast majority of hydrogen used for vehicles is derived from natural gas, the extraction process of which produces planet-warming methane.

Now a group of Canadian engineers say they have come up with a method of getting hydrogen directly from oil sands and oil fields, while leaving carbon dioxide and methane in the ground. The team behind the research, which was unveiled at the Goldschmidt Geochemistry Conference in Barcelona, said the technology had the potential to supply Canada’s entire electricity requirement for the next 330 years — all without releasing any greenhouse gases.

“Low-cost hydrogen from oil fields with no emissions can power the whole world using mostly existing infrastructure,” Grant Stem, CEO of Proton Technologies, which is commercialising the extraction method, told AFP.

“This is the silver bullet for clean energy and clean climate.”

With global energy demand rising in lockstep with emissions, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change says the world needs to work rapidly to curb greenhouse gases or risk dangerous temperature increases.—AFP

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/08/26/10-page/798060-news.html>

WHAT ARE WE EATING!

By Kamal Siddiqi Published: August 26, 2019

Every time I go to the market to buy fruit, I make sure I to get the local variety. There is so much on offer and of such good quality. We are blessed in Pakistan with our local produce. The variety and quality of what is on offer is impressive. But be warned — things are changing. For example, I have

to be careful that I buy the papaya, which has seeds inside, and not the seedless hybrid variety that is now becoming popular. Hybrid crops are making an appearance.

Have you sampled bananas or tomatoes abroad in the US or other countries that allow the sale of genetically modified food? If tried, these items will be tasteless. As if one is eating cardboard seasoned fruit. No flavour, only quantity. At the risk of sounding like my own parents (and I hated it when they said such things), much of such food that is offered today lacks any dietary value.

That scenario is now repeating itself in Pakistan. There are many examples where our local varieties are being undermined, like the garlic that is available for sale. We have two varieties: the desi and the Chinese. Most go for the Chinese variety because the cloves are larger and it looks fresher. But it isn't better by any standard.

When I was working in a newspaper some years back, many a time I would get visits for representatives of companies promoting GM food crops. Their argument was simple: would you rather die from hunger owing to food shortages or would you invest in GM crops which boost yields manifold and help ensure bountiful supplies.

They had calculated how Pakistan — with its present rate of population growth — would start facing food shortages if we did not increase yields substantially in the coming years. It is a convincing argument. But it is also one that doesn't tell the whole story.

This week we were also informed that hybrid wheat seeds will be available through a commercial venture in Pakistan by year 2022 with expectations that they will help increase crop production by at least 40-45% compared to the conventional seed varieties which the country is currently cultivating. A company official told the media that work is under way and in the past five years around \$2.5 million has been spent on this project.

While this may help increase yields, it may also have serious implications for the roti-eating population. Many questions remain unanswered in case of GM crops. The yield is bound to increase manifold in the first couple of years — but at what cost?

Time and again we have been warned of the health risks of such food crops. Given the cost it has paid, the West — particularly the US — has woken up to the world of organic food. This has become a multi-billion dollar industry as consumers become aware of the health benefits of locally sourced and produced indigenous food items. We are going in the opposite direction.

The introduction of hybrid seeds would challenge Pakistan's food security because single-use seeds would replace our heirloom seeds. This means our farmers will be dependent on these single use seeds for all times to come. They will be contingent on the companies making and selling them. In the past, with heirloom seeds, all farmers had to do was to store some of the seeds from their previous crop and then sow them once again.

There is more to worry about. Contrary to popular belief, yields do not remain high indefinitely. After an initial rise in harvest, the output then starts to reduce owing to the limitations of the land it is grown on.

Also, hybrid seeds are not fully pest-resistant as widely believed. They too can face pest attacks but of a kind which has not been foreseen by the seed company which would mean that if such an attack takes place, there would be no way to save the crops.

But the most important worry is the cost to human health. Why are we not being told that our local varieties are being sneakily replaced by hybrid ones? Why was there no national debate on such an important issue? It is our health and our future that is at stake. Will anyone take a stand on such an important issue?

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2042168/6-what-are-we-eating-opinion/>

MORE FIRES FLARE UP IN AMAZON AS BRAZIL WARPLANES FIGHT BLAZES

RECORDER REPORT AUG 27TH, 2019 PORTO VELHO

Hundreds of new fires have flared up in the Amazon in Brazil, data showed Monday, even as military aircraft dumped water over hard-hit areas and G7 nations pledged to help combat the blazes. Smoke choked Port Velho city as fires raged in the northwestern state of Rondonia where fire-fighting efforts are concentrated, amid a growing global uproar and a diplomatic spat between France and Brazil.

Two C-130 Hercules aircraft carrying thousands of liters of water on Sunday began dousing fires devouring chunks of the world's largest rainforest, which is seen as crucial to keeping climate change in check. Swaths of the remote region have been scorched by the worst fires in years, sending thick smoke billowing into the sky.

Experts say increased land clearing during the months-long dry season to make way for crops or grazing has aggravated the problem this year. The worsening crisis has fueled a row between President Jair Bolsonaro and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron, who has been piling pressure on Bolsonaro to do more to protect the forest.

Macron on Monday condemned "extraordinarily rude" comments made about his wife Brigitte by Bolsonaro a day earlier. Bolsonaro hit back, accusing Macron of treating Brazil like "a colony or no-man's land." The spat comes as G7 nations meeting in southwestern France agreed to spend \$20 million (18 million euros) on the Amazon, mainly to send fire-fighting aircraft. The G7 club also agreed to support a medium-term reforestation plan which will be unveiled at the UN in September, Macron and Chile's President Sebastian Pinera said.

Although about 60 percent of the Amazon is in Brazil, the vast forest also spreads over parts of eight other countries or territories. Bolivian President Evo Morales said Sunday he would accept international help to combat wildfires raging in his country's southeast as he suspended his election campaign to deal with the crisis. The country took delivery Friday of a Boeing 747-400 "supertanker" capable of carrying 150,000 liters (40,000 gallons) of water. Brazil has accepted help from Israel, which offered to send an aircraft. Seven states, including Rondonia, have requested the Brazilian army's help in the Amazon, where more than 43,000 troops have been made available to combat fires.

It is not clear how many of them are actually involved in fire-fighting efforts so far. After initially blaming the fires on non-government organizations, Bolsonaro on Friday vowed a "zero tolerance" approach to criminal activities in the Amazon and promised strong action to control the blazes.

Dozens of firefighters arrived in Porto Velho on Sunday and Justice Minister Sergio Moro has given the green light for the deployment of security forces to tackle illegal deforestation. The latest official figures show 80,626 forest fires have been recorded in Brazil this year, the highest number of any year since at least 2013.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/08/20190827512349/>

SCIENTISTS REPRODUCE CORAL IN LAB, OFFERING HOPE FOR REEFS

AUGUST 28,2019

MIAMI: A team of scientists in the US have managed to reproduce coral in a lab setting for the first time ever, an encouraging step in the race to save “America’s Great Barrier Reef” off the coast of Florida.

The researchers from Florida Aquarium’s Center for Conservation were able to reproduce endangered Atlantic Pillar coral through induced spawning, a development that could ultimately prevent the extinction of the Florida Reef tract.

“This amazing breakthrough was the first time that we spawned Atlantic corals in a laboratory setting that we’ve had for over a year in our greenhouses,” Amber Whittle, the aquarium’s director for conservation, told AFP Monday.

“It’s been done before at the Horniman Museum in London with Pacific corals, never with Atlantic corals, and the Pillar coral that we spawned is a highly endangered species.”

The Florida Aquarium and the Horniman Museum began working together in 2015 on induced reproduction techniques. Reproduction was achieved by mimicking the conditions of the corals’ natural environment, including sunrises, sunsets, moon phases, water temperature and quality.

Florida’s corals are deteriorating rapidly due to climate change and a destructive tissue disease that appeared in the waters of the southeastern state in 2014.

Scientists hope to reproduce healthy corals and repopulate the reefs through this technique.—AFP

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/08/28/6-page/798334-news.html>

TO SAVE AMAZONIA, HELP BRAZIL

AUGUST 28,2019

OPINION: The Amazon, the greatest reservoir of fresh waer and biodiversity on the planet, is burning. Its degradation, which threatens to reach a catastrophic tipping point, means less oxygen and rain as well as warmer temperatures. Human actions have been the driving cause. In Brazil, which holds 60 percent of the Amazonian rain forest, wildcat land grabbers and ranchers, who set fires to clear land in implicit partnership with a lenient government, are the main culprits.

We have been here before. In 2004 deforestation rates were much worse than they are today. In the last years of that decade Brazil stepped back from the brink and imposed constraints on what had been a free-for-all in the region. We now need to be more ambitious than we were then.

The threshold problem is land tenure. Less than 10 percent of the land in private hands has clear title. Chaos reigns: No one knows who owns what and pillage is more rewarding than either preservation or production.

To overcome the chaos we must distinguish long-term squatters committed to making a life in the Amazon from predatory ranchers and loggers, and award them full ownership.

In 2009, a law established the legal basis for this vital change by organizing the distribution of federal land in the Amazon. Successive federal administrations have been slow to carry it out but the state governments are ready to step in.

The Brazilian Amazon is more than trees; about 30 million people live and work there. We need to ensure that the forest is worth more standing than cut down. To that end, we must give the with to both use and preserve their environment.

The linkages between the urban economy and the forested Amazon are not yet in place. The free economic zone in Manaus, the capital of the Amazon's largest state, could well be somewhere in China; its factories assemble products like cell phones and motorcycles. The environment-friendly but primitive production techniques adopted by the native populations in the interior lack the scale and technology required to create a viable economy. On the region's borders, the main activity in the savanna has become inefficient cattle grazing.

The Amazonian debacle is part of a national misdirection. Brazil has underinvested in its people and relied increasingly on the production and export of commodities. In the Amazon, the easy way out leads to destruction. The only system with a chance of saving both the people and the trees is a knowledge economy.

Technological, entrepreneurial and legal innovation premised on a definitive settlement of land tenure can allow for the sustainable harvesting of heterogeneous tropical rain forests and their use as sources of new drugs and forms of renewable energy. To make this possible, technical environmental services must be provided over an area larger than Western Europe.

Only knowledge-intensive industries and services in the cities can turn toward the rain forest rather than away from it. New ways of organizing ownership and financing production can help local communities and startups to experiment, content and cooperate. This approach can begin to give practical content to the otherwise empty slogan of sustainable development.

Don't demand that Brazil turn 61 percent of its national territory into an international park. And don't expect Brazilians, who have managed to preserve about 80 percent of the trees in their section of the Amazon, to appreciate being lectured by European countries left largely treeless by centuries of deforestation.

Saving the Amazon is a project for Brazil to shape and execute and for the world-beginning with the Group of 7, which has just pledged the pittance of \$20 million in emergency aid-to support. If the Bolsonaro administration, sunk in its perverse culture wars, refuses to participate, governments, research institutions, and businesses of the world should go to the governors and mayors of the Amazon.

The Amazonian states have joined in a regional organization, the Interstate Consortium of the Legal Amazon, that can partner with our foreign friends.

The real Brazil wants to bet on the marriage of intelligence and nature. Give us a hand without disrespecting our sovereignty. Instead of just helping put out fires, help us make the discoveries and achieve the innovations that a better future demands.

There is much talk of sustainable development in the world. But little of it exists. The dominant tone of environmentalism in the rich North Atlantic countries is plaintive and escapist: As history has disappointed us, let's console ourselves in the great garden of nature.

Brazilians, along with the rest of the world, need alternatives-including institutional alternatives-more than we need consolation. To rescue the Amazon, we need them right now.

<https://epaper.the.express.tribune.com> 28/8/2019

REGULATING VEHICULAR EMISSIONS ON THE CARDS

By Our Correspondent Published: August 30, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change's sub-committee members has decided to regulate vehicular emissions through a bill to be tabled in the Senate.

Chairing the committee meeting on Thursday, convener Senator Muhammad Asad Ali Khan Junejo said the idea was floated in the main standing committee to determine a limit of carbon emissions within the existing quality of automobiles and fuels available in the market.

"We cannot leave vehicles to spew heavy amounts of carbon at large as automobile manufacturers claim to have non-compliant fuel available which is the main cause of harmful emissions," he added.

Asad said he had prepared a tentative draft of the legislation which would be shared with the minister of state for climate change to have her ministry's input and experts' suggestion.

"Under the prevailing tense economic situation, we are proposing to regulate air pipe emissions of automobiles in the first phase. It is the global practice that vehicular emission testing also includes windpipe, tires, engine condition and the entire vehicles assessment. However, it is not possible for the public to take on another burden while bearing the brunt of inflation and increased financial load," he said.

The proposed legislation, he said would be tabled as a bill in the Senate where after approval would be sent to the National Assembly where the government's support would be required to get the legislation accepted.

"In the beginning, only air pipe emissions will be regulated where after three years the other aspects – motor inspection and testing – would be initiated. However, it will be approved as a whole and its implementation would be carried out phase-wise," Senator Junejo said.

The ministry, he said, would be authorised to review the standards in the legislation where an open-door policy had been adopted for detailed and inclusive consultations with all relevant stakeholders, including the Ministry of Climate Change (MoCC).

State Minister for Climate Change Zartaj Gul fully endorsed the idea to table the legislation on regulating vehicular emissions and directed the Environment Wing and Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) director generals to make the lists of experts and relevant stakeholders for consultations to be made on the bill.

She suggested the convener of the sub-committee have a meeting at the MoCC to have detailed discussions with all relevant stakeholders, including the Ministry of Industries, the Petroleum Division and all others concerned.

She said it was very important legislation to control air pipe emissions and impose regular vehicle testing.

“In Muzaffargarh, around two years back 35 children died due to a CNG cylinder blast in a school van. There are also Ayub era’s trucks plying on the roads that have gone redundant but still, such automobiles are in the system. Therefore, this legislation is pertinent in the prevailing scenario,” she added. “All initiatives should be taken as a test case at the federal level with the provinces in the backdrop in such legislations. The bill should have special inclusion of provinces in this initiative.”

The officials of the Ministry of Communications told the committee that the National Transport Centre’s motor vehicle examiner lacked technological equipment to monitor air pipe emissions of vehicles.

“In Punjab, around 35 motor testing centres, including one in Rawat, have been established to conduct an inspection of vehicles. They have bought equipment from Sweden to hold the automobile examination,” he added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2045401/1-regulating-vehicular-emissions-cards/>

BRAZIL’S BOLSONARO FUELS SPAT WITH EUROPE AS AMAZON FIRES SOAR

August 31, 2019 8:46 AM

ARIQUEMES: President Jair Bolsonaro said Friday that Europe has “nothing to teach” Brazil about preserving the environment, as the country aligns itself with the United States over fires raging in the Amazon rainforest.

The far-right leader’s comments come as the latest official data show thousands of new fires were ignited across Brazil on Thursday – the first day of a ban on burning – with most of them in the Amazon basin.

Offers of international help to combat the worst fires in the Amazon in years have been made, but the issue has provoked accusations in Brazil that foreign countries – particularly in Europe – were trying to meddle in its affairs.

Brazil has found an ally in the United States where President Donald Trump praised Bolsonaro’s handling of the crisis and offered US assistance.

After meeting Trump at the White House on Friday, Brazilian Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo said the two countries had similar views on the fires.

The talks were also attended by Bolsonaro’s son and hopeful ambassador to the United States, Eduardo.

“I think we’re on the same page, the governments are on the same page,” Araujo told reporters, explaining that this means pushing back against what he said was interference in Brazil’s affairs by foreign governments concerned over the rainforest’s future.

Bolsonaro has accused France and Germany of “buying” Brazil’s sovereignty after the G7 group of rich democracies offered US\$20 million in Amazon fire aid.

He initially rejected the money unless his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron withdrew “insults” made against him.

Bolsonaro later said Brazil would accept bilateral aid to fight the fires, but has insisted the Latin American country must control the money.

Chilean President Sebastian Pinera announced that his country will send four water bombers to help fight the Brazilian blazes.

That is being done “thanks to financing from the G7 countries,” Pinera said.

On Wednesday Trump said the United States was ready to help Brazil fight the fires and criticised the G7 for failing to consult Bolsonaro over its initiative.

The Brazilian president told reporters he would talk to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and repeated a demand that “our dear Macron” retract remarks relating to Brazil’s sovereignty over the Amazon before he would speak to him.

“Europe has nothing to teach us about preserving the environment,” Bolsonaro said, reiterating his plan for “sustainable exploitation” of the Amazon.

Bolsonaro later tweeted that he had a “productive” conversation with Merkel, who he said “reaffirmed Brazilian sovereignty over our Amazon region.”

On the eve of the G7 summit last week, Macron declared the forest fires, which are also affecting Bolivia, an “international crisis” and put them on the agenda of the gathering.

Macron also accused Bolsonaro of lying to him about Brazil’s climate change stance.

Bolsonaro reacted furiously, accusing Macron of having a “colonialist mentality.”

On Friday the Brazilian leader said he will stop using disposable pens made by France’s Bic.

Under growing pressure to do more, Bolsonaro issued a nationwide 60-day ban on burning that took effect Thursday.

Activists quickly doused hopes that the prohibition would work in the remote Amazon region where deforestation has surged this year as agencies tasked with monitoring illegal activities were weakened.

On the same day as the ban took effect, 2,300 new fires were detected – most of them in the Amazon basin – taking the total number for this year to 87,257, the latest figures from the National Institute for Space Research show.

Nearly 1,500 of the new fires were in the vast Amazon basin.

This year’s total is the highest since 2010 when 132,106 fires were detected across the country.

Para was the hardest hit state on Thursday, with 587 new blazes – up 67% from the previous day.

Police on Thursday arrested three people for burning several thousand hectares in a conservation area in Para.

Thousands of troops and firefighters, along with aircraft, have been deployed since the weekend, and the defence ministry says the fires are under control.

Bolsonaro claimed in a live broadcast on Facebook on Thursday that “this year’s fires are below the average of recent years.”

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/world/2019/08/31/brazils-bolsonaro-fuels-spat-with-europe-fires-soar/>

LHC ORDERS STRINGENT LAWS TO PROTECT CLIMATE, FORESTS

Wajih Ahmad Sheikh Updated September 01, 2019

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court has issued a set of directions to various departments of the Punjab government to plant saplings and protect forests and make the existing laws more stringent to deal with the violations.

“All the respondents shall take steps to protect, manage and conserve the forests and trees in the urban areas, in fact make manifest and obvious efforts, to enlarge the forests and trees in Pakistan and the Punjab,” states a 78-page judgment issued by Justice Jawad Hassan on several petitions.

The petitions were moved by lawyers and civil society activists questioning the government’s failure to implement laws and to seek explanations from the respondent departments as to how the National Climate Change Policy 2012, the National Forest Policy 2015 and the Forest Policy Statement, 1999 have been implemented to increase the forest cover in Pakistan and Punjab. They further sought reasons for drastic reduction in forest cover in the country, particularly in Punjab, and demanded measures to increase the forest cover to reach the minimum satisfactory standards of 20-25pc necessary for a balanced economy.

The petitioners also urged court to initiate proceedings against the officials who failed to discharge their duties.

The Lahore Development Authority, the Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries Department, the registrar cooperative, the Environment Protection Agency and the Parks and Horticulture Authority were made respondents in the petitions.

The directions issued by court say every responsible ministry, division, department and authority shall publish yearly report in which it shall highlight expansion of the forest area, tree plantation campaign in the urban areas and also the action taken by them in compliance with laws.

It orders the authority concerned to impose penalty against relevant officers for omission of their duties, if any, under the laws and also against the public for cutting trees.

The judgment states that the secretary cooperative and registrar cooperative shall issue directions to housing societies and authorities for planting at least two trees in green belt in front of each house. They should also mention in their allotment letters and bye-laws of the society heavy penalties and punishments for cutting trees (at least Rs25,000 per tree).

It directs the government to utilise the media and other means to inform the public and create awareness about benefits of trees and mechanism of lodging a complaint for any violation of the law.

“Every area shall have a person to file complaint depending on the jurisdiction of the area and duties of the officers,” the verdict mandates and also directs the authorities to make comprehensive policies with respect to plantation of trees in urban areas with experience of the Urban Plantation Policy.

The judge orders schools, colleges, higher education institutes, hospitals, parking sites etc., to make policy for planting trees in open spaces and waiting areas/car parks.

“The government of the Punjab through its respective departments shall make laws in imposing penalty and heavy fine for cutting, removing and damaging any tree without permission of the authority concerned and consider all mitigating measures at the time of public hearing of any project such as Initial Environmental Examination and Environmental Impact Assessment,” the judgment concludes.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1502849>

PRIVATE SECTOR’S ROLE VITAL TO MAKE PAKISTAN CLEAN AND GREEN: FAWAD

RECORDER REPORT SEP 1ST, 2019 ISLAMABAD

Fawad Chaudhry, Federal Minister for Science and Technology Saturday said that the government is fully committed to making Pakistan clean and green as per the vision of the Prime Minister Imran Khan, and this mission can only be achieved through contribution of the private sector.

This was stated by Fawad Chaudhry while inaugurating Pakistan Tobacco Company’s Jhelum nursery under its CSR program. Addressing the guests at the inaugural ceremony, Fawad Chaudhry was of the view that “Clean and Green Pakistan” campaign has been launched by the Prime Minister in all provinces including Azad Jammu Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

He highlighted the importance of forests in daily lives and guided on environmental effects of deforestation including loss of habitats, increase in temperature due to greenhouse gases emission, water depletion, soil erosion and their effects on the life of indigenous people.

He stressed that Clean and Green Pakistan goal can only be achieved through public private partnership and applauded PTC’s active role in bridging the gap. He also appreciated the efforts of PTC for distributing more than 78 million saplings under its Corporate Social Responsibility program and he concluded his speech by saying “Let’s put all our efforts together in making Pakistan a Cleaner and Greener country.”

While addressing the audience, Director Legal and External Affairs, PTC,

Asad Shah highlighted the initiatives taken by PTC under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). He said the PTC’s flagship CSR program on afforestation was initiated in 1981 and till date the company has successfully planted and distributed more than 78 million trees free of cost across the country.

He said that this is a 550 bed nursery located on main G.T Road adjacent to its factory and it is expected to churn out more than 0.8 million saplings a year. All plants will be provided to public free of cost, he added.

He further said that in last financial year, PTC has contributed record of 103 billion rupees in terms of excise, income tax and sales tax. He highlighted that tax evasion by local cigarette companies is

causing loss of 40-50 billion rupees annually to national exchequer. He demanded that government should provide level playing field to legal industry.

PTC is the pioneer in the afforestation program and it is currently the largest private sector afforestation program in Pakistan. We believe in giving back to the communities that we operate in. Through our afforestation program, we are also supporting the Government's 10 Billion tree tsunami initiative. "PTC is working hand in hand with the government of Pakistan to promote its efforts in the quest of making Pakistan a Clean and Green society," he added.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/09/20190901514687/>

PUNJAB ORDERED TO ENSURE TREE PLANTATION

By Hasnaat Malik Published: September 1, 2019

ISLAMABAD: The Lahore High Court has directed the secretary and registrar of the provincial cooperatives department to issue directions to the housing societies and authorities for making plantation of at least two trees in the green belt in front of each house part of the allotment letters and by-laws of the society.

It also called for the imposition of heavy penalties, including a fine of at least Rs.25,000/- per tree for cutting the same and to monitor the trees through respective officers of the relevant society or authority.

"The treatment and maintenance of the trees will be the sole responsibility of the society / authority concerned," says the 78-page judgment over urban tree plantation.

The judgment notes that the government of Punjab, through its respective departments, shall make laws in imposing penalty and heavy fine for cutting, removing and damaging any tree without the permission of the concerned authority, including the Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) and the forest department, and consider all mitigating measures at the time of public hearing of any project such as initial environmental examination (IEA) and environmental impact assessment (EIA).

Justice Hassan also notes that a specific officer may be appointed in a designated area to deal with the issues related to trees and afforestation, as the case maybe.

The judgment also directed all the relevant authorities to make and adopt comprehensive policies with respect to plantation of trees in urban areas in line with the Urban Plantation Policy and make their own policy under respective laws.

"The school, colleges, higher education institutes, hospitals, parking sites, etc. are specifically directed to make policy for planting trees in open spaces like waiting areas and car parks," the judge wrote.

The court held that every responsible ministry, division, department and authority, etc., shall publish the yearly report in which it shall highlight the expansion of the forest area, tree plantation campaign in urban areas and also the action taken by them in compliance of the said laws.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2046625/1-lhc-calls-making-tree-plantation-mandatory-punjab/>

September 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 2nd TO 8th 2019

K-P GOVT TO SPEND RS9B ON PLANTATION DRIVE IN TRIBAL DISTRICTS

By APP Published: September 3, 2019

PESHAWAR: The government would spend around Rs9.065 billion on plantations related activities in erstwhile Fata to bring its vast lands under forestry cover in 10 billion trees afforestation project (10BTAP) to counter climate change's challenges.

“KP Forest Department will carry out 47 percent plantations activities in erstwhile Fata keeping in view of the availability of vast lands to achieve the plantation target of adding one billion saplings under 10BTAP in Khyber Pakthunkhwa by 2023,” KP Forest Department Forests-I Chief Conservator Niaz Ali Khan said on Monday.

He said Rs9.065 billion (33%) of the total amount would be spent on plantations related activities in erstwhile Fata, and the physical targets allotted to merged areas is 47% of the total provincial targets.

The chief conservator said BTAP has been extended to erstwhile Fata by the Government with a target of raising of 215,000 hectares (ha) block plantations, 10,000 ha saline and waterlogged, 1200ha plantations on marginalised lands, 90ha avenue plantations, 6760ha dry land and 3200ga wood lots.

Sowing and dribbling would be carried out over 10,000 ha while 1375ha land would be treated under range lands policy besides 10 watershed areas, adding 4,600 forest enclosures would be established besides manmade plantations. Up till now, he said, 1,150ha block plantations, 10ha avenue plantations, 240ha dry land, 1611ha sowing and 0.47 million seedlings were freely distributed among farmers, general public and national buildings departments in erstwhile Fata. As many as 71ha departmental nursery and fruit plant nursery on two hectare and five private nurseries with the help of women were established.

In Khyber Forest Division, he said the target of setting up 658 enclosures was achieved. Plantation on 290ha out of the set target of 700ha was achieved besides setting up a departmental nursery on six hectares, raising of 1,220 enclosures and planting of 9,34,900 plants in merged areas.

The forests chief said 31, 860 new plantations would be raised out of which 1,400 achieved so far in erstwhile Fata.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2047883/1-govt-spend-rs9b-plantation-drive-tribal-districts/>

PAKISTAN'S DEFORESTATION RATE WORLD'S HIGHEST, OBSERVES LHC

Nasir Iqba Updated September 04, 2019

ISLAMABAD: With annual deforestation rate in Pakistan recorded as the world's highest, the Lahore High Court has observed that such tendency will lead to increase in the spread of life-threatening diseases and ordered the Punjab government, Defence Housing Authority and various other development authorities to make a comprehensive policy for tree plantation and penalising those removing, cutting or damaging trees.

The country's deforestation rate has been estimated between 0.2 and 0.5 per cent per annum — the highest in the world — accounting for four to six per cent decline in its wood biomass per annum, the LHC verdict deplored.

Authored by Justice Jawad Hasan, the judgement, while citing a research report, observed that the natural forest cover had reduced from 3.59 million hectares to 3.32m hectares at an average rate of 27,000 hectares annually.

Citing the 2010 research report by the National Environment Information System (NEIMS), the judgement feared that the natural resources were decreasing at such an alarming speed that all the forest area would be consumed within the next five years.

NEIMS is a project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) detailing the environment, biodiversity and ecological zones in Pakistan from forest to mountains and threatened flora and fauna and species of animal. The report highlighted that only 4.72m hectares or 3.36 per cent of its land mass was covered with forests, as there had been a declining forestation trend since 2000.

The LHC verdict recalled that the value of intangible benefits of forestation was eight times greater than the tangible value of products and services of forestry sector. Many intangible benefits were derived from forest, including oxygen production, watershed value, scenic benefits, ecosystem synergism and a variety of other values essential for human health and quality of life.

The forests also provide a number of crucial ecosystem services like their role in sequestering carbon from the atmosphere, protecting upstream watersheds, conserving biodiversity and gene-pools for future generations and in providing landscape.

Forests are both a source of carbon dioxide when they are destroyed or degraded, and a sink when conserved, managed or planted sustainably, the report said, explaining that 60 to 90 of all terrestrial species were found in forests having widespread economic and medicinal uses still unknown to mankind.

Quoting the report, the judgement said the forest vegetation and soils held 40 per cent of carbon stored in terrestrial ecosystems.

As the population grew, the demand for clean drinking water became more acute, the court observed, adding that such need for water was in addition to the need for agriculture, sanitation purpose, cooking and other uses.

Until two decades back, no one in Pakistan had ever thought of purchasing water, but at present people had to purchase it because of depletion of forest in watersheds, the verdict said.

According to the judgement, forest and plant cover are necessary to slow runoff and filter rainwater. When trees are in place, the flow of rainwater from downhill to the nearest stream slows down. Once slowed, rainwater seeped down to refill underground storage tanks or aquifers. In addition, water may be absorbed by the roots of trees so that it could cycle back for reuse as rainwater. Forests prevent non-saline drinking-quality water from running off too quickly to mix with the salt water of oceans. Once salty, water takes much longer to re-enter the fresh water portion of the hydrological cycle, where it is most useful to humans.

The roots of trees hold soil in place and the fertile soil that is needed to grow crops would otherwise be washed away in rainstorms, decreasing the amount of soil available for agriculture. Rich soil transfers nutrients to food which contributes to human health.

Forests provide multiple benefits to environment, people and animals like they cool air temperature by releasing water vapours into the air while at day time trees generate oxygen and store carbon dioxide that helps to clean air.

Moreover, forests attract wild life and offer food and protection to them. They reduce light reflection, offer a sound barrier and help guide wind direction and speed. Thus forests help in controlling the level of floods and soil erosion, the court observed in its recent judgement.

The court directed the authorities, including the DHA, development authorities and other relevant institutions to make and adopt comprehensive policies with respect to plantation of trees in urban areas with experience of Urban Plantation Policy and make their own policy under respective laws and immediately start planting of trees with the request to PHA and other departments and maintain the same by imposing fine and penalty to the officers of the area or any citizen.

The court also directed all educational institutes, hospitals and parking areas management to make and implement policy for plantation of trees in open spaces.

Similarly, the Punjab government was also directed to impose penalties and heavy fine on those found involved in cutting, removing and damaging trees.

Published in Dawn, September 4th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1503365>

TRADERS, MANUFACTURERS PROTEST BAN ON OXO-BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC BAGS

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter September 04, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Traders and manufacturers of oxo-biodegradable plastic bags took to the streets on Tuesday against the government's ban on their products.

Speaking on behalf of the Potohar Plastic Association, spokesperson Sheikh Zubair said the government had no scientific evidence to support the argument that oxo-biodegradable bags are harmful to the environment.

Traders and manufacturers said the bags disintegrate after interacting with the elements, such as sunlight and water.

“We will stop producing and selling them if the Ministry of Climate Change can convince the masses that oxo-biodegradable bags cause any harm to the environment, humans and animals. In fact, oxo-biodegradable plastic bags turn into fertiliser when thrown into the soil,” Mr Zubair claimed.

At their protest near the National Press Club, traders argued that these bags cost Rs2 per bag, compared to the government’s new degradable bags that cost more than Rs20.

“Officials from the ministry have distributed hundreds of thousands of degradable plastic bags amongst shopkeepers and stores for free, affecting our business. Did the government plan a strategy [for] how it would compensate or suggest an alternate [for] the businessmen and the hundreds of thousands of labour force associated with the plastic bag industry who they are putting out of business,” Mr Zubair asked.

He said that while the government has banned oxo-biodegradable plastic in the capital, the rest of the world continues to use it.

“The western world would have been the first to ban oxo-biodegradable bags had they been hazardous to the environment,” he said.

According to the Ministry of Climate Change, while single-use plastic bags have been banned in the capital, oxo-biodegradable bags – which are hazardous to the environment and human health – are still in use.

Pakistan Environment Protection Agency Director General Farzana Altaf Shah said oxo-biodegradable bags have been banned under the same law that prohibits the use of single-use plastic bags.

Environmentalists say that oxo-biodegradable bags, which disappear after interacting with sunlight, water and oxygen, disintegrate into almost invisible pieces that settle in the soil, effecting fertility and mixing with water.

They argue that these tiny pieces of plastic can be inhaled by humans and are equally threatening to marine life, which can also consume them.

According to one environmentalist in the climate change ministry, environmentalists also believe oxo-biodegradable plastic bags are carcinogenic. However, the official conceded that there was limited research on their negative health and ecological effects.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1503438/traders-manufacturers-protest-ban-on-oxo-biodegradable-plastic-bags>

UNSAFE COLLECTION, DISPOSAL OF MEDICAL WASTE PUT LIVES AT RISK

Faiza Ilyas September 04, 2019

A SCREEN grab of a video posted by former cricketer Wasim Akram’s wife Shaniera Akram on Twitter about disposal of medical waste, including ‘open needle syringes’ on the Clifton beach.

KARACHI: Barring a few tertiary care hospitals in the city, no healthcare facility in Karachi has a proper mechanism to safely collect and dispose of its medical waste.

The highly hazardous refuse is either sold by healthcare facilities, unsafely dumped within the neighbourhoods or taken to the decades-old government incinerators lacking independent monitoring, medical experts told Dawn on Tuesday.

In addition, they said, the government was yet to install incinerators at eight hospitals in the province — a project which the government initiated last year on the directives of the Supreme Court-mandated water commission.

The experts were sharing their views against the backdrop of a debate generated on the media following Shaniera Akram's posts on Twitter in which she shared her observations, pictures and a video showing parts of the Clifton beach littered with clinical waste.

“There is kilometers of medical waste, including open syringes, vials of blood, broken glass medical containers, that has come in from the ocean spread out over kilometers across the beach.

“Our beach is a bio-hazard zone and needs to be shut down immediately. I am so sorry to the people including myself who use and love our beach but this is beyond safe,” she said.

Reacting to this alarm, the affected area reportedly was cordoned off and the Clifton Cantonment Board collected the waste.

Experts, however, criticised government's ad hoc approach towards what they described as ‘a very old serious issue’.

“We appreciate what Ms Akram did and would request all concerned citizens to do the same, if that's how the government would work,” said Dr Qaiser Sajjad of the Pakistan Medical Association.

He added that the association had been raising this problem for ages but it could never attract official attention.

“We want to know which department is responsible for collecting medical waste from hundreds and thousands of clinics, maternity homes, hospitals and labs in the city.

“What we see on the ground is horrifying; clinical waste being dumped in lanes and streets as well as educational institutions,” he said.

He warned that “citizens are in the midst of a health disaster, urging the government to wake up and put systems in place”.

Waste from clogged drains?

Answering a question as to how medical waste might have ended up on the beach, Dr Nuzhat Khan, currently heading the National Institute of Oceanography, said that it probably came from clogged drains carrying waste from the city.

“I think it all flushed onto the beach as we have been experiencing heavy spells of rain. There are three to four drains which directly discharge waste on the Clifton beach,” she said, adding that pollution seriously affected the whole coast from Korangi fish harbour to Port Qasim.

She also referred to a 2017 incident in which massive flushing of sewage on the beach was erroneously reported as an ‘oil slick’ by the media.

Dr Altaf Ahmed, representing the Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases Society of Pakistan, regretted that while Punjab had shown progress on safe disposal of medical waste, Sindh lagged far behind.

“We have seen hospitals selling their medical waste to garbage collectors. Some waste is taken to the government incinerators in Gutter Baghicha but nobody knows about its efficiency and operation as it's a restricted area,” he said, adding that a few government hospitals had incinerators (an old technology) but that too were either found out of order or run half of their capacity.

The government, he pointed out, should see whether healthcare facilities had a system to manage and dispose of waste at the time of their establishment and then give them licence for operation.

Categorised as ‘highly infectious waste’, the clinical refuse must be segregated at source.

“It’s so easy to do. But, when it gets mixed with domestic waste, it turns the whole (the large quantity of non-infectious domestic) waste into infectious waste,” he said.

It is important to recall that concerns over poor medical waste disposal practices have frequently been highlighted by experts.

A Karachi University study carried out on the food being sold in and outside 10 public sector hospitals of the city showed that it was unfit for human consumption and that the germs contaminating it had resistance against a number of commonly used antibiotics.

The samples were picked up from the Civil Hospital Karachi, Landhi Medical Complex, Abbasi Shaheed Hospital, Sindh Government Hospital, Liaquatabad, Qatar Hospital, Sindh Government Hospital (UP Mor), Lyari General Hospital, Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, Dow University of Health Sciences (Ojha campus), and Sindh Social Security Hospital.

The study identified dumping of waste (especially medical waste) in the open, lack of infection control measures at healthcare settings, mixing of sewerage lines with water mains, and poor hygiene practices of food handlers as major contributors to the evolution of these germs and their spread.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1503336>

MEDICAL WASTE

Editorial Updated September 05, 2019

WHEN Karachi resident Shaneira Akram went for a morning stroll along the Clifton beach on Tuesday, she was shocked to **discover** large amounts of medical waste lying around on the sand.

Along with heaps of plastic bags and other garbage, the tide had brought with it several blood vials and open syringes to the shoreline.

Thanks to her efforts in raising the alarm about the potential public health catastrophe through a series of tweets and videos, the Sindh Police quickly cordoned off the area, while municipal authorities brought in heavy machinery to clean up the site.

The beach may have been cleared for now, but the larger issue of Karachi’s waste disposal and management cannot be buried so neatly.

According to a report published a day after the heavily publicised incident, the vast majority of healthcare facilities in the city by the sea still do not have the necessary equipment to safely collect and dispose of medical waste.

This is an open secret, written about countless times before: hospitals, clinics and maternity centres continue to dump toxic waste in the open, or directly into water bodies, despite being well aware of the danger such actions pose to ordinary citizens.

Of course, Karachi is not alone; healthcare facilities across the country engage in similar irresponsible practices.

A host of infectious diseases are linked to toxic medical waste, while garbage collectors and scavengers, along with those living close to medical centres, are especially threatened.

It is unknown what percentage of the waste actually goes through incinerators, how many of these are even functional, or whether healthcare practitioners are separating highly toxic and non-toxic waste at the source.

Answers to these questions are needed, and the provincial government must do more than just “write letters” to hospitals to ensure that proper procedures of waste disposal are being followed.

It is nothing short of criminal when those whose duty it is to provide healthcare to the people can so casually and callously toy with it.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1503655/medical-waste>

COPHC TO PLANT ONE MILLION TREES IN GWADAR

By APP Published: September 5, 2019

ISLAMABAD: China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) will plant one million trees in Gwadar as part of Prime Minister Imran Khan’s environmental campaign that envisions the planting of 10 Billion saplings across the country.

These views were expressed by the COPHC Chairman Zhang Baozhong in a meeting with Adviser to Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam, a press release said. A delegation of COPHC visited the climate change ministry and discussed important issues in this regard.

Talking to the delegation, the adviser said that the government wanted Gwadar to be fully established as a clean and green city so that it could serve as a benchmark for other cities in Pakistan and be an example globally.

“The federal government and the ministry will cooperate with relevant departments in this regard,” he added.

The COPHC chairman said that the researches done by various scientific research institutions, including the Chinese Academy of Sciences and others, had been taken into consideration before making the decision.

“The selection of plant species for plantation has been made while giving due consideration to the climate of Gwadar city, soil patterns, availability of water and botanical diversity,” the COPHC chairman said.

“A nursery had also been set up for the production of one million plants, which is capable of producing 300,000 plants per month. COPHC has already prepared 19,000 plants for the nursery including paper mulberry, moringa, castor oil and other species in the nursery.”

To manage the massive plantation target, he said, a committee had been constituted comprising representatives of Gwadar Development Authority, Balochistan Forest Department, Municipal Committee Gwadar and COPHC.

He added that the cost of planting one sapling in Gwadar was more than Rs20,000 keeping in view the severe weather conditions. “Moreover, the survival rate of the plant is less than 50 percent which is a major challenge for making the plantation drive a success.”

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2049453/1-cophc-plant-one-million-trees-gwadar/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 9th TO 15th 2019

SUCCESS OF BAN ON PLASTIC BAGS HINGES ON ALTERNATIVE SOURCES

Imran Ayub Updated September 10, 2019

KARACHI: Although the provincial government is ready to enforce a ban on plastic bags from October, their replacement with the bags made of paper or cloth remains a big challenge for authorities, who are perhaps unaware of the fact that people in Karachi alone use over 10 billion polythene bags per year.

Any success of the campaign against plastic bags would solely depend on massive production of their alternate, officials and industry sources said.

The Sindh government announcement came earlier this month amidst much media fanfare when Chief Minister’s Law Adviser Barrister Murtaza Wahab, who also holds the portfolio of environment and climate change, had vowed that the fresh ban was different from the past ones as it was imposed across the province.

Before making it effective, he had announced, the provincial government would run a massive campaign to convince consumers as well as traders about the benefits of such a step.

But what is needed to be known for the authorities and consumers is the number of plastic bags which are going to be changed with paper of cloth made stuffs.

“Our estimates and even of government institutions are that 55 billion shopping [plastic] bags are being used annually in Pakistan,” said Shoaib Munshi of the Pakistan Plastic Manufacturers Association (PPMA). “Karachi remains the largest user, where 9-10 billion plastic bags are used every year. This is a huge number. To make one billion grocery bags of papers, you need 14 million trees. The ban is not the solution we believe.”

The provincial government, however, sounded firm to implement its decision finding the plastic bags as a key source of causing pollution, garbage mess and the environmental hazards.

Before reaching the decision to ban plastic bags, the authorities claimed to have consulted experts to find justifiable reasons for the sake of a better environment.

“The decision has been taken by the provincial environment department. The provincial government has simultaneously kicked off an awareness campaign about the harms of using plastic bags and in connection with this drive, cloth-made bags have been distributed among people of Karachi to encourage their use,” he said.

But this remains to be seen that how the government executes its plan to replace such a huge quantity of plastic bags with paper or cloth made bags.

“We have proposed that we may produce [plastic bags] up to 60 microns thickness,” said Mr Munshi of the PPMA. “We have asked the government that if they are able to organise collection of all the plastic bags — big and small — from streets and garbage collection stations we are willing to buy the entire waste from them.”

Dr Kauser Ali Syed, head of the department of polymer and petrochemical at the NED University of Engineering Technology, supported the government move since he knew plastic neither disintegrated nor can it be recycled.

He was in agreement with the suggestion that manufacturing thicker plastic bags, weighing a minimum of 60 microns, could help handle the situation to a large extent.

“Currently, plastic bags of 10-20 microns are used. The 60-micron bags will be expensive that would automatically help in reducing the consumption due to higher prices. In our society, we prefer to reuse things which cost more so people will not throw them away as easily they have been doing today,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1504429/success-of-ban-on-plastic-bags-hinges-on-alternative-sources>

SINDH TO SET UP SPECIAL POLICE FORCE TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENT

By Our Correspondent Published: September 12, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has proposed the formation of a separate police force for the implementation of environmental protection laws in the province. Sepa has sent the recommendations for the formation of the environmental police force to the chief minister. The force will be formed after approval from the cabinet.

According to the proposal, the force, comprising 200 personnel will be trained by the Sindh Police Department and would be responsible for ensuring that environmental protection laws in Sindh are followed in letter and spirit.

The proposed police force would have the authority to take penal action against individuals as well as private and public agencies causing environmental pollution. The environmental police will also be authorised to register FIRs, raid and arrest violators of rules under the Environmental Protection Act. Police stations of the environmental police will be established in all divisions of the province. A grade-19 officer will be deputed as the provincial head of the environmental police force, while each division will be supervised by a DSP. Besides, each police station will have one inspector and around 15 police officials. A police mobile will also be provided to each police station.

According to Sepa officials, they have suggested the establishment of two police stations in Karachi. Sepa's secretary, Khan Muhammad Mahar told The Express Tribune that the

environmental police force is being formed in light of the recommendations made by the Judicial Commission on Water and Sanitation. The documentation has been completed in this regard and the appointment process will be started after approval from the CM and the cabinet.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2054361/1-sindh-set-special-police-force-protect-environment/>

PG&E ANNOUNCES \$11 BN SETTLEMENT IN DEADLY CALIFORNIA FIRES

By AFP News 09/14/19 AT 12:47 PM

WASHINGTON: Bankrupt US utility company Pacific Gas and Electric announced Friday it has reached an \$11 billion settlement with insurance companies over the deadly wildfires in California last year blamed on faulty power lines.

The San Francisco-based company said the settlement covers 85 percent of the insurance claims in the 2018 Camp Fire in Northern California — the deadliest in the state’s modern history — that left 86 people dead.

“Today’s settlement is another step in doing what’s right for the communities, businesses, and individuals affected by the devastating wildfires,” PG&E chief Bill Johnson said in a statement.

The blaze ravaged more than 60,000 hectares (153,000 acres) of land and destroyed nearly 19,000 houses and other structures, consuming the small town of Paradise.

PG&E acknowledged that its equipment was to blame for the disaster, and filed for bankruptcy protection in January. Johnson took over the reins in April.

The insurance settlement is part of the bankruptcy reorganization plan, and the company said it would continue to work with individuals to “fairly” resolve their claims.

The company in June reached a settlement with local governments and agencies totaling \$1 billion.

“As we work to resolve the remaining claims of those who’ve suffered, we are also focused on safely and reliably delivering energy to our customers, improving our systems and infrastructure, and continuing to support California’s clean energy goals,” Johnson said. The company’s share price surged 7.5 percent in early trading in New York.—AFP

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/09/14/11-page/800918-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 16th TO 22nd 2019

YET ANOTHER CLEANLINESS DRIVE TO KICK OFF FROM 21ST

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter September 17, 2019

KARACHI: The local government department of Sindh has formally decided to start a cleanliness drive in Karachi from Sept 21 by lifting garbage from the metropolis and transporting it to landfill sites. The drive would gradually be extended to other parts of Sindh.

This was stated by Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah who was talking to media along with provincial Information Minister Saeed Ghani at the Sindh Assembly building here on Monday.

In reply to a question Mr Shah said that at present the capacity of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board was 5,000 tonnes daily which is being increased to lift garbage up to 16,000 tonnes daily so that backlog of garbage dumps can be cleared from the city for which temporary GTS [garbage transfer stations] were being created. After concluding the drive, the GTS would be eliminated from all sites in the city.

The minister also said that all institutions concerned including mayor Karachi, commissioner Karachi, all deputy commissioners, municipal commissioners and chairman DMCs with mutual consultation would formulate strategy and ensure necessary steps to restore its old image as the purpose of all the relevant institutions was to make the city clean.

Before this decision, the people had suffered during monsoon rains in July and August when the city was flooded during several wet spells, which choked the storm-water drains and sewers, paralysing the system.

This resulted in a blame game against each other by different institutions.

LG Minister Nasir Shah has also requested the media to play its role in highlighting lifting of garbage from the city to the landfill sites to dispel the impression of failed local bodies.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1505560/yet-another-cleanliness-drive-to-kick-off-from-21st>

SIX-WEEK LONG CAMPAIGN AGAINST COAL IN SINDH

By Press Release Published: September 18, 2019

KARACHI: The six-week-long 'Peoples' Action Against Coal and for Climate Justice' campaign, organised by the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) will continue till September 30. The PFF has demanded the end of coal imports, of mining and coal power generation in Pakistan.

The campaign against coal comprises of mobilisation for environmental justice, awareness, and sensitisation among all stakeholders including the fishing, peasant and Thar's pastoralist communities, federal and provincial governments, lawmakers, civil society members, NGOs, and others.

Peoples Caravan will travel through different districts of Sindh during the second phase of the campaign. It will cover more 1,000km of distance over 10 days, starting from Karachi Press Club and ending at Hyderabad Press Club. The second phase of the campaign will last from September 20 to September 30.

Initiatives to stop the use of coal have been taken across the world, some of the most notable ones being the 1995 Kyoto Protocols and the more recent Paris Agreement 2016. The initiatives resulted out of a realisation that climate change is a global concern and if the coal industry pays the complete price of electricity generation, the price of electricity will increase three-fold.

During the United Nations Summit, Pakistan had committed to decrease its greenhouse gas emissions by 5 per cent, while at home it is expanding its coal industry.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2058927/1-six-week-long-campaign-coal/>

IBEX MEAT, TROPHIES SEIZED; SEVEN ARRESTED

Correspondent September 20, 2019

HYDERABAD: Wildlife officials arrested seven persons and seized meat and trophies of three ibexes which were hunted illegally in the Khirthar National Park — a protected area — the other day.

The meat belonged to four animals while the wildlife staff seized three trophies as according to the suspects they had lost one while running to avoid arrests. The staff produced meat before a civil court which ordered them to provide it to crocodiles in some zoo. Since the meat had become decomposed, the staff under directive of officers dumped it somewhere in the soil.

The arrests and seizure was confirmed by Hyderabad wildlife department deputy director Wajid Shaikh to Dawn. A case has been registered against the suspects.

According to his information, five ibexes were hunted in the Kamboh Hill area within the Khirthar National Park on Wednesday.

Wildlife conservator Javed Mahar said that a separate case against the suspects for possessing illegal weapons was being lodged at the police station concerned.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1506155/ibex-meat-trophies-seized-seven-arrested>

THAR IDENTIFIED AS ‘VULTURE SAFE ZONE’ IN PAKISTAN

Reporter Updated September 20, 2019

KARACHI: A pre-monsoon survey conducted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Sindh has identified Tharparkar as a major sanctuary for vultures, a scavenging bird species whose population has seen a massive decline in the region, that includes Pakistan.

The survey shows that Thar-parkar is the only place in Sindh with significant numbers of vultures whereas the Khirthar National Park is one of the potential sites where vultures may grow in big numbers.

The survey reports spotting of over 450 white-backed, long-billed, red-headed, and Egyptian vultures in Tharparkar and a much smaller number in the Khirthar range.

“Ninety per cent of the total 535 vultures recorded in the entire Sindh were spotted in and around the surrounding area of Gorano pond that now has turned into a wetland.

“An IUCN team early this year recorded 48 other bird species in the same area, which was created some 50km away from Thar coal mine site,” said Naveed Soomro representing IUCN.

The pond received subsoil saline water pumped out from Thar coal mine, he added.

Asked about the factors attracting different bird species to the area, he said the district facing acute water shortages also experienced frequent droughts. Development of a large water body had changed environmental conditions for birds, including vultures, and many of the species had chosen it as their resting and breeding place, he added.

“The level of TDS (total dissolved solvents) of this water body is high but it does not matter much to birds,” he said, adding that vultures had a long range as they looked for feed and adapted in unique ways to consume dead animals.

The survey recommends creation of vulture safe zones in those areas of Sindh where there exists vulture population. These areas include Tharparkar, Khirthar National Park and Gorakh Hills.

It also recommends alternative drugs for livestock, which are not toxic for vultures, through strict enforcement of a ban maintained by drug regulatory authority on non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, which are found to be harmful for vultures.

These drugs are available for human use and should be clearly labelled with caution that they are not meant for livestock, the survey suggests.

Dr Z.B. Mirza, a renowned bird specialist in Pakistan said the IUCN report included observations on the state of the habitats, particularly of the pasturelands and of the lopped fodder trees.

“Unfortunately, the veterinary drugs that are toxic to vultures are found in use all over Sindh with no awareness on [their] deleterious effects amongst users. There were also signs of significant habitat degradation,” he said.

It is important to mention here that Pakistan is home to eight out of nine vulture species found in Asia. Population of all vulture species has been plummeting since the 1990s and there have been no major signs of any recovery.

The biggest threat to vultures in the region has been identified as the use of veterinary non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs, such as diclofenac, on livestock that transfers to vultures in high volumes when they consume infected animal carcasses.

Diclofenac was banned for use on domestic livestock in Pakistan in 2006. Research in this area has also highlighted the growing threats of habitat degradation, tree lopping and scarcity of food due to changing dead livestock disposal practices.

The survey, part of an ongoing vulture conservation project, was carried out in collaboration with Sindh wildlife department, the Zoological Survey of Pakistan and Baanhn Beli.

It was funded by Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC).

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1506161>

8 FACTORIES SEALED FOR POLLUTION

By APP Published: September 20, 2019

LAHORE: A team from the Environment Protection Department (EPD) sealed eight factories for draining industrial waste underground using wells and contaminating underground water. The units sealed by the department included Cane Engineering Services, Star Laboratory, Latco Engineering, ALCOP Aluminium Company, KOR Tech Auto Industry, KM Foods, Abbot Lab and Munir Agri Factory. Action against the factories was led by EPD Deputy Director Ali Ejaz. Speaking to the media, he stated that the factories were draining industrial waste into underground wells. This industrial waste was also polluting underground water, he added. Meanwhile, EPD teams also sealed Moeed Steel Mill in Wagha Town for using substandard fuel and releasing smoke.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2060570/1-8-factories-sealed-pollution/>

SINDH GOVT LAUNCHES MONTH-LONG ‘CLEAN MY KARACHI’ DRIVE IN ALL DISTRICTS TODAY

Staff Reporter September 21, 2019

KARACHI: A Sindh government campaign to clean up the provincial capital — dubbed ‘Clean My Karachi’ — is starting on Saturday in which over 600 dumper trucks, shovel machines and tractors and 4,000 workers will take part all over the city.

This decision was taken by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, who was presiding over a meeting here on Friday to review arrangements made for the drive.

The chief minister said deputy commissioners had been provided Rs50 million each along with setting up of a temporary Garbage Transfer Stations (GTSs) in their area and the same garbage would be taken to landfill sites of Gondpas and Jam Chakro by the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board from the GTSs.

“What we have to do is to clean it once and for all and hand over the cleaned city to DMCs; they will have to maintain it further,” he added.

The deputy commissioners under the guidance of the chief minister have divided garbage lifting work on sub-division level where the provincial government has provided tractors, loaders, shovels, tractor trolleys and other machinery to deputy commissioners.

The chief minister directed Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Shah to involve all DMCs in the drive.

“I would visit each and every district and will meet chairmen and municipal commissioners in the respective areas,” he said and advised the LG minister to invite Federal Minister Ali Zaidi to visit along with him while adding that “I’ll take the mayor with me”.

He directed the deputy commissioners to try to continue lifting of garbage round the clock so that this gigantic task could be completed within 30 days.

The commissioners were asked to keep monitoring the dumping of garbage in the temporary GTSs so that they could be transferred to the landfill sites in time.

The chief minister tasked the local government minister to form a group of two ministers for each district to monitor the work.

The cleanliness drive will cover all districts — Korangi, Malir, Central, West, East and South.

The meeting was attended by the chief secretary, provincial ministers, city commissioner, local government secretary, all deputy commissioners and other officers concerned.

In a meeting with outgoing Chinese Consul General in Karachi Wang Yu, Murad Ali Shah urged the Chinese CG to continue support for the Sindh government for revival of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project.

“The project has been approved at China Pakistan Economic Corridor-related Joint Cooperation Committee meeting, but it was put on the back burner. Now, I want you to talk to your government to support the Sindh government to construct KCR,” he said.

The chief minister lauded the efforts of the outgoing consul general in implementation of the CPEC projects.

He also thanked the Chinese government for supporting Pakistan’s stance on Kashmir and raising voice against Indian atrocities in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK).

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1506389/sindh-govt-launches-month-long-clean-my-karachi-drive-in-all-districts-today>

CM ORDERS ACTION AGAINST LITTERING AS CAMPAIGN TO CLEAN KARACHI KICKS OFF

Our Correspondent September 22, 2019

During his visit to various areas of Karachi to monitor the provincial government’s cleanliness drive on its first day, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Saturday directed the divisional administration to remove encroachments under the flyovers of the city, impose fines on builders who threw debris on the roads and arrest those who were found throwing trash on the roads.

The CM remarked that those dumping debris and trash on the roadsides would only be deterred from doing that when fines were imposed on them.

Shah was accompanied by his cabinet members, the mayor and others during the over-five-hour-long visit to all the six districts of the city. The chairmen of the District Municipal Corporations and senior superintendents of police received the CM as he arrived in their respective districts.

The CM started the visited from Shireen Jinnah Colony where he asked the Karachi commissioner to direct a builder to remove the debris that had been dumped on the road leading to Ziauddin Hospital. “If the debris is not removed by tomorrow, stop the construction work of the building and impose a heavy fine on him [the builder],” he told the commissioner.

The CM also noticed that manholes were overflowing on the road where the Aga Khan Lab is situated in Clifton Block 2. He directed the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) to resolve the issue by late night or else the engineer concerned would face the music.

At Shireen Jinnah Colony, the CM visited a temporary garbage transfer station (GTS) where garbage lifted from District South was being dumped to be transported later to landfill sites.

From District South, the CM and his team visited District Korangi. They oversaw the cleanliness work in Qayyumabad where garbage was being lifted. Federal Maritime Affairs Minister Ali Zaidi was also present there.

Shah also monitored the cleanliness work in Korangi No 1 and T&T Colony where garbage collected from different areas was being dumped. He also met people present there and listened to their grievances.

He directed the Korangi deputy commissioner (DC) to remove encroachments from the main roads and improve the drainage system with the help of the water board.

After District Korangi, the CM and his companions went to District East where they visited Sohrab Goth and the Jamali Pul area where a temporary GTS has been set up. The CM inspected the work and issued necessary instructions to the administration. He directed the East DC to ensure that no trash was thrown on the roads.

He issued instructions to create Kachra Kundis in the district so that people could throw their trash there.

During the tour of District Central, the CM visited Liaquatabad No 10 where he was received by DMC Central Chairman Reham Hashmi and the Central DC and. Shah witnessed the garbage lifting work in Liaquatabad.

He also visited a ground and directed the DMC chairman and DC to turn the plot into a temporary GTS. Residents of the area told the CM that they usually set garbage on fire to dispose of it but it spread foul smell and smoke in the area.

Talking to the media, the CM said that the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) was established to help the local bodies and use garbage for power generation and production of urea. He added that a power plant in that regard was being set up.

He said when the SSWMB was established, the city was generating 8,000 tons of trash, of which the DMCs used to lift 4,000 tons and that resulted in a huge backlog which went on multiplying day by day.

Talking about the current situation, Shah said the city was generating 16,000 tons of garbage and the DMCs were working with the SSWMB to lift garbage but the backlog was still there.

Responding to a question, Shah said when he saw that the SSWMB and the DMCs had failed to clear the backlog of waste, he decided to intervene.

He said the new cleanliness drive he had launched would be vigorous and continue for 30 days, after which the people would witness the difference.

Talking about the backlog of garbage, the CM said people had earlier started filing applications against the SSWMB, therefore the Supreme Court-mandated judicial commission on water and sanitation raised a number of questions against its performance, after which the provincial government stopped the payment to its contractors.

He added that the performance of the SSWMB was affected during the three-month period of the general elections. All these factors contributed to the current garbage mess of the city, he said.

To another question, the CM said the federal government-backed cleanliness drive could have only 23,000 tons of garbage dumped at the landfill sites, whereas the SSWMB lifted 13,000 tons of waste daily.

He said he would be monitoring the garbage lifting work every day and he had also assigned the monitoring work in this connection to his ministers and the mayor.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/530051-cm-orders-action-against-littering-as-campaign-to-clean-karachi-kicks-off>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 23rd TO 29th 2019

SHC SEEKS DETAILS OF CONTRACT BETWEEN DMCS, CHINESE FIRM

By Our Correspondent Published: September 25, 2019

KARACHI: A two-member bench of the Sindh High Court (SHC) sought details of the agreement signed between the district municipal corporations (DMCs) and the Chinese company, which has been awarded the contract to lift garbage from Karachi, on Tuesday.

While hearing the plea filed against the awarding of the contract to the company, the bench, comprising Justice Syed Azhar Hassan Rizvi and Justice Kausar Sultana, also ordered the petitioner, Bashir Abbasi, to submit details pertaining to the registration of his non-governmental organisation (NGO).

Expressing annoyance over not being provided basic information, the court remarked that the petitioner's counsel had only presented the plea filed against the DMCs. Addressing the petitioner's counsel, Justice Rizvi asked, "Don't you have any problem with the Sindh government, which is responsible for allocating budget and releasing funds?" He also asked whether the petitioner's counsel knew how much money is given to DMCs. Reprimanding the defence lawyer, he said that all the details should be submitted to the court.

Presenting Abbasi's case, the defence lawyer said that the Chinese company was charging billions of rupees but was not doing its job.

The court remarked that "pick and choose" strategy wouldn't work. If you want to file a plea then nominate everyone found to be involved in the case as a party, it said. It also asked about Abbasi's profession and the amount of tax he pays. Abbasi informed the court that he runs an NGO and is a filer.

Apart from the details of Abbasi's NGO, the court also sought particulars of the agreement signed between the DMCs and the Chinese company.

Meanwhile, another bench of SHC, headed by Justice Ahmed Ali Shaikh and comprising Justice Omer Sial, expressed annoyance over the absence of co-accused Iftikhar Qaimkhani's counsel, during the hearing of a bail plea pertaining to the illegal allotment of 198 plots by Syed Mustafa Kamal and others. The court ordered that Qaimkhani's counsel appear before the court at the next hearing under any circumstances.

The assistant lawyer informed the court that the counsel for Qaimkhani was sick and requested an extension, so that the arguments could be presented at a later date. Expressing annoyance, Justice Shaikh remarked, "Do you think we don't understand these tactics?" He warned that the court won't entertain any excuses at the next hearing. The bail would be cancelled if Qaimkhani, or his counsel, didn't not appear at the next hearing, he said.

The court adjourned the hearing till Oct 1, while approving the extension of pre-arrest interim bails of the former city nazim, Mustafa Kamal, and other accused, including Fazalur Rehman, Mumtaz Haider and Nazeer Zardari.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had filed a reference against Kamal and others, alleging that they had illegally allotted 5,500 square yards of land located along Karachi's coast. The land was initially leased to hawkers and shopkeepers in 1980, but was later acquired by DJ builders in 2005, also on lease. According to NAB, Kamal illegally permitted the construction company to build a high-rise building on the land.

In another case, pertaining to the murder of a police constable, Maqsood, in 2010, the court accepted the plea filed against the sentence awarded to the accused, Mateeullah.

A two-member bench, comprising Justice KK Agha and Justice Khadim Hussain Tunio, accepted Mateeullah's plea and annulled the verdict announced by a trial court, which had meted out life imprisonment to the accused along with imposing a fine on him.

The defence lawyer argued before the court that legal requirements pertaining to the identification of the accused, during the identity parade, were not met.

According to the police, Mateeullah had opened fire while police officials were patrolling in Mehmoodabad. As a result, constable Maqsood was killed and another official, Muhammad Aslam, was injured. Police said that Mateeullah was arrested after he was identified by Aslam and a case was registered against him at the Mehmoodabad police station.

Another bench of SHC issued a notice to Khawaja Izharul Hassan over a plea filed regarding the nomination of a private organisation as a party in a case pertaining to fake domiciles. A two-member bench, comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Agha Faisal, heard the plea filed by Hassan.

The plea mentioned that thousands of government jobs have been awarded on the basis of fake domiciles in the past and another 40,000 jobs would be given to those having fake domiciles in the near future. According to the plea, fake domiciles and Permanent Residence Certificates are being issued across Sindh. Furthermore, domiciles for Karachi are issued without considering the address mentioned on CNICs, which is depriving the metropolis' residents of job opportunities, it stated.

Jobs announced by the Sindh government, which should have been awarded to the citizens of Karachi, were being given to others on the basis of domiciles since 2008, it said. The plea sought the formation of a committee, on the orders of SHC, to ensure proper investigation of documents before the issuance of domiciles.

The court adjourned the hearing of the case till October 24.

Published in The Express Tribune, September 25th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2064439/1-shc-seeks-details-contract-dmcs-chinese-firm/>

WRONG POLICIES BLAMED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

By Our Staff Reporter | 9/27/2019 12:00:00 AM

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam on Thursday said wrong policies of successive governments caused environmental degradation, groundwater in particular.

‘Recharge Pakistan’ is one of the five components of the present government’s vision of Clean and Green Pakistan to address recharging the aquifers, he said, chairing a meeting on ‘Recharge Pakistan’ and groundwater depletion in the Ministry of Climate Change.

Pakistan Council for Research and Water Recharge (PCRWR) presented its findings during the meeting. ‘With the help of partners, floodwater and rainwater will be used to recharge underground aquifers,’ said the adviser.

Representatives from PCRWR told the meeting that they had established their offices all across the country with seven regional and 18 sub-regional setups.

They were conducting their work keeping in mind Pakistan Water Vision 2025, Sustainable Development Goals, National Water Policy 2018 and National Water Research Agenda 2016-2025.

The adviser was told that Pakistan’s freshwater was fast depleting because of unregulated pumping.

More than 93 per cent of pumpedwater was being used for agricultural purposes while 90pc of the drinking water and almost all the industrial water were being extracted from ground sources.

Pakistan’s 40pc of cultivable land is arid while government’s policies towards arid agriculture have worsened the situation.

The PCRWR was told to come up with solutions, especially to water management, rainwater harvesting and improving water quality.

The meeting learnt that PCRWR had developed freshwater maps for the country at the depth of 1-50 metres and 51-100 metres. Its representatives also said they were using NASA’s technology called GRACE for this purpose.

The technology made real time monitoring of the underground freshwater aquifers possible. The meeting was also informed about water recharge technology and freshwater skimming technology for water pumping.

Heavy pumping of water in Indian Punjab and pollutants in Indian controlled rivers also came under discussion.

The adviser said the government was already working with China under CPEC for groundwater recharge and a working group was already in place. He said World Wildlife Fund (WWF) was also facilitating the government of Pakistan in a similar project.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=27_09_2019_004_007

MINISTER URGES INDUSTRIALISTS TO INTRODUCE SUBSTITUTE OF PLASTIC BAGS

RECORDER REPORT September 29, 2019

FAISALABAD: Use of plastic bag will be banned while efforts are already afoot for systematic and planned tree plantation to overcome the environmental pollution. However, industrialists must come forward to introduce substitute of plastic bags with environment friendly and degradable bags, said State Minister for Climate Change Madam Zartaj Gul.

She was addressing a function in Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI) here today. She said that climate change is a very vast, complicated but most important subject. This ministry has been devolved under 18th amendment but because of its importance, the provinces are still answerable to the federation as regards environment pollution. She explained global warming and its possible long term impacts on overall environment and said that Pakistan has no role in global warming but it has to bear the consequences of global warming perpetrated by some developed countries and super powers. As regards, danger zone, Pakistan is ranked 7th and in this connection deaths due to earth quacks, floods and heat waves in Karachi are matter of concern. She said that fundamentally Pakistan is an agrarian country and production of different crops had declined due to global warming.

Continuing, she said that 70 percent people are deprived of clean potable water. She said that she has to work not only to introduce her ministry but also to give better results to save the coming generations. She said that no environment related survey was conducted during last 70 years and now she has to manage it to formulate future environment related policies.

She said that Karachi, Lahore and Faisalabad are the dirtiest cities of Pakistan where people are falling prey to serious and complicated diseases. She also pointed out the coming smog season and said that government and industrialists must work closely to overcome this threat. She said that there are 30,000 industrial electricity connections in Pakistan but only 44 units had made arrangements to treat their waste water. She said that PTI government is working seriously and devotedly to solve the pending backlog in addition to introducing corruption free system in the country. "There may be a delay in our delivery but no one can blame us for corruption", she added. She said the working of various government departments has also improved considerably as common man has now direct access to highest level through Prime Minister Portal.

Responding to problems identified by the President FCCI, she said that government had clamped ban on use of plastic bags in Islamabad. "I have talked to Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar and he will be ready to ban on use of plastic bags in the province," she asked the industrialists to introduce new technology to replace the plastic bags. "In this connection, my ministry is ready to provide maximum guidance and incentive," she added. She assured that PTI government will also formulate a new policy to ban residential colonies in industrial areas in order to save the residents from industrial pollution and repeated relocation of industrial units. She welcomed the plantation of one lac saplings by FCCI but said these are not sufficient as all the corporate houses are bound to spend 3 percent of their income on local communities under their social corporate responsibility. She also welcomed the offer of tree plantation on available state land by industrialists and said that government will facilitate them. She also welcomed a proposal to set up Forest Development Authority to undertake this gigantic task.

On the occasion, Director Environment told that well planned M3 industrial city is being established on 4500 acres of land while NOC for Allama Iqbal Industrial Estate is under process. "This industrial estate will be established over 3300 acres of land", he told. He said that Faisalabad is the only city where waste water treatment plant is working for the last many years in Chakera. Regards smog, he told that sizing units using cheap waste as fuel which is the main cause of smog in Faisalabad.

However, he told that 70 percent units have already installed wet scrapper to control the environmental pollution. He further told that major export houses are situated on Khurrianwal-Jarnwal road. Out of these 24 have already installed secondary waste treatment plants while remaining have primary treatment facility.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/09/29/2-page/803216-news.html>

October 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEP 30th TO OCT 6th 2019

SINDH GOVERNMENT IMPOSES ‘COMPLETE BAN’ ON PLASTIC BAGS

RECORDER REPORT OCT 1ST, 2019

KARACHI: Adviser to chief minister on Environment Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Monday said a complete ban on manufacturing, sale, purchase and use of non-degradable plastic bags of all size has been imposed with effect from October 1, 2019.

The provincial adviser told this responding to a query raised by Sindh Chief Minister in the meeting of Sindh Cabinet here, said a statement. He said that only Oxo biodegradable plastic/ shopping bags of different size, 10 into 14 to 30 into 40 with weight of 6 to 28 grams of 40 micron to 30 micron, single side would be manufactured, sold and used. The chief minister directed his adviser to meet with manufacturers and sellers and take them into confidence for enforcement of the ban.

The Sindh cabinet directed the Karachi Water & Sewerage Board (KW&SB) to implement water and sewerage services charges/tariff as has been approved by the government in 2016.

The water board has implemented the enhancement of nine percent enhancement of its tariff for consumers of all categories. The provincial cabinet also approved enhancement of fees of Gratis Arms Licence (non-Prohibited Bore) from Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000, on the request of Sindh Home department to meet out the expenditures of scanning, lamination, printing, electricity, stationary, software development consumed in issuance of such computerised licences.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/10/20191001522876/>

EPA DISTRIBUTES FREE BIO-DEGRADABLE BAGS

By Our Correspondents Published: October 2, 2019

RAWALPINDI / ISLAMABAD: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) distributed biodegradable plastic bags in different schools and offices on Tuesday.

The agency has received these environment friendly bags from big companies as a gift.

On the occasion, EPA Director Amin Baig said that non-degradable plastic bags were creating problems for the environment as they choked drains and gutters. He added that it was high time to replace non-degradable plastic bags with degradable ones.

He pleaded the students to create awareness amongst their parents regarding the hazards of non-degradable plastic bags and compel them to stop using it for the sake of the environment.

The usage of non-degradable plastic is high in the country despite a ban on the manufacturing, purchasing and selling of non-degradable plastic bags. According to a survey report of EPA, as many as 55 billion plastic bags are used per year in Pakistan while the amount of plastic use is increasing by 15 per cent each year. The report disclosed that more than 8,000 plastic manufacturing units are present in Pakistan with an average daily production capability of 250kg-500kg.

Further, this industry provides direct employment to some 0.2 million people whereas it is the source of bread and butter of some 0.6 million people indirectly. The challenge of weaning away from single-use plastic shoppers is great but it has to be surmounted for the long term benefit of the country and the plant, the EPA director said.

After the federal capital imposed complete ban on single use plastic bags in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) polythene bags dubbed with a stamp of degradable thronged the markets of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

These plastic bags were the same polythene sacks which were being banned in the federal capital after August 14; however, this time these bags had a distinct stamp which was confusing the masses.

Ministry of Climate Change Senior Official told APP that these bags were spurious and non-degradable plastic bags where the ministry would take up this issue with district administration of Rawalpindi.

He said that no such move would be allowed to spoil the environment and obliterate the law imposed in ICT. "The menace of plastic bags has become a threat to our cities as it is resulting in urban flooding and also having hazardous impacts on human health," he added.

He added that the ministry's inspection team had managed to get over 95 percent compliance of the ban whereas few incidents of violation might occur in the suburbs of the federal capital. No tolerance would be observed against such elements, the official noted.

Naseem, shopkeeper that if the government was offering alternates it should have been introduced prior to the ban.

This would have helped to ensure the ban being imposed swiftly without resistance at the public people, however, at present we mostly face problem in managing those alternate or biodegradable bags.

Interestingly, Zafar Niazi shared his experience of 35-year in doing shop keeping business. He said around 35-40 years back there was khaki paper bags used to sale culinary, non-food and eatable items which should be revived to fill the gap of plastic bags.

An environmentalist talking to APP said, "The people around the globe could be consuming five grammes of minute plastic particles every week, equal to the weight of a credit card," while quoting the latest research by global scientists and the University of Newcastle in Australia that revealed shocking impacts of plastic bags.

The research claimed traces of polymer coming mostly from tap and especially bottled water, nearly invisible bits of it were also found in shellfish, beer and salt, he said.

He mentioned the worldwide study, “The findings, drawn from 52 peer-reviewed studies, are the first to estimate the sheer weight of plastics consumed by individual humans: about 250 grammes, or half-a-pound, over the course of a year.

“It was necessary to disseminate these studies to the public as a different study worked out that the average American eats and drinks in about 45,000 plastics particles smaller than 130 microns annually, while breathing in roughly the same number, he said adding, “This will motivate masses to shun plastic bag use as unless you make a person realize the severity of a hazard no output could be achieved in that regard.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2070013/1-epa-distributes-free-bio-degradable-bags/>

OUR PLASTIC PROBLEM

Editorial Updated October 03, 2019

THE Sindh government’s decision to enforce a province-wide ban on the manufacturing, sale and use of plastic bags shows there is a growing awareness among legislators about the importance of safeguarding the environment and public health.

Alongside the ban, an awareness campaign has been launched, and cloth bags distributed among some of Karachi’s residents. This is not the first time the provincial government has attempted to ban plastic bags. In fact, the Sindh Prohibition of Non-degradable Plastic Products (Manufacturing, Sale and Usage) Rules and the Sindh Environmental Protection Act have existed since 2014.

Just last year, the Sindh cabinet issued a notification on the use of polythene and plastic bags, which was to come into effect in phases within three months. But such a move was never successfully implemented. A similarly unsuccessful attempt had been made back in 2006, with the passing of the Sindh Prohibition on Manufacture, Sale and Use of Polythene Bags Ordinance.

The Pakistan Plastic Manufacturers Association estimates that approximately 55bn plastic bags are used in the country each year. Other estimates place the figure well over 100bn. While banning plastic remains a massive challenge, coordinated efforts amongst the various provinces may ease the burden.

On Aug 14, in an attempt to limit the damage, the Islamabad Capital Territory too placed a ban on the use of single-use plastic, which was expectedly met with resistance from various stakeholders. Unfortunately, whenever such a ban has been announced, there have been protests from the retail and manufacturing industries, which employ tens of thousands. This was witnessed on Tuesday, when scores of workers in Lahore held demonstrations against the government for potentially rendering them jobless.

The government must ensure that does not happen, and compensate workers and manufacturers and give them viable, long-term alternatives. Otherwise, in its attempt to do good in the long run, it might just end up creating a bigger problem for itself in the short term.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1508718/our-plastic-problem>

FOUR ILLEGAL CRUSHING PLANTS SEALED

Correspondent October 05, 2019

QUETTA: The Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and district administration jointly conducted raids in the eastern bypass area of Quetta and sealed illegal crushing plants.

Officials said on Thursday that a team headed by Special Magistrate Bahadur Khan and EPA Inspector Asmat Shah raided the illegal crushing plants involved in spreading pollution in the eastern bypass area. "All the four illegal crushing plants have been sealed," EPA officials said, adding that plants were closed down under the Environment Act, 2012.

The action was taken in accordance with the orders of the Supreme Court and directives of Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan Alyani.

All the divisional commissioners have been directed to take stern action against illegal crushing plants in their jurisdictions, which were causing distress to the environment. The campaign aims to control rapid increase of air pollution.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1509064/four-illegal-crushing-plants-sealed>

PUBLIC HOSPITALS HAVE NO IDEA ON HOW TO DISPOSE OF THEIR WASTE

By Tufail Ahmed Published: October 5, 2019

KARACHI: There had been a great hue and cry in Karachi and other parts of Pakistan after pictures and videos of tonnes of medical waste that washed up on Sea View beach circulated on social media last month.

During a regular morning stroll along the beach, Karachi resident Shaneira Akram saw heaps of medical waste, including used syringes, drips, cannulas, blood and urine bags and used swabs and bandages, along the shoreline.

After Akram took to her Twitter account and requested the authorities to cordon off the area, prompt action was taken by the police and the municipal authorities to start a cleanliness drive.

This was, however, not a one-off incident of negligence as the disposal and treatment of medical waste has been a long-standing problem in Pakistan – one that poses a high risk of jeopardising the health of staffers, patients, disposal workers and anyone else coming into contact with the often hazardous materials discarded by hospitals and other healthcare facilities.

Medical waste can include a wide range of hazardous materials, such as infectious waste, anatomical and pathological waste, obsolete or expired chemical products and pharmaceuticals, radioactive materials and so-called "sharps" – medical instruments or devices that are no longer used.

To top it all off, there is no readily-available data of disposable waste being generated by each patient's bed in public hospitals to assess the overall quantity of the waste and how it could potentially cause danger if not treated or disposed of in the required manner.

"Throwing untreated medical waste into the sea or out in the open may give rise to diseases and, sadly, there is no institute in Pakistan through which statistics and figures of medical waste can be gathered to assess the gravity of the situation," Dr Asim F Belgaumi, Chief Medical Officer at the Aga Khan University Hospital (AKUH), told The Express Tribune.

According to sources, the hospitals that come under the provincial department of health and the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) do not even have a record of the amount of waste being produced by them per day, while according to health experts, a single bed in a hospital produces approximately two to three kilograms of disposable waste on a daily basis.

Of all the public hospitals in Sindh, only five teaching hospitals have standard operating procedures to dispose of waste using scientific methods, including sterilisation and incineration. These hospitals include the Jinnah Postgraduate and Medical Centre, Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital and Lyari Hospital in Karachi, and Liaquat Hospital and Benazir Bhutto University Hospital in Larkana.

On the other hand, 37 hospitals that come under the administration of the KMC and the Sindh health department still use 'traditional' methods to dispose of medical waste.

While in some hospitals, medical waste is 'recycled' by an organised group through sanitary workers, other hospitals have no standard procedures to treat the waste. In fact, how and where the waste is dumped is not even known.

These hospitals include the Sindh Government Hospital New Karachi, Sindh Government Urban Health Centre North Karachi, Sindh Government Liaqatabad Hospital, Sindh Government Saudabad Hospital, Sindh Government Ibrahim Hyderi Hospital, Sindh Government Children Hospital North Karachi, Sindh Government Qatar Hospital, the Institute of Skin Diseases Regal Karachi, the Institute of Heart Diseases, and Sobraj Maternity Hospital, among others.

According to the International Institute of Health, 90 per cent of medical waste generated by hospitals is deemed harmless but the remaining 10 per cent is regarded as dangerous which can cause various infections. If not disposed of scientifically, all medical waste can be hazardous.

In 2005, the Sindh government crafted rules regarding the scientific disposal of medical waste, while in 2012, the rules were amended under the Environmental Protection Act of 1997. According to the rules, medical waste must be dumped in secure places according to scientific techniques. Despite the existence of the law, however, most hospitals do not follow the rules.

Dr Belgaumi, who is also a professor at the Hematology and Oncology department in AKUH, said that following the international laws, the AKUH has installed various dustbins within the facility where infected waste is dumped.

"The needle of used syringes is first clipped using a clipper and then put in a separate box, while other types of waste generated by the hospital is dumped in other dustbins," he explained. "Hazardous waste is treated into an insulator before being dumped."

He stressed that the disposal of medical waste is a serious issue and there is a dire need to raise awareness among hospital staff and the public about it.

"Disposing of medical waste in a non-scientific manner can transfer viruses and bacteria from one place to another. Besides spreading awareness, the provincial department of health should also form an institute that could maintain data regarding medical waste," Dr Belgaumi concluded.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2072696/1-public-hospitals-no-idea-dispose-waste/>

SINDH GOVERNOR HANDS OVER GARBAGE-LIFTING TROLLEYS TO MPA

Our Correspondent October 6, 2019 Karachi

Karachi: Sindh Governor Imran Ismail on Friday handed over three motorcycle-driven trolleys, five trolleys and other equipment to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) Syed Imran Ali Shah to lift garbage.

The trolleys and the equipment were donated by Rotary Club (Platinum Karachi) for cleanliness campaign in the areas of the constituency PS-129.

While talking to the media on the occasion, the governor said that garbage lifting from the city was the responsibility of the provincial government and municipal bodies of the city. He said that only an empowered local government could better resolve the issues of the city.

Ismail said the present government wanted all the parties to work together to solve the problems of the city. In response to a question, he said that the looted public money would be brought back and the National Accountability Bureau was playing its role in this regard.

Replying to a question about the march announced by Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the governor said that the government would fulfill its constitutional role in this regard.

Replying to another question about development projects in the city, he said that five centre-funded projects would be inaugurated soon while other development projects were also being finalised.

About the local government system, Ismail said that working under a single authority in the city was the need of the hour and the federal government was ready to cooperate, adding that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had a better local government system, which is a good example for other provinces.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/536995-sindh-governor-hands-over-garbage-lifting-trolleys-to-mpa>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 7th TO 13th 2019

WAHAB URGES CITIZENS TO HELP IMPLEMENT PLASTIC BAN IN SINDH

By Our Correspondent Published: October 7, 2019

KARACHI: The Chief Minister's Adviser on Law, Environment, Climate change and Coastal Development Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that citizens should support the provincial government in the implementation of the ban on plastic bags.

Speaking on the occasion of 'World Habitat Day', Wahab said that it was not possible to impose any restriction without the cooperation of the people.

He requested citizens to voluntarily avoid the use of plastic bags for the betterment of the environment, adding that with a little effort, we could get used to using cloth and paper bags.

The World Habitat Day is observed on October 7 each year. The idea is to raise awareness among people about cities and villages and convince them to make their surroundings sustainable. This year, the theme of World Habitat Day is “Technology is the advanced way to convert garbage into wealth” (Kachra ko dolat main badalna ka lia technology aik jadeed tariqa ha).

Barrister Wahab also warned the factories involved in polluting the environment, especially those melting tyres and batteries for wires, to avoid flouting environmental laws or else strict action would be taken by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) against them.

Meanwhile, a team of SEPA officials raided illegal workshops that were melting battery lead in Ittehad Town. The lead-in batteries is melted over fire in an open area at these workshops. The process is severely affecting the health of people in the surroundings and also polluting the environment, said SEPA.

The team, headed by SEPA Deputy Director Waris Ali Gabol, sealed several workshops that were extracting lead out of the batteries. A police party was also present with the team during the operation.

According to SEPA officials, none of the sealed workshops were registered with SEPA and all of them were being run illegally. These workshops were openly violating environmental laws.

The complaints regarding the offence were received from the citizens through the PM’s citizen portal.

SEPA officials said that the pollution spread through extracting the lead out of batteries is extremely poisonous for health.

Barrister Wahab said that several mafias are involved in this illegal business and they are playing with the lives of people.

“This business is seriously injurious to health and the people who are in this business are damaging their own health too,” said Wahab.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2073667/1-wahab-urges-citizens-help-implement-plastic-ban-sindh/>

SINDH GOVT PROPOSES THIRD LANDFILL SITE

By Vakeel Rao Published: October 8, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh government has decided to set up another landfill site for the disposal of garbage accumulated in the city. The land set aside for this purpose is on the Dhabeji site. The proposed site will be on around 3,000 acres of land.

According to Local Government Secretary Roshan Ali Shaikh, blocks will be specified to separate different kinds of garbage brought to the Dhabeji landfill site. Besides, a project will be initiated through public private partnership to generate electricity through garbage, added Sheikh. He claimed that the proposed site could collect around 150 years’ worth of garbage from the city and would be the biggest landfill site in Pakistan. “The land for the site has been acquired. It will be the most unique landfill site in the world as we plan to establish a mini forest on the site. Thousands of neem trees will be planted which will keep the poisonous gases emitting from the garbage from leaving the site,” he claimed.

There are currently two landfill sites, namely Jam Chakro and Gond Pass, for the garbage collected in Karachi daily. There are garbage transfer stations built on various locations as well and temporary transfer stations have also been set up for the provincial government's 'Clean My Karachi' campaign.

However, the capacity of the existing landfill sites has decreased sufficiently given the heaps of accumulated garbage hence a third site has been proposed.

Around 12,000 to 15,000 tonnes of garbage is reportedly collected from the city and brought to the existing landfill sites daily.

According to Sheikh, in September alone around 257,000 tonnes of garbage was brought to the landfill sites.

He said that nearly 18,500 tonnes of garbage is being brought to the sites daily when the collective capacity of the two sites was at barely 5,000 tonnes previously.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2074448/1-sindh-govt-proposes-third-landfill-site/>

SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

By Editorial Published: October 9, 2019

Recent reports suggest that the World Bank has agreed to work with the Sindh government to make the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) more effective. The news that Sindh has a garbage collection body comes as a surprise for many Pakistanis. Most people, who have had the pleasure of passing by the Korangi River, would dismiss the report as fake news, but it is true. The SSWMB is indeed a real organisation with real staff. It is just difficult to prove whether or not it actually does any work. The board has had more than enough time to become effective, yet it has been unable to expand beyond Karachi. Little surprise that even the courts have been unimpressed by its performance.

The agreement with the World Bank would increase SSWMB's capacity in a phased expansion across Sindh. The first phase would see work start in divisional headquarters and then in district headquarters. It is highly unfortunate that even this had not been initiated by the incumbent provincial government, which has ruled the province for over a decade. The World Bank's country chief has said that solid waste management experts will help the Sindh government prepare a detailed plan to improve the body in terms of management and efficiency in solid waste disposal, while also making it self-sufficient. This will be challenging, as media reports suggest the board has outsourced much of its work in Karachi to Chinese companies at several times the rates charged by local operators.

The performance of the foreign companies also comes into question as the garbage problems that have plagued the city for years are still very much there. As for shifting garbage to dumps, half of the city's garbage transfer stations are not even operational, according to a media report last month. Also, the previous SSWMB head had claimed that the board had been given less than half of its allocated budgets in the past two years, which would imply that cleanliness is not next to godliness in the eyes of the government.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2075109/6-solid-waste-disposal/>

CM WANTS KARACHI'S CLEANLINESS DRIVE BE EXPEDITED

By RECORDER REPORT on October 10, 2019

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has directed district administration of Karachi to expedite on-going cleanliness drive and submit their proposals for making it sustainable, otherwise the entire exercise would fail to create an impact.

He said this on Wednesday while presiding over a meeting on on-going garbage lifting drive here at CM House. The meeting was attended by chief secretary Mumtaz Shah, the provincial ministers, advisors and special assistants assigned monitoring work of the drive, secretary local government Roshan Shaikh, commissioner Karachi Iftikhar Shahalwani, MD SSWMA Asif Ikram, MD Water Board Asadullah Khan, all six deputy commissioners and others.

The chief minister was told that from September 21 to October 8, 2019 total 450,896.51 tonnes of garbage has been lifted by deputy commissioners and the Solid Waste Management. Only Solid Waste Management has lifted 205,805.51 tonnes from temporary GTS and dumped it at landfill sites.

The DC Central has almost cleared the entire backlog and was assigned to have another round all over his district to remove remaining trash, if any. The chief minister directed DC Central to find out suitable points where dustbin could be constructed.

The deputy commissioner Malir said that he has cleaned around 75 percent garbage from his area and still he has to continue his drive. He said that he has constructed some dustbins even then people prefer throwing their trash on the main road. The chief minister appreciated his tree plantation along with garbage lifting work.

DC East in his report said that his entire district has been cleaned and somewhere in the area new garbage heaps were emerging. At this the chief minister asked him to activate his DMC and monitor performance of SSWMA. "It becomes the duty of DMC concerned to ensure proper cleaning by SSWMA," he said.

DC Malir said that his district was worst in terms of garbage heaps but with his constant efforts he has cleaned main roads of Bhains Colony, Malir 15 and rural areas. He said that he has constructed some dustbins even then people prefer throwing their trash on the main road. The chief minister directed the DC Malir to start tree plantation on the main road of Bhais Colony and also wash the bridges located in his district. "I don't want to see dust and trash lying on or along the roads," he said.

Shah directed Minister Katchi Abadies Murtaza Baloch to personally monitor cleanliness work by involving DMC Malir and Karachi District Council.

DC South said that their district have almost been cleared but some shopkeepers and food streets at Boating basin and other areas were throwing their trash on the roads when they close their shops at night.

The chief minister giving clean instruction to the Commissioner directed him to inform all the builders to remove their debris on their own. He said that those who refuse seal their buildings and stop their construction work.

CM also directed the DCs to ensure that every shopkeeper must put a dustbin at the gate of his shop where they and their customers put the trash. "I am directing you to start imposing fine who violate the code of conduct of throwing trash," he said.

The minister pointed out that some of the roads which have developed craters and have overflowing gutters did not give clean look despite lifting garbage from the area. At this the chief minister directed MD Water Board to start improving their sewerage system. "First you have to improve you sewerage lines and then I would start construction of roads there," he said.

The chief minister directed local government Minister to direct Water board to prepare a detailed over hauling plan

of sewerage system and submit that to him in the next meeting.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/10/10/529076/cm-wants-karachis-cleanliness-drive-be-expedited/>

SEAFOOD EXPORT GROWS BY 23PC IN JULY-AUG

RECORDER REPORT October 11, 2019

KARACHI: Pakistan grew its seafood export by 23.09 percent to \$36.393 million in July-Aug 2018-19 as fishermen continue to haul fisheries catch in the prime period, according to official figures.

Increase in the seafood export now stands at \$6.828 million in July-Aug 2018-19 from \$29.565 million in July-Aug 2017-18, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics said. Shrimps and fish species of export quality are landing with a better prospect, fishermen said.

Seafood export in term of volume also surged by 32.20 percent or 4,056 metric tonnes to 16,652 metric tonnes in July-Aug 2018-19 from 12,596 metric tonnes in July-Aug 2017-18.

In Aug 2019, Pakistan exported \$18.814 million of seafood, which is 6.17 percent higher or \$1.093 million comparing to their export of \$17.721 million in Aug 2018.

Export volume of seafood export went up by 3 percent or 210 metric tonnes to 7,926 metric tonnes in Aug 2019 from 7,716 metric tonnes in Aug 2018.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/10/11/3-page/804942-news.html>

IS PUNJAB GOVT READY TO TACKLE SMOG?

By Afzal Talib Published: October 12, 2019

LAHORE: Like every year, the Punjab government is starting to take measures to tackle hazy skies ahead of the impending smog situation. Smog, a mixture of fog and smoke, dominates many parts of the province, impairing visibility, creating pollution and causing a host of health problems for locals.

Fog is a natural phenomenon in the winter, but climate change, air pollution and dust have started to produce smog instead. The prevailing circumstances, during the winter months, have left a question mark hanging over the performance of the Punjab Environmental Protection Department.

The sedimentary layer, called smog, rises to about 80 to 130 feet above the ground and makes it difficult for the sun's rays to reach the earth. The situation eventually starts to irritate the eyes and throats of people in the vicinity.

There is no means to reduce or end this menace in Lahore — or anywhere else in the country — except for rain. This smog situation persists from the late October to November and ends in December after the rains; as has been the case for the past few years.

Punjab Environmental Protection Department (PEPD) Deputy Director Muhammad Ali says notices have been issued to 200 factories and Section 144 has been imposed. "Police are taking action against smoke-generating vehicles, while other departments, including the local government, are supporting the pollution campaign to prevent smog," he said. Ali adds there is no method to reduce smog or eliminate it altogether, while authorities are trying their best to control pollution.

PEPD officers have started taking action against owners of smoke-emitting factories, vehicles and brick kilns across the province.

According to statistics, there are more than 10,000 factories polluting the air with their smoke in the 36 districts of the province. At these manufacturing units, not only the smoke, but plastic being burnt by them is proving hazardous for human health. The most affected cities are Lahore, Gujranwala and Sheikhpura.

There are about 800 steel mills, furnace oil factories and brick kilns in Lahore, along with more than 2.2 million vehicles emitting toxic smoke.

Besides, the crop around the city is also adversely affected as it is bereft of sunlight. Observers find it pitiful that workers of government departments burn garbage which causes air pollution. Also, the use of construction material in an open environment causes pollution. Environmental experts stress that in order to solve these problems on a more permanent basis, there is a need for coordination and better performance from the respective departments, including the PEPD.

In preparation for the winter and smog season, Section 144 has been imposed on the burning of crops, garbage and rubber. In addition to this, farmers have been warned to stop the burning of trash.

The traffic police have been tasked to take action against smoke-emitting vehicles. In this respect, the Punjab Education Department will launch awareness campaigns in schools and colleges to prevent pollution. The PEPD will continue operations against derelict factories and brick kilns.

A deadline was issued to the brick kiln owners to install the latest technology, but not even 10% of them adhered to it. It has been recommended that all government departments fulfill their duty and implement the policies to eliminate pollution. Another worrying factor is that trees have been cut across the province, including Lahore, with complete impunity.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2077659/1-punjab-govt-ready-tackle-smog/>

NEW SURVEY TO MONITOR AQUATIC BIRDS' POPULATION

By Asif Mehmood Published: October 12, 2019

LAHORE: The Punjab Wildlife department has decided to conduct a survey of the upcoming arrival of seasonal aquatic birds in the province.

The Midwinter Waterfowl Count and Houbara Bustard survey will be launched in the second week of December. Survey reports will be sent to the International Waterfowl Research Bureau (IWRB) and the Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB). Faisalabad Wildlife Research and Training Centre will conduct the survey.

According to reports, the number of migratory birds is decreasing every year due to hunting and climate change.

In this regard, Punjab Wildlife Protection Department Director Muhammad Naeem Bhatti said that the survey of birds will start from mid-December. "This survey is conducted every year and is known as the Midwinter Waterfall Count."

He added that the survey will look at the types of aquatic birds migrating to the province and the number of flocks at reservoirs, lakes, and rivers. "The survey reports, consisting of the data about migratory birds, will be recorded and sent to the IWRB and the AWB."

The director revealed that according to an organisation of hunters of migrant birds, the number of migrant birds coming to Pakistan is dwindling every year. "The decrease in migratory birds is due to illegal hunting of the birds, rapid climate change and a lack of wetlands and reservoirs."

He maintained that effective measures are being taken, collectively, by Wildlife authorities, Organisation for Saving Aquatic Birds and non-governmental organisations to prevent illegal poaching.

The director further said that a survey of Houbara Bustard will also start from the second week of December, under the direction of the Houbara Bustard Commission. "The survey will be completed within a week in Cholistan, Thar and other areas including Dera Ghazi Khan."

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2077669/3-new-survey-monitor-aquatic-birds-population/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 14th TO 20th 2019

C40 MEMBERS ASSURE KARACHI MAYOR OF SUPPORT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

By Newsdesk Published: October 14, 2019

Members of the C40 Global Mayors Summit assured Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar of providing financial and technical support to deal with climate change and improve environmental conditions in Karachi, during the summit's seventh session held at Copenhagen from October 9 to October 12.

The assurance came in response to Akhtar's request to lend support for environmental management in Karachi.

Earlier at the summit, Akhtar highlighted the major environmental issues faced in Karachi, including air pollution, noise pollution, visual pollution, thermal pollution, lack of proper waste management infrastructure and degradation of water bodies.

Stating that Karachi is lagging behind in the area of environmental management, he requested the summit's members to extend financial and technical support for environmental management in the city.

On the sidelines of the summit, Akhtar met the mayors of other metropolises and invited them to visit Karachi.

The summit was attended by over 70 mayors of different metropolises as well as global decision makers, business executives, scientists and citizens of different countries. The attendees committed to actively participating in and initiating ventures to combat climate change and devising solutions for creating more livable settlements.

The C40 World Mayors Summit is a series of symposiums where member cities share innovative solutions to combat climate change and reduce greenhouse emissions. Over the past decade, C40 has convened six mayor summits, hosted by London in 2005, New York in 2007, Seoul in 2009, Sao Paulo in 2014 and Mexico City in 2016. However, it was for the first time in the seventh C40 Global Mayors Summit, 2019, hosted in Copenhagen, that citizens too attended the event.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2078810/1-c40-members-assure-karachi-mayor-support-environmental-management/>

AIR POLLUTION CAUSED 400,000 PREMATURE EUROPEAN DEATHS IN 2016: AGENCY

Reuters Updated October 17, 2019

BRUSSELS: Poor air quality caused about 400,000 premature deaths in Europe in 2016, the most recent year data is available, and almost every city-dwelling European is exposed to pollution levels that exceed healthy levels, according to a report on Wednesday.

“Air pollution is currently the most important environmental risk to human health,” the European Environment Agency (EEA), the EU’s health agency, said in the report.

The report’s author, EEA air quality expert Alberto Gonzalez Ortiz, said that while the level of dangerous particles in European cities was dropping, it was not dropping fast enough.

“We have not yet reached the EU standards and of course we are far from reaching the WHO (World Health Organisation) standards,” Ortiz said.

EU law currently requires countries to assess the level, notably in urban areas, of a range of pollutants, including ozone and particulate matter, and take action if certain limits are hit.

Particle pollution in cities has become the target of tougher restrictions after the EU’s top court ruled in June that cities needed to act if pollution levels were exceeded in a single black spot rather than based on an average across a region.

In July, the European Commission, the EU’s executive body, asked the EU’s Court of Justice to take action against Spain and Bulgaria over their poor air quality, warning the countries were failing to protect citizens against pollution.

EU limits are set per pollutant and in 2017, 16 out of the EU's 28 member states reported at least one case of levels of nitrogen dioxide, a poisonous gas in car exhaust, being higher than the legal EU annual mean concentration. This list includes France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Germany and Britain.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1511315/air-pollution-caused-400000-premature-european-deaths-in-2016-agency>

DC FOR COORDINATED EFFORTS TO CONTROL SMOG PROBLEM

By RECORDER REPORT on October 20, 2019

Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali has directed for mobilizing coordinated efforts to control the possible situation of smog during the current season and performance reports be submitted regularly in this regard.

He was presiding over a meeting of District Anti Smog Committee which was held here to review the arrangements of different departments regarding the control of smog and raising the awareness among the public to avoid its injurious affects.

The Deputy Commissioner stressed upon taking long terms and short terms measures for controlling the smog on permanent basis. He ordered for taking stern action against the excessive smog emitting factories and vehicles and said the ban on burning solid waste and stubbles should be got implemented in letter and spirit.

He said awareness campaign must be continued to sensitize the people against the threats of smog. He directed the ACs to follow the coordinated strategy against the smog and concerned departments be motivated for taking administrative and preventive measures to avoid smog.

During the meeting, DD Environment gave briefing about steps taken for control the possible situation of smog. ADCG Mian Aftab Ahmad, ACs and other officers were also present.

Meanwhile, the meeting of District Emergency Response Committee for Anti Dengue was held at DC office which was jointly presided by Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali and Adviser to CM Punjab for Sports Malik Umer Farooq. MPA Latif Nazar was also attended the meeting. Deputy Commissioner directed the ACs for holding Tehsil Emergency Response Committee meeting on daily basis and reviewed the performance of departments in connection with anti dengue.

He said the officers of concerned departments should be active in field to achieve the desire results of the anti dengue campaign. He asked for submitting departmental performance reports regarding surveillance and prevention activities daily.

He cleared that the carelessness and dereliction from duties should not be tolerated and stern action would be taken against the officials showing poor performance in this regard.

Adviser to CM Punjab said under the directions of CM Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar, the strict monitoring of the anti dengue measures was being carried out by the Punjab govt to make the preventive and precautionary measures a success on durable basis.

He asked the concerned departments to take the dengue issue very serious and dengue surveillance, clinical & medical services awareness campaign and other departmental measures should be implemented with full responsibility.

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/10/20/532825/dc-for-coordinated-efforts-to-control-smog-problem/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 21st TO 27th 2019

CM PROMISES CONTINUITY OF CLEANLINESS DRIVE

Staff Reporte rOctober 22, 2019

KARACHI: The month-long ‘Clean My Karachi’ campaign launched by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah ended on Monday.

During the campaign, 979,941 tonnes of garbage had been lifted from the metropolis, the CM said, adding that the effort would continue in the shape of a shared responsibility to be made with all stakeholders.

He was chairing a meeting to review the progress of the garbage-lifting work assigned to deputy commissioners here at the CM House.

Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Shah briefed the chief minister about the “successful” campaign.

The briefing said with a population of at least 23 million, Karachi produces 14,000 to 16,000 tonnes of solid waste on a daily basis. There are 20-plus agencies, including cantonment boards, Port Qasim Authority, Pakistan Railways, district municipal corporations (DMCs) Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB), etc, trying to manage the city’s waste.

The primary responsibility of solid waste management lies with the local councils in the administrative jurisdiction of the provincial government.

Says during the past one month, 979,941 tonnes of garbage lifted from the metropolis

The chief minister said that the total outlay of DMCs in 2013-14 was Rs5.74 billion, which was increased to Rs13.79bn. However, solid waste management remained sub-optimal. Therefore, to augment the performance, the government had established the SSWMB and later entered a seven-year management contract with Chinese companies in four districts, at a cost of \$52 million.

Before the establishment of SSWMB, the total solid waste lifted and disposed at landfill sites was not more than 5,000 tonnes per day. After the board’s establishment, the figure reached 13,000 tonnes per day. However, the backlog still continued to accumulate, especially in the districts where SSWMB did not operate. These districts are Central, Korangi and West.

During the month-long drive, 62 temporary garbage transfer stations (GTS) were established. Until Oct 20, the estimated solid waste collected at these GTSs was 370,504 tonnes.

Spelling out the way forward to keep the city clean, the chief minister has given long- and short-term plans.

The long-term plan includes establishment of six GTS and development of two landfill sites and their scientific improvement.

These schemes have an estimated cost of Rs2.8bn against which Rs1bn has been allocated this year. The development of a 3,000-acre landfill site at Dhabeji is also on the cards as the allotment of land is under process with the Board of Revenue.

The chief minister also directed SSWMB to modernise citizens' complaints redressal system and to develop GIS mapping of dump sites.

He also directed the LG department and SSWMB to take steps to start medical and industrial hazardous waste management projects.

Under the short-term plan, the chief minister approved Rs88m for DMC Korangi, Central, West and District Council Malir to enable them to continue their operation. This money will be utilised for repair of machinery, equipment, etc, under the supervision of DCs.

The CM has already given permission to DMCs (West, Korangi and Central) to either outsource the collection of solid waste to local contractors or hire sanitation staff if they want.

Mr Shah assigned the Karachi commissioner to take businesses, shopkeepers, traders on board and develop a shared responsibility mechanism with them.

He issued directive to DCs to identify land/areas for construction of at least two permanent GTSs in each district. The SSWMB, DMCs and DCs would bring on board informal front-end garbage collectors and develop guidelines for them.

On the directives of the chief minister, the SSWMB would provide waste bins/katchra kundis at places already identified by DCs during the cleanliness drive.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1512140/cm-promises-continuity-of-cleanliness-drive>

SEPA TAKES ACTION AGAINST ILLEGAL PLASTIC RECYCLERS

By Our Correspondent Published: October 23, 2019

KARACHI: On the directives of Adviser to Sindh Chief Minister on Law, Environment and Coastal Development Barrister Murtaza Wahab, a Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) team carried out raids against illegal plastic recyclers and zinc oxide manufacturers in Sher Shah.

The operation was led by SEPA Deputy Director Waris Ali Gabol and West District assistant commissioner. The SEPA team sealed numerous factories during the crackdown.

Speaking on the issue, SEPA deputy director said that using unscientific methods to recycle plastic and manufacture zinc oxide is hazardous for the environment as well as for human health.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2085233/1-sepa-takes-action-illegal-plastic-recyclers/>

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Editorial October 24, 2019

THE Ministry of Climate Change's decision to compile a red data list for threatened or endangered wildlife and plant species is a good first step towards protecting rare flora and fauna in the country. Besides providing a framework for wildlife conservation efforts, this list will also help battle illegal wildlife trade. According to the IUCN, at least four ecosystems in Pakistan are among the world's most biologically outstanding ecoregions. Pakistan is home to an estimated 174 species of mammals, 177 species of reptiles and 668 species of birds. Out of these, about 50 species of mammals and 27 of birds are considered endangered, while 17 species of insects are also under the threat of extinction. For the compilation of this red data list of plants, animals and other organisms, the climate change ministry will collaborate with international organisations working on ecosystem preservation and wildlife conservation. Though the list will be Pakistan-specific, it will be based on internationally recognised guidelines used to evaluate the extinction risk. According to the WWF's Living Planet Index report of 2018, populations of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians and reptiles have declined by at least 64pc in the Indo-Pacific region — which includes Pakistan — between 1970 and 2014. The report also points out that the rampant illegal wildlife trade has badly damaged the country's biodiversity, and it has termed smuggling of freshwater turtles and pangolins as a major cause for concern. Furthermore, unchecked deforestation over the years has caused many animals, such as the leopard, to lose their habitat.

In Pakistan, conservation efforts had been stymied by the lack of credible data and information. However, this list, by providing data about the range, population size, habitat and ecology of and threats to endangered species of animals, birds, insects and plants will be able to identify and provide an outline for effective conservation efforts in the country. The list might also prove helpful in improving regulation of hunting permits granted by the provincial wildlife departments. The data can be used to increase awareness among local communities to help preserve the natural habitats of threatened species.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1512625/wildlife-conservation>

MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS' PRODUCTS TOP WORST PLASTIC LITTER LIST

AFP Updated October 24, 2019

MANILA: Tens of thousands of pieces of plastic littering the planet come from just a handful of multinational corporations, an environmental pressure group said on Wednesday.

Coca-Cola, Nestle and PepsiCo were named by Break Free from Plastics, a global coalition of individuals and environmental organisations, who warned the companies largely avoid cleanup responsibility.

The coalition's volunteers collected nearly half a million pieces of plastic waste during a coordinated "World Clean Up Day" in 51 countries a month ago, of which 43 percent were marked with a clear consumer brand.

For the second year in a row, it said, Coca-Cola came out on top, with 11,732 pieces of plastic collected from 37 countries across four continents — more than the next three top global polluters combined.

“Many of them have made commitments that they claim will make their products more sustainable, but largely protect the outdated throwaway business model that got us into this mess in the first place,” said the report, released in Manila.

As nations, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Sri Lanka dump the most plastic into the oceans, but “the real drivers of much of this plastic pollution in Asia are actually multinational corporations headquartered in Europe and the United States”, it said.

Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, and Nestle were responsible for the most pieces of plastic collected, according to the report.

Others in the top 10 polluters include Mondelez International, Unilever, Mars, P&G, Colgate-Palmolive, Philip Morris and Perfetti Van Mille, it added.

While global consumer brands now acknowledge their role in perpetuating the crisis, the report said they “have been equally aggressive in promoting false solutions to address the problem”.

Promoting recycling is their way of shifting responsibility to consumers, it said.

Just nine percent of all plastic produced since the 1950s has actually been recycled, the report said.

The report deems single-serve multilayered sachets, common in Southeast Asia and aimed at low-income families that cannot afford bigger volumes of consumer products, as “the most damaging type of plastic packaging”.

Coca-Cola’s promotion of a single-use bottle using plastic collected from the oceans, as well as PepsiCo’s efforts to promote recycling, “do not get to the heart of the problem and all but guarantee the plastic pollution crisis will grow worse”.

Nestle sells over a billion products a day in single-use packaging “but has no clear plans for reducing the total amount” it puts into the world, the report alleged.

The firm said it was working towards solutions “to make reports like this a thing of the past”.

“As the world’s largest food and beverage company, we know we have an important role to play in shaping sustainable solutions to tackle the issue of plastics waste,” a Nestle spokesperson said in a statement.

“It is completely unacceptable for this (plastic) packaging to end up as litter in the environment and we are working hard to make all of our packaging either recyclable or reusable by 2025.” The report said companies should veer away from promoting “false solutions” — such as recycling and so-called “bioplastics” — and instead transition from a throwaway economy.

All the companies named have made public commitments to reduce plastic waste and increase recycling.

Coca-Cola and PepsiCo — like Nestle — have pledged to make their packaging recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025. The beverage giants have also pulled out of a US lobbying organisation that represents the plastics industry.

“Changing the way society makes, uses, and disposes of packaging is a complex challenge and we’re playing our part,” a PepsiCo spokesperson said.

“We want to help build a system where plastic packaging never becomes waste.” The Coca-Cola Company said it was working to help stop plastic waste entering the seas, describing it as a “critical global issue”.

“Any time our packaging ends up in our oceans — or anywhere that it doesn’t belong — is unacceptable to us,” the firm said in a statement.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1512597/multinational-corporations-products-top-worst-plastic-litter-list>

PROVINCE’S WILDLIFE ‘IS IN DANGER’

OCTOBER 25, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Balochistan government has failed to take concrete steps to control hunting of migratory birds and wildlife species under the Wildlife Act 2014, According to Umar Goagzai, a wildlife lover in Balochistan, wildlife in the province is in serious danger and it required special measures by the government to curb poaching of endangered wildlife species, Balochistan has rich biodiversity and natural heritage, especially wildlife that has unfortunately been facing threat mainly due to human activities and adverse weather conditions, he added.

Goagzai said the wildlife of Balochistan was in danger due to increasing population, deforestation, climatic change, drought and unbridled hunting forcing wild animals and birds to migrate from the province. He said that the government under the Wildlife Act 2014 has to formulate enabling policy and managing wildlife parks, captive breeding facilities, aviaries, zoological gardens, zoological museums, environmental education centres, rescue centres and other facilities.

There has been not a single structure developed under the said law which had further deteriorated the wildlife situation, he noted.

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201910250200&EN_ID=11201910250062&EMID=11201910250030

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 28st TO Nov 03rd 2019

PM TO LAUNCH CLEAN GREEN PAKISTAN INDEX ON 30TH

Jamal Shahid October 28, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam announced on Sunday that the Clean Green Pakistan Index (CGPI) would be launched on Wednesday (Oct 30).

He said that it would encourage competition among cities on various indicators, including public access to drinking water, safe sanitation, effective solid waste management and tree plantation.

Talking to mediapersons, Mr Aslam said Prime Minister Imran Khan would launch the Clean Green Pakistan Index, adding that key representatives of provincial governments, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir, federal and provincial ministers, senior officials, ambassadors of various countries,

university teachers and students and senior representatives of local and international non-governmental organisations would attend the ceremony.

Mr Aslam said the baseline data of 19 competing cities would be announced at the ceremony, and after six months, the competing cities would be ranked again.

Those with prominent progress will be rewarded with special federal and provincial government funds. After six months, more cities will be added in the competition as second phase of the programme, he added.

The initiative will measure sanitation, environmental indicators of cities, secretary says

The adviser said the CGPI had been rolled out under the PM's Clean and Green Pakistan initiative to ensure environmental conservation and sustainability.

According to the official, the government was focusing on transforming overall outlook of the cities, which would play key economic roles in the coming days.

“Cities in many countries across the world are playing vital roles in the overall socioeconomic development. It is because cities are now providing economies of scale and they are also providing efficient infrastructure and services through density and concentration in sustainable transportation, communications, power, human interactions, water and sanitation services and effective waste management and enhanced urban forestry activities,” he said.

Explaining core objective of CGPI, Climate Change Ministry Secretary Hassan Nasir Jami said the CGPI initiative would begin a competition process among 19 cities of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the first phase.

He said the process would be expanded to other provinces in the second phase to make cities environmentally sustainable through large-scale tree plantation and sustained supply of basic life amenities such as drinking water, safe sanitation, efficient municipal and solid waste management service deliveries.

Spelling out various aspects of the initiative, Nasir Jami told mediapersons that CGPI fundamentally comprised five pillars of Clean Green Pakistan Movement that included water, sanitation, hygiene, solid waste management and plantation.

“The CGPI will primarily measure clean and green characters of the cities on 27 indicators under these five pillars. This index will be used as a benchmark for making annual budgetary allocations to the provinces from the national kitty,” the secretary said.

About data gathering for the indicators of CGPI, Acting Inspector General of Forests at the Climate Change Ministry, Mohammad Suleman Khan Warraich, explained that the data for the index would be gathered after every three months at households and neighbourhood levels through surveys to be conducted by the local government departments.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1513307>

URBANISATION, POLLUTION WIPING OUT KARACHI'S WILDLIFE

Anadolu Agency Updated October 30, 2019

KARACHI: The city of Karachi is today a picture of glossy skyscrapers, bustling shopping centres, shanty slums, and massive traffic jams like any other metropolis around the world.

Although it is hard to believe, the metropolis boasted a rich wildlife up until a few decades ago.

Once a natural habitat for colourful birds and other fauna, the city has lost its precious wildlife not only through the ravages of time, but also because of human influence, mainly unplanned urbanisation and indiscriminate killing.

Sparrows, parrots have almost disappeared due to predatory birds, loss of nesting places

Alteration of habitat, a direct result of unplanned urbanisation and pollution, has badly hit the population of urban birds like house sparrow and parrots in the past two decades, according to experts.

Instead of these human-friendly birds — which signify the quality of air — other bird species such as kites, crows, and mynahs occupy the skies of today's Karachi.

“For younger generation, it is hard to believe that Karachi had had a strong wildlife. But this is true. The city's western, eastern and northern outskirts had served as a habitat for several rare birds and animals, including leopards and deer until 1960s,” Muhammad Moazzam Khan, an adviser to World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Pakistan, told Anadolu Agency.

The last Chinkara deer, also known as gazelles, were also spotted in the outskirts of Karachi in 1994, according to Mr Khan.

The city's western outskirt had also served as one of the favourite hunting sites for professional hunters during the British colonial era. An undated picture shared by Mr Khan showed a British hunter together with some locals with two dead leopards lying in front of him.

“Presence of leopards itself is proof that there was wildlife in Karachi to feed these predators,” he said, adding: “But it has gone almost extinct due to a perpetual influx of population, cutting of forests, massive constructions, and pollution-caused asphyxia [oxygen deficiency].”

The colossal rise in population, Mr Khan said, flanked by inadvertent urbanisation, gradually destroyed the natural habitat, eventually leading to extinction of several birds, reptiles and animals like leopard, deer, hedgehog, snakes and others in this part of the country.

The situation in other big cities like Lahore, Faisalabad, Peshawar and Quetta is relatively better as they still have “marginal areas” to protect their wildlife to a certain extent.

“We cannot say this is satisfactory but relatively better compared to Karachi because they still have a village life as well,” Mr Khan said.

Experts see a rapid drop in nesting places by human influence, poor diet and rising air pollution as key reasons behind disappearance of these birds.

According to latest surveys, Mr Khan said, the population of parrots and sparrows has dwindled 80 per cent and 70pc, respectively, in Karachi for the past two decades.

Cutting of trees and grasslands for wood and construction purposes, on the one hand, has deprived these birds of their nesting places and proper diet whereas the increasing pollution and garbage sites, on the other, have led to increase in population of “opportunistic” birds like kites, crows, and mynahs.

Mr Khan singled out kites, which are predators as well, as a major threat to sparrows and parrots.

“Growing pollution and garbage sites have increased the population manifolds of opportunistic birds, which need food. And for that, these seed eaters, especially sparrows are their main target,” Khan noted.

“Also, huge plantation of ‘outlandish’ trees like conocarpus, mesquite, and eucalyptus, which otherwise have no disadvantage except for [the fact that] they do not provide nesting place to sparrow and parrots,” he pointed out.

Mesquite — small leguminous trees — have inflicted more damage on wildlife. Unlike eucalyptus, and conocarpus, it has spread out automatically causing damage to whatever is left in the habitat of the city’s suburbs.

Shabina Faraz, a Karachi-based analyst who frequently writes on environment, shared a similar view.

“The lethal combination of dropping nesting places, dearth of food, and predators like kites, have almost vanished sparrows in Karachi.” she stressed.

Not only sparrows and parrots, she added, kites had forced several species of seabirds to move away from Karachi’s beaches.

Cutting of fruit gardens, which once sprawled on the eastern outskirts of Karachi, is cited as another reason behind disappearance of parrots.

Experts reckon that a sharp rise in population of wild pigeons in Karachi has also wreaked havoc on the environment.

The rapid growth in pigeons’ population is mainly because of numerous sites where citizens drop seeds and other bird feed as an act of mercy, attracting thousands of pigeons to each site every day.

These sites in the metropolis have been named as ‘Kabootar chowk’ (pigeon roundabout) by citizens.

“This is not mercy but senselessness. By doing this, they are actually inviting trouble for themselves in the form of diseases and allergies,” Ms Faraz said, warning that “the trouble will be stupendous if any major disease breaks out due to pigeons”.

She also said that the droppings of the pigeons added to the decaying of infrastructure.

Mr Khan, however, appeared to be unsure about the effects of damage to wildlife on urban ecology.

“No doubt, every animal or bird has a role in balancing the ecological system. But we still don’t know how it has affected the city’s environment,” he said.

Ms Faraz said that sparrows, parrots and other human-friendly birds would eat insects, flies and mosquitoes and their disappearance disturbed the balance in the environment but “major effects are still invisible, which would come into light in the near future”.

Published in Dawn, October 30th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1513650/urbanisation-pollution-wiping-out-citys-wildlife>

CM RELEASES RS88M TO THREE DMCS AND DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR CLEANLINESS

Staff Reporter October 30, 2019

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Tuesday released Rs88 million to three district municipal corporations and the District Council Karachi to get their machinery repaired and start cleanliness work while in three other districts of the metropolis where the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board was assigned the job, the SSWMB would further be “activated” to make the CM’s cleanliness drive sustainable.

The three districts where SSWMB is carrying out cleanliness work are South, East and Malir while Korangi, West and Central districts and District Council are carrying out cleanliness drive on their own.

A total of Rs17m is provided to Korangi, Rs22m to West, Rs37m to Central district and Rs12m to Karachi District Council to repair garbage vehicles and other related machinery so that they could clean their areas.

The chief minister, who was chairing a meeting to review the results of the month-long cleanliness drive that concluded on Oct 21, directed the SSWMB to take strict action against contractor firms if they failed to deliver because the firms were being paid by the provincial government and it was expected of them to carry out cleanliness work up to the satisfaction of citizens.

He also recalled that just after concluding of garbage-lifting drive, the contractor firms of the SSWMB went on strike. “This is a deliberate attempt to turn the city ... filthy. This is not acceptable at any cost,” he said and directed SSWMB MD Asif Ikram to take strict action against the contractors.

The CM directed the DMCs to devolve sweeping work and front-end collection up to katchra kundi to union council level so that monitoring and supervision can be done at the doorstep.

“Union councils are small units and their chairmen and other staff can ensure proper sweeping and cleaning of their areas easily,” he said and added that “I am assigning supervision work to the chairmen of DMCs”.

He also asked the deputy commissioners to declare model areas in terms of cleanliness and hygiene in their respective areas and keep them expanding. “I am still receiving serious complaints that shopkeepers and restaurants are throwing their trash and filth on roads,” he said and directed the deputy commissioners to warn market associations once again before taking actions against the delinquents.

The meeting participants also decided to inform all builders not to put their debris on roads and bound them to lift their construction material at their expense, otherwise fine would be imposed on them.

Mr Shah directed DCs and chairmen of DMCs to develop at least two garbage transfer station (GTS) in their respective districts. “These GTS must be properly developed with all required facilities along with weighing system,” he said.

Published in Dawn, October 30th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1513632/cm-releases-rs88m-to-three-dmcs-and-district-council-for-cleanliness>

MALIR CANTT BOARD, DHA IGNORING ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS: SEPA DG

Faiza Ilyas October 30, 2019

KARACHI: “So many buildings have come up in the jurisdiction of the Malir Cantonment Board (MCB) over the past few years without being subjected to the legal process of environmental impact assessment (EIA). The Defence Housing Authority (DHA) has also built Phase VIII without an EIA. Is there no [environmental] law [in the province]?”

These observations were made by Director General of Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) Naeem Mughal while wrapping up a public hearing organised on Tuesday in the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) office.

The hearing pertained to the EIA report of a mixed-used housing scheme consisting of seven residential towers and one commercial building, which has been proposed at Plot No. 350, Deh Safoora, in the jurisdiction of MCB.

Mr Mughal was replying to participants’ queries raised over the construction of several buildings within the jurisdiction of MCB, apparently without an EIA, a mandatory requirement under the law for projects falling in the category of Schedule II of Sepa rules and regulations.

“In 2017, the department wrote detailed letters to all land-owning organisations, including the DHA and cantonment boards, to share their master plans and ensure compliance with the environmental law. But, we didn’t receive any reply neither from the DHA nor the cantonment boards,” he said.

The exercise was repeated this year. The DHA was asked to urgently submit an EIA and a traffic management plan for all commercialised roads in its jurisdiction, including the EIA report of DHA Phase VIII (as well as the projects under the DHA Water Front Development Scheme).

“There is no response yet to the March letter of Sepa. We are not against development but it must be within the law. It’s important for city’s sustainability,” Sepa’s top official complained, while regretting that the DHA and cantonment boards’ officials also didn’t turn up at public hearings pertaining to areas in their jurisdictions despite invitation.

Earlier, the programme started with a presentation on the project titled Credible Towers proposed over 19,360 square yards and the audience was informed that the project site was a commercial plot.

Highlighting some key features of the project, Saquib Ejaz Hussain representing the Environmental Management Consultants-Pakistan, which has prepared the project’s EIA report, said the proposed project was a self-contained building with sufficient parking space and systems for back-up power

generation, sewage treatment and firefighting and that all necessary no-objection certificates (NOCs) had been obtained including those for utilities.

He, however, admitted that the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) was non-committal on water supply and linked it to the completion of K-IV project.

“The water supply would be supplemented by grey water recycling and hyper filtration system. The project after completion would require 103,525 gallons per day of potable water and 3.56MW of electricity,” he explained.

The issue of infrastructural developments in the city amid acute water and electricity shortages was also raised during the question hour.

“These NOCs [attached with the EIA report] are meaningless as nothing has been committed [by utility services in black and white],” said Dr Raza Gardezi of Citizens for Environment.

He also questioned why no document had been attached with the EIA report to authenticate the official status of the plot, originally an agricultural land, which apparently was later converted into a different land use category.

Dr Gardezi also called upon Sepa to constrain the Sindh Building Control Authority and cantonment boards to undertake cumulative impact assessment of the corridors that had been commercialised before further grant of approval of architectural plans for buildings on the corridors concerned.

He also shared that only a building with 110-foot height could be built on the project site (opposed to the proposed ground plus-15 structure) as the site fell within the transition zone of the runaway under the Civil Aviation Authority rules.

Concerns related to traffic congestion were also highlighted and it was pointed out that the roads in the project area were not vehicle-worthy and were highly congested at peak hours.

There were also suggestions that the project should have a separate water storage tank to meet water requirements for firefighting and that Sepa should restrict the project proponent to provide accident and life insurance cover to labourers during the construction phase.

The fact that the project was huge in terms of its carbon footprint but the EIA report didn't carry details of the plantation to be done in and around the project site also attracted criticism.

Replying to some of these concerns, it was explained by the project proponent that all NOCs granted by any utility agencies had a particular format in which clear commitments were largely avoided.

“If the CAA didn't give clearance for extra parking space, the basement would be used for this purpose,” said EMC rep Hussain.

Published in Dawn, October 30th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1513625/malir-cantt-board-dha-ignoring-environmental-laws-sepa-dg>

SMOG BLAMED ON INDIAN FARMERS BEGINS TO HIT LAHORE

Intikhab Hanif Updated October 31, 2019F

LAHORE: Moderate smog has started developing in Lahore because of the lowering minimum temperature, humidity and calm wind at night that is allowing the contributing pollutants, being generated mostly by Indian Punjab farmers by burning massive crop residue, to penetrate the bordering areas.

“We have already taken adequate steps to prevent local contributions to smog, and are ready to combat those from Indian Punjab,” said Environment Protection Secretary Salman Ejaz on Wednesday.

He contradicted reports suggesting development of hazardous level smog in Lahore. “This is false as our authentic data shows much lower levels that are not dangerous at all as yet,” he said.

Chief Meteorologist in Lahore Sahibzad Khan said there was no smog. It was merely smoke and haze, he said, indicating chances of rain and strong westerly winds on Saturday and Sunday.

This would provide relief, though temporary, against smog or whatever, he said.

Human rights group Amnesty International earlier said that the Air Quality Index in Lahore had reached 484 at 10am, adding that the threshold for hazardous level of air quality was 300.

It blamed the Punjab government for exposing people to hazardous air risks in violation of their human rights to life and health.

Smog was witnessed in the bordering areas of Lahore and those in the south along the canal on Wednesday morning.

Haziness, and nose and eye irritation was a clear indication of the beginning of the phenomenon which is pestering Lahore and other Punjab cities in October and November for the past few years.

The main cause is stated to be the burning of crop residue mainly by Indian Punjab farmers. Smog that develops as a result causes worst health threatening conditions in the Indian side up to Delhi.

The Environment Protection Department (EPD) observatory at the Met department’s Jail Road observatory on Wednesday recorded 128 AQI (Air Quality Index) at 12.50pm.

The AQI at Wagah was 280. According to the EPD smog policy, AQI ranging between 101 and 200 indicates slight, 200 to 300 moderate and 400 to 500 hazardous air pollution.

Mr Salman Ejaz said Punjab did not witness smog during most parts of the current month because of extended monsoons and some strong westerly weather systems that pushed back the pollutants from the fields of Indian Punjab.

“NASA Satellite pictures are showing huge crop residue burning in the east Punjab cities Amritsar and Jalandhar. The local contribution is 20 per cent. And we are not having full impact of the smog causing pollutants from the Indian side because of the (favourable) wind direction,” he said.

Published in Dawn, October 31st, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1513953/smog-blamed-on-indian-farmers-begins-to-hit-lahore>

TWO CHINESE FIRMS OF SANITATION WARNED

Staff Reporter October 31, 2019

KARACHI: The city administration on Wednesday warned that action would be taken against two Chinese companies tasked with disposal of solid waste in districts West and Malir as per law if they failed to fulfil their responsibilities.

Officials said that the warning to the firms was issued in a meeting held to review the state of cleanliness in the city with Karachi Commissioner Iftikhar Shallwani in the chair.

They said that the meeting participants also discussed the performance of the Chinese companies in the cleanliness campaign carried out by the provincial government.

The sources said that managing director of the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) Asif Ikram, all deputy commissioners and all municipal commissioners of the district municipal committees and representatives of the both the Chinese firms were present in the meeting.

They said that the SSWMB MD and DCs of South, East and Malir briefed the commissioner about the non-implementation of the contract saying that the companies were not fulfilling responsibilities regarding garbage lifting and disposal in the districts.

The sources said that the commissioner asked the representatives of the Chinese companies to follow the contract agreement and make the three districts clean to the satisfaction of citizens with close coordination of the district administration and the SSWMB officials.

Speaking to Dawn, the commissioner said that the chief minister had issued the directives to the city administration to ensure the implementation of the contract made with the Chinese companies.

“The CM wants the city clean and the system of cleanliness in the city to be improved.”

He said that the meeting also showed dissatisfaction over the reply of the Chinese companies pointing out that they failed to perform their responsibilities of keeping the roads, streets, neighbourhoods and pavements clean.

Published in Dawn, October 31st, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1513903/two-chinese-firms-of-sanitation-warned>

PAKISTAN’S OWN POLLUTION CAUSES SMOG, SAY EXPERTS

Xari Jalil Updated November 01, 2019

LAHORE: As Lahore’s smog levels crossed 550 on the Air Quality Index — signified as hazardous — environmental experts and activists both express their dismay and horror at what is to unfold further.

According to some instruments installed in Lahore, the Gulberg area even recorded 600 AQI. The last level of ‘hazardous’ on the AQI is shown as between 250 to 300 which necessitates the people with

heart and lung diseases, older adults and children should remain indoors and keep activity levels low. All outdoor physical activity must be avoided, says the index.

Imran Khalid, who holds a PhD in Environmental Policy, says that in cooler weather (autumn and winter), the warm air does not allow the cooler air underneath to rise which leads to visible smog and this is what is being witnessed in Lahore and even as far as Islamabad.

“Some of the sources for this smog include vehicular pollution with very poor fuel quality being used along with lack of pollution control technologies in our vehicles, industrial pollution, burning of municipal and even industrial waste and brick kilns which again use dirty fuel such as rubber tyres,” says Khalid who also heads the Environment and Climate Change Department at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad.

Traffic, industry, agriculture major polluters with 43, 25 and 20pc share, respectively

He believes the situation during this time of the year is made worse by crop stubble burning and depending on the wind direction, the pollution from either side of the border with India can indeed affect the neighbouring country.

However, he adds, it is important to remember that research shows that the key sources of air pollution in Pakistan are local in nature.

“A number of national and provincial level laws exist to address our exceedingly poor air quality but implementation is lacking. In fact, we do not have sufficient number of monitoring devices to monitor the air pollution levels in real time. This has led to a growth in the number of private, hand held monitors that have been deployed by the Pakistan Air Quality Initiative (PAQI), for example. Moreover, the US Embassy has also brought in its own monitors and placed them at the Embassy and associated Consulates.”

Mr Khalid points out that there is a clear lack of political will to move forward with the recommendations of the smog commission or to address the issues raised by the citizens in the climate march.

Sectoral Emission Inventory for Punjab shows that the major portion of air pollution emissions are coming from the transport sector and it holds 43pc share in all sectors (power, industry, transport, and crop burning residue). The second major pollutant is industry whose share is 25pc while the third major pollutant is agriculture which accounts for 20pc. Collectively, the main sectors creating air pollutants and emissions are power, industry and transport which have 80pc contribution to emissions and pollution, from which Punjab's photochemical smog conditions arise.

The R-Smog report, prepared by the Agriculture Department and United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO), clearly states that winds are westerly in winter time. So there is little chance of crop burning smoke coming from India.

Meanwhile, there is general disappointment at the government's indifference to the issue.

Aysha Raja, a civil society activist, wants to bring attention to a letter written by Climate Action Now Pakistan to the National Assembly Standing Committee on Climate Change, headed by Munazza Hasan, requesting that they hold refineries accountable for not upgrading to Euro 4, despite collecting 100 of billions of rupees in “Deemed Duty” since 2004.

“As citizens, it is our right to ask our government representatives to hold big polluters accountable,” she says.

Another activist adds that whenever the subject is brought up, the government deflects from answering and tries to bring attention to bring electric cars.

Mueed Qureshi, an engineering expert, says generally Pakistan imports crude oil at standard international rate per barrel.

“Our local refineries produce the final vehicular fuel, and they raise or lower prices according to international rates,” he says. “And yet they only provide Euro 2 compliant fuel whereas in advanced countries their refineries provide Euro 4 compliant fuel. Our refineries don’t offer better quality to the market and yet draw the same benefits.”

Dr Imran Khalid says that addressing the fuel quality issue would be key to long-term solution to our air pollution woes.

“In the meantime, the health of our most vulnerable sections of society such as children, the elderly, and others who live in dire circumstances are directly under threat,” he warns.

Published in Dawn, November 1st, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1514116/pakistans-own-pollution-causes-smog-say-experts>

HEALTH EMERGENCY DECLARED IN DELHI AS POLLUTION HITS YEAR’S WORST

Agencies Updated November 02, 2019

NEW DELHI: Authorities in New Delhi declared a public health emergency on Friday and closed schools and all construction activity until next week as air pollution in the city hit its worst level this year.

A thick haze has hung over the Indian capital this week caused by plumes of toxic smoke from farm fires raging in neighbouring states.

An index measuring the level of a deadly air pollutant hit 484 on a scale of 500 on Friday, the government’s Central Pollution Control Board, the worst this year.

The index measures the level of PM 2.5, tiny particulate matter that goes deep into the lungs. Anything above 400 poses a risk for people with respiratory illnesses and can also affect even those with healthy lungs.

“We have been advised to stay at home on Monday,” said Anuj Rawat, an account director at Kantar, the market research arm of British advertising major WPP. Kantar employs around 400 people at its office in New Delhi, Rawat said.

The Environment Pollution Control Authority, which is leading the effort to tackle Delhi’s pollution, said: “We have to take this as a public health emergency as air pollution is now hazardous and will have adverse health impacts on all, but particularly our children.” It banned all construction work in the sprawling metropolis of 20 million people and its neighbouring cities until Nov 5.

Each year, farmers in the states of Punjab and Haryana burn crop residue to prepare for the sowing season, ignoring government warnings.

According to government-run monitor SAFAR, satellite pictures had captured nearly 3,200 incidents of stubble burning on Thursday in Haryana and Punjab that contributed to 44 percent percent of Delhi's pollution.

The toxic air has left several Bangladeshi cricket players with sore throats and itchy eyes ahead of their Twenty20 match against India on Sunday.

“Government knew an emergency situation was approaching and did not take substantive steps on stubble burning or big industrial polluting sources,” said Sunil Dahiya, an energy and air pollution analyst at Greenpeace.

“A public health emergency situation began at least 10 days ago.”

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal offered free masks on Friday and ordered schools shut till Nov 5 to protect children.

Air pollution in New Delhi generally peaks around Nov 1 due to a combination of smog from fireworks set off during a Hindu festival and smoke from the burning of agricultural fields in the neighboring states.

The air quality index reading at the US Embassy in New Delhi for pollution particles in the air reached nine times the recommended WHO level on Friday. At such levels people are advised to avoid all outdoor exertion due to the health risks.

New Delhi's top elected official Arvind Kejriwal already has announced a plan to restrict the movement of private cars in the capital for nearly two weeks, beginning Monday.

Published in Dawn, November 2nd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1514390>

KYARR INCREASES PLASTIC POLLUTION ALONG BALOCHISTAN COAST

By RECORDER REPORT on November 3, 2019

The category 5 super cyclone Kyarr (04A) generated higher than usual waves in the central Arabian Sea resulting in the inundation of many villages in Keti Bunder and creek areas along the Indus Delta, the WWF-Pakistan said on Saturday. Similarly, it said, areas along the coast of Karachi including Ibrahim Hyderi, Lath Basti, and Rehri came under seawater resulting in damage to houses and other properties. The effect of Cyclone Kyarr was more evident along the Balochistan coast where all major settlements were inundated. This included the coastal villages of Gaddani, Sonmiani and Damb in Lasbela district where water caused damage to infrastructure.

Likewise, some areas of Ormara, Pasni, Sur and Gwadar in Makran division were also affected. The most significant impact of super-storm Kyarr was felt by the coastal town of Gunz located near Jiwani. Although this super-cyclone was the strongest since Gonu in the year 2007, it brought rain to southern Oman and Somalia, it added.

A WWF-Pakistan team visited to assess the damage in Gunz and reported that receding waves took along a large number of fishing nets abandoned by fishermen. It also washed away a large number of nets, which were stored on the shore. Additionally, receding waters dumped plastic waste, consisting mainly of polythene bags and other plastic debris.

According to Muhammad Moazzam Khan, Technical Advisor (Marine Fisheries), WWF-Pakistan it is not possible to estimate the quantity of plastic garbage and fishing nets that have washed away but these will certainly add to ghost fishing and plastic pollution in the sea. Khan said that when such abandoned nets enter the sea, negatively impacting marine life, which becomes entangled in them, and are therefore known as ghost nets. 'It is a serious menace, which can increase because of careless dumping of used and abandoned nets in the sea,' he added.

Sudheer Ahmad, Coordinator, WWF-Pakistan posted at Jiwani Information Centre visited other coastal settlements to assess the damage. He pointed out that water had inundated almost all coastal settlements including Bandri, Gunz, Jiwani and Pushukan but the major damage occurred in Gunz, which included washing away of garbage and plastic nets into the sea. Fishermen are concerned about the issue, as Gunz is an important fishing ground for lobsters and other coastal fishes.

As a result, ghost fishing is expected to increase. He, however, pointed out that local administration is building a protective wall and strengthening the beachfront to save the settlement from any future weather related events such as approaching cyclone Maha. He stressed that in addition to beach protection a campaign of removing ghost nets from the area should be initiated.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/11/03/540941/kyarr-increases-plastic-pollution-along-balochistan-coast/>

AND THE SMOG RETURNS

By Imran Adnan Published: November 3, 2019

LAHORE: Due to the negligence of government agencies and irresponsible attitude of citizens, various cities of Punjab – including the provincial capital – are once again engulfed in smog which is causing respiratory and eye problems among the masses.

As per official statistics, the Air Quality Index (AQI) of Lahore touched 189 and 346 at Jail Road and Wagha Border respectively. While as per international standard, AQI ranging between 0 and 50 is considered satisfactory and air pollution poses a little or no risk. AQI value between 51 and 100 is acceptable; however, for some pollutants, there may be a moderate health concern but for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution. It shows that AQI value 101-150 is unhealthy for sensitive groups but it may not affect the general public. AQI ranging between 151 and 200 is unhealthy that may cause health effects on everyone while members of the sensitive groups may experience serious health effects. AQI value between 201 and 300 indicates health alert as everyone may experience more serious health effects. The hazardous level is indicated with AQI 301-500 as it is a public health emergency. The entire populations are more likely to be affected.

A senior official of Pakistan Metrological Department (PMD) warned that the soupy air in Lahore is hazardous to breathe, especially for young children. Haziness, throat, nose and eye irritation are warning signs of poor air quality in the city.

Following the outbreak of smog-related diseases, the Environment Protection Department (EPD) Punjab has launched a smog awareness campaign in different districts of the province to create awareness about health hazards.

According to EPD spokesman, the campaign has been launched on the special directions of Provincial Minister for Environment Protection Muhammad Rizwan, with an aim to create awareness about best practices to keep oneself safe and healthy during smog season. The EPD teams are distributing pamphlets and face masks among motorcyclists, motorists and pedestrians across the province and urged them to use face masks or handkerchief on the face while leaving the house to protect themselves from breathing problems and throat infection.

The teams briefed that the young children, the elderly, asthma and allergy patients should take extra measures to stay safe.

According to health experts, if the air quality continues to deteriorate, a series of health issues will arise for citizens. It will also shorten the average lifespan if the situation persists in the coming years.

As a preventive measure, EPD Director General Tanveer Ahmed Warraich said that brick kilns being operated on old technology will remain closed till December 30. If the problem of smog aggravates then the duration of the closure will be increased. Section 144 has been imposed throughout the province and brick kilns will remain closed from October 1 till December 31. Therefore, strict action will be taken for the burning residue of crops, tyres, rubbers and other things.

Warriach had expressed these views at a news conference held a couple of days ago. He said that till now 16 teams of the environment are working on dengue disease whereas 12 teams are working on anti-smog campaigns. The EPD department has sealed 177 units for spreading pollution whereas notices have also been issued to 193 units. FIRs have been registered against 22 factory owners.

He further said that four air quality stations are operational and the air quality index is presently at 287. He said that the Environment Protection Department is undertaking all possible steps to eradicate smog and strict action will be taken against those elements found involved in contributing to pollution.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 3rd, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2092389/1-and-the-smog-returns/>

PAKISTAN BESET WITH SERIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL, CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGES: PM

Jamal Shahid November 07, 2019 ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is beset with serious environmental conservation and climate change challenges that pose risks to efforts to achieve socioeconomic and poverty reduction goals, Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Wednesday.

Inaugurating the seventh International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Asia Regional Conservation Forum, Mr Khan emphasised the need to pursue the development of effective policies geared towards conserving natural resources, ecosystems and biodiversity.

He said these policies would build the foundation for economic productivity and improved livelihoods, and are key to achieving Sustainable Development Goals in Asia.

More than 500 participants, including around 170 from Asian countries, will be attending the forum, which is being co-hosted by the Ministry of Climate Change.

Seventh IUCN Asia Regional Conservation Forum inaugurated with focus on nature-based solutions to societal challenges

Mr Khan said that protecting the environment was one of his priorities when he began his term as prime minister.

“With the active participation of youth in the country, the implementation of 10 Billion Tree Tsunami project has become a gigantic step towards restoring and protecting the country’s natural resources,” he said.

Delegates from governments, NGOs, research and academic institutions and the private sector from 24 countries in south, east and southeast Asia and other parts of the world are participating in the event, which takes place every four years.

Prime Minister’s Advisor on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam said that Asia accounted for 60pc. It also has the highest growth rate today and is home to nearly half of the world’s poorest people, rendering poverty a key issue to be addressed.

He quoted the World Bank’s 2018 report, which said that of the 783 million extremely poor who live below poverty line, 33pc live in South Asia and 9pc in East Asia and the Pacific.

“Most countries are likely to reach middle-income status by 2020 and Asia is in the trajectory of becoming the World’s Economic Centre of Gravity by 2050. With many Asian economies relying on ecosystem services, there is an urgent need to conserve the region’s rich biological resources,” he said.

Addressing the inaugural session of the forum, IUCN acting Director General Grethel Aguilar said Asia has to act now for environmental conservation.

She told participants: “Nature is under intense attack. A quarter of vertebrate and plant species on the IUCN Red List are threatened with extinction and the world does not seem to be on course to achieve many of the biodiversity targets by the 2020 deadline.”

“This is why the next ten years will be crucial. By 2030, the world must achieve all the SDGs,” she said.

“It was necessary that investments were taking place in parts of the world where growth was happening and where governments needed support to ensure that the development was sustainable,” IUCN Global President Zhang Xinsheng said during his address.

The forum will continue until Nov 8. It is being held under the theme ‘Greening Asia for Nature and People’, and will focus on nature-based solutions to societal challenges. A variety of side events on a broad range of topics will also be held during the three-day event.

Discussions from the Asia Regional Conservation Forum will help shape conservation action for the next decade and will feed the IUCN World Conservation Congress, to be held in Marseille, France in June 2020.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1515337>

PM TERMS ‘GREEN PAKISTAN, WILDLIFE PRESERVATION’ MAIN TARGET

By RECORDER REPORT on November 7, 2019

Terming environmental degradation a serious challenge for Pakistan, Prime Minister Imran Khan Wednesday said the government was carrying out a massive programme to protect the country having diversity of 12 natural ecological zones.

Addressing at the inaugural session of three-day Asia Regional Conservation Forum – Greening Asia for Nature and People organized by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the PM said the main target was to make Pakistan green and preserve wildlife in its natural forests, Alps and deserts.

PM Imran Khan said protecting planet was the biggest service to humanity by making it liveable for future generations.

He mentioned 10 Billion Tree Tsunami, steps for cleaning of rivers and air and waste disposal system as significant projects under the umbrella of environmental protection programme.

Imran Khan said Pakistan's northern areas exuded unmatched scenic beauty in the world, however regretted that timber mafia under patronage of politicians wreaked havoc with natural environment.

He said strict action was taken against such mafia by the provincial government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf to check ruthless cutting of forests. He recalled visiting Himalayas every summer during early years of life, which he said developed his passion for protecting Pakistan's natural environment.

He said in his book written 30 years ago, he warned about the looming dangers to the country's forests and also made a pledge to take strong measures for environmental protection.

The PM mentioned worsening air pollution in the neighbouring India and said smog in Lahore was also a matter of concern, which required urgent steps.

Calling youth a vital driving force in championing the cause of environmental protection, the PM said the subject would be included in educational curriculum to sensitive students at grassroots level.

The PM expressed confidence that the conference that gathered experts from 35 countries would find ways towards proposals for effective policy on environment conservation.

IUCN President Zhang Xinsheng highlighted the importance of collective efforts by governments and civil society organisations to achieve the shared goal to protect nature. He said the aim of IUCN was to encourage international cooperation and provide scientific knowledge and tools to guide conservation action.

Adviser to PM on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam said his ministry would carry out a five-point agenda including 10 billion tree tsunami, banning single-use plastic ban, Clean Green Index to change behaviour on waste management, Electric Vehicle Policy and Recharge Pakistan project on ecosystem restoration.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/11/07/542296/pm-terms-green-pakistan-wildlife-preservation-main-target/>

November 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOV 04th TO 10th 2019

DELHI'S AIR POLLUTION REACHES 'UNBEARABLE LEVELS'

AFP Updated November 04, 2019

NEW DELHI: India's capital New Delhi was enveloped in heavy, toxic smog on Sunday — the worst levels in recent years — with flights diverted or delayed as politicians blamed each other for failing to tackle the crisis.

Every winter, the megacity of 20 million people is blanketed by a poisonous smog of car fumes, industrial emissions and smoke from stubble burning at farms in neighbouring states.

Concentrations of particles measuring less than 2.5 microns hit the highest level of this season, exacerbated by light rains late on Saturday, India's state-run System of Air Quality Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR) said.

The reading for pollutants in the atmosphere hit 810 micrograms per cubic metre on Sunday morning, beyond the "hazardous" zone according to the US embassy in Delhi, which independently monitors pollution levels.

The recommended World Health Organisation safe daily maximum is 25.

"Pollution has reached unbearable levels," Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted Sunday.

Visibility was so poor that major carriers Air India and Vistara said flights were being delayed or diverted to and from Delhi's airports.

Some cricket players and coaches have also been training in masks ahead of the Twenty20 international between Bangladesh and India later on Sunday.

"It's actually scary — you can't see things in front of you," protester Jaivipra said at a rally in Delhi on Sunday calling for politicians to do more to curb pollution.

Nurses at the demonstration said they were seeing more people suffering from respiratory problems.

"Patients are coming with more lung and respiratory diseases, like more (are) affected with asthma," Reshma C.M. said.

The conditions sparked a blame game between state and federal politicians over who was responsible for the conditions, which authorities said on Friday reached "emergency" levels.

In a tweet last week, Kejriwal called on the state governments of neighbouring Punjab and Haryana to take action.

“Delhi has turned into a gas chamber due to smoke from crop burning in neighbouring states,” he tweeted.

Federal Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar accused Kejriwal of politicising the issue and presenting the two states “in a bad light and as villains”.

Schools in Delhi have already been ordered closed until Tuesday, and construction halted. From Monday there will be an odd/even car licence plate scheme to cut traffic.

Global non-profit Vital Strategies’ senior vice president for environmental health, Daniel Kass, said while temporary curbs were helpful, they had limited impact over time.

“They are insufficient to address the most important aspect of air pollution, which is what people live with day-to-day,” Kass said.

He said a range of measures needed to be imposed at local and national levels for air quality to improve.

Published in Dawn, November 4th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1514737>

‘SMOG WAS CAUSED BY WIND VORTEX IN REGION’

Xari Jalil Updated November 08, 2019

LAHORE: An environment ministry official provides masks to children on Thursday. Dangerously poor air quality forced the provincial government to close all schools in the city for the day. Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar said the sudden increase in smog on Wednesday was the result of burning crops in India, along the border with Pakistan, accompanied by a change in wind direction.—
AP

LAHORE: Chief Minister Usman Buzdar said on Thursday the sudden increase in smog on Wednesday was the result of burning crops in the border area of India along with a change in wind direction. He added that because of rain, the situation had become better at night.

Meteorological Department Director Mian Ajmal Shad told Dawn that in the winter, west to east winds were normal. “Most of the year round, Pakistan receives Westerly waves,” he said.

“But these winds are of a different altitude in the summer. In the winters, they are of lower altitude so they hit more. However wind patterns can change a lot during this time.”

From 3pm to 8pm on Wednesday, winds were coming from the eastern side, he said, according to the Narowal, Lahore and Bahawalnagar stations.

According to information, the westerly winds that occur throughout the year are weak winds and can be easily deflected by other winds they counter. The cyclones in the Arabian sea can impact them, the winds can get dragged down south, while the earth’s rotation also generates the Coriolis effect – (The

Coriolis effect is defined as how a moving object seems to veer toward the right in the Northern hemisphere and left in the Southern hemisphere.)

Researcher Dawar N Butt says that “Westerly winds in combination with eastern winds developed a vortex in the region. This vortex is what was accumulating the pollutants and recirculating them but it did not just affect Lahore, there was a distinct spike in PM2.5 in Gujranwala, and Muridke as well.” The rise in PM2.5 shot up to 800 in many places.

After the thunderstorms from winds coming from north to south, the vortex was interrupted and the air quality was pushed down.

The chief minister, though, showed concerned over smog, he, however, has yet to implement the standards set by the smog commission.

Some of the brick kilns are running, emitting black smoke, while low quality fuel emissions continue to cause year round air pollution. The focus, say activists and academics, should not be from season to season, but all year round, and monitoring should be done of vehicles.

A recent Food and Agriculture Organization report showed that the transport sector contributed most to Pakistan’s pollution, followed by industries. Indoor pollution was also high on the scale.

Spokesperson for Environment Protection Department Anjum Ijaz, however, said earlier this month that in fact the air quality had been satisfactory and that no warning needed to be given.

At the same time, there has been little checks and balance of these contributing factors, including the stubble burning happening in Pakistan.

According to a notification by the Home Department on October 1, section 144 had been imposed, but stubble burning is happening.

A source said that only 65 per cent of the rice crop had yet to be harvested, which meant more burning was expected.

The EPD said its teams distributed face masks among motorcyclists, motorists and pedestrians on important roads of the city.

GCU: The Government College University’s Environment Protection Society set up a camp to raise awareness among university students about smog.

GCU EPS Adviser Dr Faiza Sharif said the situation of smog was worse this year, so the government, civil society and educational institutions must beef up their efforts for raising awareness among people about environment pollution.

Published in Dawn, November 8th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1515558/smog-was-caused-by-wind-vortex-in-region>

80 INDIAN FARMERS HELD FOR STARTING POLLUTING FIRES

From the Newspaper November 08,

NEW DELHI: More than 80 farmers have been arrested in northern India for starting fires that contributed to the recent pollution crisis in New Delhi and other cities, officials said on Thursday.

Each winter the post-harvest burning of crop stubble covers swaths of the region in toxic smog, which combines with car and factory emissions to turn Delhi into the world's most polluted capital.

India's top court this week ordered a crackdown on illegal stubble-burning, but the fires continued across Punjab and Haryana states — with many started at night to try and avoid detection.

A senior Punjab police officer said more than 17,000 farm fires had been reported in the state in the past three days, with 4,741 on Wednesday alone. "More than 84 people have been arrested for violating the law. Cases have been filed against 174 farmers," the officer said.

Punjab and Haryana make up a key agricultural region that produces nearly 18 million tonnes of rice each year. This, in turn, creates nearly 20 million tonnes of crop stubble — most of which is burnt.

Authorities said more than 48,000 farm fires had been reported in the two states since late September — a dramatic increase from 30,000 cases in 2018.

The Supreme Court ordered a complete stop to the fires on Monday and on Wednesday slammed local governments for not taking action, instructing them to pay hard-up farmers to stop burning the stubble.

"You just want to sit in your ivory towers and rule. You are not bothered and are letting the people die," said Justice Arun Mishra.

Published in Dawn, November 8th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1515612>

PEOPLE URGED TO REFUSE PLASTIC BAGS

SHAZIA HASAN NOVEMBER 08, 2019

KARACHI: Garbage seemed to be on everyone's mind at the Sixth Sense Forum panel discussion on 'Garbage! What is the role of education, universities and social responsibility?' at the Aga Khan University (AKU) here on Thursday.

Dr Moiz Khan, assistant professor at the Department of General History at the University of Karachi, said that he remembered going for grocery shopping with his mother as a child when just about everyone used to take with them jute or nylon baskets. "There were no plastic shopping bags. Plastic or polythene bags have no value in recycling, which is the biggest problem. And now micro-plastic has even become a part of our food chain. It is inside us," he pointed out.

"I recently saw four undergraduate students having juice at our university campus. One girl, after finishing her juice, tossed its box on the road even though the dustbin was only a few feet away from her. When I pointed that out to her with the request to throw the box in the bin, she turned up her

nose and asked why make her do that when there is garbage all around. And this I got from an undergraduate student," he said shaking his head.

He also said that he had researched about what was wrong and why the garbage was accumulating all over the city. “You see, there are multiple authorities whose job it is to collect the garbage, but they are overlapping and putting the blame on each other.

“Karachi is a huge city to manage with a huge population concentrated in high-rises and the government is completely oblivious of this. Some may think that the government’s not picking up garbage is actually political victimisation of people who don’t give it votes but then the same thing is happening in places such as Larkana where they do give them votes,” he laughed.

Anusha Fatima, founder of TrashIt said that “We are producing the waste so we also need to look at how we are contributing to clean it up.”

She said that there was a need for introducing courses at the university level about cleanliness that could engage students as well as different stakeholders in society.

She added that during another recent programme the mayor of Karachi distributed papers listing Karachi Metropolitan Corporation’s (KMC) responsibilities and according to that list garbage did not come under KMC. “Then whose job is it?”

Yousuf Farooq, director, facilities management at the AKU, said that children should be taught at the kindergarten level about sorting and recycling of discarded things.

Ahmed Shabbar, CEO of GarbageCAN, said that people had become too complacent about the garbage all around them unlike in the past when there was a kabbarri culture and they used to sort whatever they were discarding at the source such as separating paper from tin and glass to sell to the kabbarri. “Now in the times of mobile phone apps who knows when the poor kabbarri passes by with his pushcart,” he said.

“There are laws about littering and the collecting of garbage but there is no implementation of these laws, that’s where protesting and climate marches come in,” he said.

He said that teachers could tell students about not littering though the actual learning happens at home. Meanwhile, he added that the state had failed to deliver and therefore they needed a public-private partnership.

He also said that the big trashcans that one sees at road corners were actually rented out to scavengers who have a go at taking whatever they could recycle from them before being moved to a landfill. “The scavengers pay for what they take from the garbage but their money doesn’t go to the government. It is not clear whose pocket it goes into,” he said.

He also said that people should refuse plastic bags as much as possible. “Sure, you cannot completely remove plastic from your lives, but there needs to be a balance,” he concluded.

The discussion was moderated by Samir Sadrudin.

Published in Dawn, November 8th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1515519/people-urged-to-refuse-plastic-bags>

SMOKE BEING EMITTED FROM INDIA CAUSING SMOG IN LAHORE: MINISTER

By RECORDER REPORT on November 8, 2019

Punjab Finance Minister Hashim Jawan Bakht has claimed that prevailing smog-like situation in the provincial metropolis is caused by the smoke emitted from certain places in India where farmers are burning their crop stubbles. Due to change in the air direction, this smoke is reaching the provincial metropolis and adding to the pollution.

He further said that the provincial government has started prevention measures. Vehicles and factories emitting smoke while brick kilns working on old technology are being shut down temporarily. He said it will be ensured that the kilns should work on latest technology while industries use clean oil and energy.

The Minister was chairing a meeting here on Thursday to review the steps taken by the Environment Department Punjab. The meeting was convened under the Special Monitoring Unit of the Chief Minister Punjab. He said committees have been constituted to monitor the situation and they included experts from the agriculture, industries, energy, local government, transport, Punjab horticulture, traffic police and others. This committee will ensure introduction of alternate to burning of crop stubbles, take action against burning of solid waste, plastic, tyre and rubber under section 144.

The minister directed the Environment Protection Department (EPD) to immediately prepare projects cycles to be included in the Annual Development Programme (ADP). He also stressed the need for negotiation with the industrialists prior to taking action against those kilns and factories using old technology.

Meanwhile, the Environment Protection Department (EPD) Punjab has expedited smog-awareness campaign in the metropolitan city to sensitize people to be well-prepared to avoid health hazards and take safety precautions.

According to the spokesman, the campaign has been launched on the special directions of provincial minister for environment protection Muhammad Rizwan to raise awareness about best practices to keep oneself safe and healthy during smog season.

In this regard, the teams distributed face masks among motorcyclists, motorists and pedestrians on important roads of the city. While talking to the media, the EPD spokesman said that pollution of the night between November 6 and 7 was due to burning of crops residue at Indian side but now with the blessings of Allah Almighty and after the rain, the situation has been improved to a great extent. The spokesman urged the people to use face masks or handkerchief on their faces while leaving their houses in order to protect themselves from the pollution.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/11/08/542602/smoke-being-emitted-from-india-causing-smog-in-lahore-minister/>

SMOG SOARS TO ALARMING LEVEL IN LAHORE

By Nouman Sheikh Published: November 8, 2019

LAHORE: Smog soared to alarming levels in the provincial capital on Thursday, posing a threat to public health and forcing authorities to close schools.

According to Punjab Health Services Director General Dr Haroon Jahangir Khan, an alert was issued across the province and special counters were set up at all government hospitals. He added a campaign had also been launched to distribute masks and pamphlets to create awareness among the masses in Lahore, Sheikhpura, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Okara and Gujranwala.

Dr Khan said arrangements had been made to provide medicines at all public hospitals.

On the other hand, District Education Authority CEO Parvez Akhtar told The Express Tribune that the government has not decided to close schools on Friday (today), but there was a possibility that timings could be changed.

Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar, late on Wednesday night, announced the closure of all public and private schools on Thursday after the air quality index reached over 580 in some parts of the city.

Further, people have been advised that until smog persists, the elderly, children and the infirm should stay indoors with their windows closed. Doctors advised that people who feel the effects of smog should drink plenty of water and wear face masks if they have to venture outdoors.

Smog in the provincial capital may turn out to be fatal for motorcyclists. According to doctors, motorcyclists can be killed if they do not take precautions and fail to use helmets. Senior Physician Dr Faisal Rafiq told The Express Tribune that a layer of contaminated smoke, released from running buses, cars and factories, mixes into the air. "This problem of severe air pollution in the provincial capital has been present for the last several days."

Speaking on the effects of air pollution and the resulting smog, Dr Rafiq explained that if a motorcyclist is not wearing a helmet or mask during their ride, the substance enters the body while breathing. He added this results in nasal infection flu. "The infection spreads to the trachea, increasing the risk of pneumonia."

He added that smog may prove to be the most dangerous for infants as well as people over the age of sixty because of the poor immune functionality of their bodies, "Therefore, children and the elderly should not travel on motorcycles. They should use water to avoid the damage caused by smog, wear face masks as mandatory and not ride a motorcycle without a helmet."

"People over 60 years of age, who suffer from diabetes and asthma, must get vaccinated," he recommended.

Reportedly, traffic wardens have also been ordered to wear a mask during duty and to inform motorcyclists about the harms of smog.

Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Liaquat Ali Malik said that so far, action has been taken against 29,251 vehicles causing environmental pollution. "In response to the smog issue, City Traffic Police and the Department of Environment have joined forces and launched action to restrict those vehicles and buses which emit hazardous smoke and contribute to an increase in smog."

The CTO added that action was taken this year against thousands of vehicle owners over heavy fuel smoke. "The data shows as 4,014 vehicles in January, 2,112 vehicles in the month of February, 2,502

vehicles in March, 1,939 in the month of April, 2,271 in May, 1,821 in June, 1,683 in July, 1,167 in August, 2,141 in September and 9,701 vehicles were charged during the month of October.”

The highest number of vehicles was recorded in October and further action against polluting vehicles will be taken in November, he maintained. “Smog can be prevented by taking precautionary measures.”

The dangers of smog can be avoided through awareness. If we want to reduce the effects of smog, it is necessary to spread awareness through effective campaigns, he further said. The CTO instructed transporters to maintain smoke-free practices, ensure the cleanliness of vehicles and get their proper inspection on a regular basis. “Smog causes problems such as breathing issues, nose and throat diseases, and irritation to the eyes,” he said. He concluded that pollution-free air is key to a safe and healthy

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2095686/1-smog-soars-alarming-level-city/>

ALVI CALLS FOR PRESERVING ENVIRONMENT

NOVEMBER 9,2019

ISALAMABAD.President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday called for joint efforts at international level for preservation of environment to make the globe a better place to live for coming generations.

Addressing at the concluding session of three-day 7th International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Asia Regional Conservation Forum (RCF), the president said world leaders and stakeholders had an important role to play in sensitizing their nations on environmental issues, including water conservation and reduction in consumerism and waste material. President Alvi said Pakistan had lesser ecological footprint as compared to developed countries and was in fact bearing brunt of environmental degradation.

Besides leaders and government, he said the involvement of communities could better address the challenge of global warming.

A comprehensive plan of action initiating from recognition of environmental problem, geo-fencing and devising steps for effective implementation is important to save the world for the sake of humanity, he added.

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENL_ID=11201911090030&EN_ID=11201911090010&EMID=11201911090006

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOV 11th TO 17th

COURT SEEKS STEPS TO COPE WITH POLLUTION

Staff Reporter November 13, 2019

LAHORE: Justice Mamoon Rashid Sheikh of the Lahore High Court on Tuesday expressed concern over the growing environment pollution and observed that the situation needed effective measures to be taken by the authorities.

“Switching over to electric automobiles, solar power systems and modern technology for brick kilns are some of the steps taken by many countries to protect the environment,” observed the judge during hearing of two petitions filed against the failure of the government to control smog.

Advocate General of Punjab Ahmad Jamal Sukhera and petitioners’ counsel Rafay Alam and Azhar Siddique were present in the court.

Justice Sheikh recalled that there was a time when firefly, an insect whose tail produces light during night, was a common sight in the city. However, he lamented that the growing pollution made the fascinating insect a rare species.

Referring to a report, Mr Rafay said emissions of transport and industries were 80pc of the air pollution.

Mr Siddique argued the past governments had committed ‘terrorism’ with trees by felling them ruthlessly in the name of development projects.

AGP Sukhera endorsed observations of the judge saying environment was something which was important to everyone. Though Mr Sukhera was not supposed to represent the federal government, he shared personal knowledge with the court saying there were official deliberations on introduction of electric cars.

He said the incumbent government also had a policy of vertical construction instead of horizontal to save green areas. About shifting brick kilns to modern technology, he said it was a policy and political matter to be decided by the government.

To a query on bilateral talks with India on the issue of smog, Mr Rafay said in past there had been an official correspondence between chief ministers of Pakistan and India’s Punjab regarding crops stubble burning.

The court adjourned hearing till Nov 19 directing the law officer and petitioners’ counsel to sit together and come up with recommendations on the matter.

Published in Dawn, November 13th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1516409/court-seeks-steps-to-cope-with-pollution>

SMOG TURNS AIR ‘VERY UNHEALTHY’ IN LAHORE AREAS

Staff Reporter Updated November 14, 2019

LAHORE: Smog reached very unhealthy levels (as per the US Consulate readings) in Lahore on Wednesday, worsening eye and throat sores people have been suffering since the beginning of the annual menace around a week ago.

According to the Met department website, (which also quoted the US Consulate readings) the level of air quality index (AQI) in Lahore was 257 (very unhealthy).

US Consulate Twitter account nevertheless indicated much higher figures at different points in the city in the morning.

They showed 506 AQI at the US Consulate, 498 in Gulberg, 491 at Punjab Assembly, 489 at Liberty Market, 453 at Upper Mall, 384 in Allama Iqbal Town's Zeenat Block and 395 at Sundar Industrial Estate.

Smog or a high level of air pollution in Lahore is causing eye and throat irritation, skin rashes, besides generating or aggravating pulmonary diseases.

The Punjab environment department says the practice of paddy stubble burning, mainly by the Indian Punjab farmers, is the major contributing factor in the formation of smog during October and November for the past few years.

But independent sources say the permanent contributors to the unhealthy phenomenon include fuel emissions from vehicles on city roads, untreated emissions by industries, particularly steel re-rolling mills that burn used tyres and plastic waste material as an alternate to costly electricity and gas, besides the dirt. They say if crop stubble burning is one of the factors, it only adds to the huge domestic polluters contributions.

Meteorologists say that calm or low wind, low temperatures and humidity during this part of the year help form smog in the highly polluted areas. Humidity keeps the pollutants suspended in the air, they say.

Meanwhile, it remained partly cloudy in Lahore, keeping temperatures low and weather a bit cold. The city's maximum temperature was 25 degrees C and the minimum 15 degrees Celsius.

The Met department said, a westerly wave was affecting lower parts of the country and was likely to also cover central and upper parts on Wednesday night.

As a result, rain, wind/thunderstorm is expected at scattered places in south Punjab, Sindh and northeastern Balochistan, besides at isolated places in districts of upper Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir in the next 24 hours. Snowfall is also expected over mountain.

Meanwhile, the Punjab school education department has banned outdoor sports and other activities in all the public and private schools of the province because of smog till Dec 20.

Punjab Minister for School Education Murad Raas tweeted: "No outdoor activities in all public and private schools of Punjab till December 20, 2019 due to the Air Quality."

Secondly, all children should wear air filter masks during school hours and lastly, awareness sessions on environment should be held in all schools."

A department notification addressing all the chief executive officers of the district education authorities in Punjab says: "... there will be no outdoor sports and other activities up till 20th December in all public and private schools in Punjab due to smog."

It adds that all the students should wear masks while in the school during smog and that arrangements should also be made to create awareness among the students about air quality, prevention of smog and impact of environment on the health of human beings.

Published in Dawn, November 14th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1516541>

NA BODY VOICES CONCERN OVER FOREST DEPARTMENT'S POOR PERFORMANCE

By NAVEED BUTT on November 14, 2019

National Assembly Standing Committee on Climate Change has expressed serious concern and resentment over poor performance of forest departments of the provincial governments and directed them to submit comprehensive reports about plantation of trees and set targets in this regard.

The committee met with Munaza Hassan in the chair at Parliament House on Wednesday. The committee discussed the target of plantation under "The Billion Tree Tsunami Project" and issues relating to plastic shopping bags, national parks of Islamabad, Islamabad Wildlife Management Board and other issues.

The officials of forest departments of the provincial governments could not give satisfactory answers to the questions of the members of the committee. Even, it was exposed in the meeting that huge figures of plantation of trees are shown in the documents but nothing is on the ground.

The committee also recommended the forest departments of the provinces and Ministry of Climate Change to involve the local members of the national and provincial assemblies on the plantation process.

Committee member Dr Haider Ali Khan of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) told the committee that many trees are being cut in his areas and he had informed the concerned authority but it did not take any action.

Minister for Climate Change Zartaj Gul asked Khyber Pakhtunkhwa inspector general of forests to visit the areas along with Dr Haider Ali Khan and his team where trees are being cut and submit a report to the committee.

Committee Chairperson Munaza Hasan sought a comprehensive report about how many trees were cut and how many trees were planted. She said that forest departments should coordinate with concerned representatives of national and provincial assemblies for plantation of trees.

The committee was told that a total of 10 million trees including 0.2 million fruit trees were planted last year.

Zartaj Gul said that she was informed that 800,000 trees were planted in her constituency but when she visited the site, there were only eight plants.

When the members of the committee questioned about the achievement of target and detail of plantation in current year, an official of Punjab Forest department could not give satisfactory answer. Similarly, an official of KP forest department could not satisfy the committee while no official from Sindh participated in the meeting.

The committee expressed serious concern and resentment at this situation and directed the officers to present a comprehensive report at district level in the next meeting.

However, an official of AJK forest department said that 4.5 million trees have been planted so far and the target is assigned to plant 20.5 million trees for four years. The committee also recommended involving agriculture universities and youth for plantation.

The committee also discussed the issue of allocating National Park's land for the construction of restaurants in the middle of Margallah Hills National Park premises, causing immense loss to the wildlife and creating air pollution.

While discussing the issue about regularization of the employees of Islamabad Wildlife Management, the secretary Ministry of Climate Change told the committee that a board of this organization would be established in one month and services rules would be formulated in next three months.

The committee also discussed the ban on plastic shaping bags in Islamabad and recommended to provide alternative facility to the people.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/11/14/544151/na-body-voices-concern-over-forest-departments-poor-performance/>

DELHI SMOG HITS 'EMERGENCY' LEVELS

November 14, 2019

NEW DELHI: The Indian capital's notorious air pollution hit "emergency" levels again Wednesday, coinciding with a visit by Britain's Prince Charles.

New Delhi has been choked on and off for weeks, as industrial and traffic pollution — combined with smoke from crop stubble burning — cast a toxic pall over the metropolis.

For the second time in 10 days, the amount of 2.5PM — the deadly tiny particles that get into the bloodstream and lungs — hit "emergency" levels, nearly 20 times the safe limit set by the World Health Organisation.

With the government facing new criticism over steps taken to counter the pollution, Prince Charles visited the Indian Meteorology Department as part of his two-day visit to India.

Charles, frequently outspoken on green issues, was briefed on the crisis by Sunita Narain, a leading environmental activist.

She did not reveal details of her royal talks, but in a commentary last week said: "Every breath we take is poison."

Narain has called for faster moves away from coal and other "dirty fuels" as energy sources, and said authorities are doing "too little too late".

India's Supreme Court joined criticism of the government on Wednesday saying authorities had made "little constructive efforts" to curb pollution.

The court has ordered a new clampdown on stubble burning — in theory already banned — on farms surrounding the capital. It was acting because pollution "affects the vast majority of Indians."

Research released this year said the toxic smog across northern India cuts short the lives of around one million people each year. The Delhi state government has taken measures including banning construction and only allowing cars on the road depending on whether the registration is an odd or even number.—AFP

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2019/11/14/6-page/810122-news.html>

LAHORE'S AIR QUALITY STILL 'HAZARDOUS'

By Imran Adnan Published: November 14, 2019

LAHORE: Lahore's air quality continued to fluctuate within the 'hazardous' range. On Wednesday, the air quality index (AQI), as reported by AirVisual, a global air monitoring giant, was recorded to be 300 till the filing of this report.

A ranking of air quality and pollution indicates that Lahore is still second among the list of major polluted cities; Delhi came in first with an AQI of 505.

The information available on the AirVisual website has predicted that the air quality in the provincial capital will remain in the hazardous range till Saturday, November 16,. Little improvement has been predicted in the following days.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, an official from the Pakistan Meteorological Department claimed that the air quality of the provincial capital is improving, as compared to previous weeks. He maintained that on Wednesday, the average AQI was around 180, which is safe.

However, international air quality standards states that AQI beyond 100 is unhealthy for those the elderly and the infirm.

Health and environment experts have warned that burning crop remains could further worsen air quality in the provincial capital and adjoining cities; several cases of burning crop residue have been reported despite the imposition of a ban.

Experts also called for imposing a ban on burning coal and wood in open spaces for heating and recreational activities, such as barbeques.

Young Doctors' Association (YDA) General Secretary Dr Salman Kazmi underlined that felling trees are the main cause of environmental pollution and smog. "Due to an increase in smog and environmental pollution, many diseases are spreading," he said.

He appealed to the government to plant new trees and impose a ban on cutting greenery. He also advised the general public to take certain precautions when leaving the house and to avoid visiting places unnecessarily.

"Use facemasks when outside and travelling on motorcycles. When coughing, place a cloth over your mouth," he advised.

Meanwhile, Punjab Industries, Trade and Information Minister Mian Aslam Iqbal presided over a meeting on Wednesday at the Provincial Board of Investment and Trade Office. Preemptive measures to combat smog and converting kilns to zigzag technology were discussed.

During the meeting, it was unanimously agreed to carve out a roadmap in consultation with brick kiln owners to shift them onto zigzag technology. Punjab Environment Protection Minister Muhammad Rizwan, Punjab Environment Protection Secretary Salman Ijaz, All Pakistan Brick Kiln Association President Shoaib Khan Niazi and others also participated in the meeting.

Speaking at the ceremony, the trade minister stated that under the formulated roadmap, 8,000 brick kilns will be shifted to zigzag technology. “We do not wish to cease someone’s income by closing down brick kilns. We have to control smog using effective measures,” he said.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) government, he maintained, was determined to provide the younger generation a pollution-free environment. Brick kilns located near cities will be shifted to zigzag technology on a priority basis, he maintained.

Punjab Environment Protection Minister Muhammad Rizwan informed the participants that the Environment Protection Department is working proactively towards eliminating smog. Various decisions will be taken keeping in view the problems being faced by the common man and in order to overcome problems related to the phenomenon, he concluded.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 14th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2099028/1-lahores-air-quality-still-hazardous/>

‘135,000 DIE OF BAD AIR QUALITY EACH YEAR IN PAKISTAN’

Xari Jalil Updated November 15, 2019

LAHORE: Environmental activists and medical practitioners, including the representatives of the Young Doctors Association (YDA), held a demonstration and talk outside the Jinnah Hospital on Thursday regarding the smog crisis in the provincial capital.

In an air quality index (AQI) of around 450, those gathered demanded the provincial government show what concrete steps it had taken to control the air pollution levels. An online petition is also being circulated where doctors’ demands were made.

Dr Zulfiqar Mir who was leading the demonstration said that according to a research by The Lancet (a health journal) shocking number of at least 135,000 people, most of them children, die annually in Pakistan, only because of air pollution.

Research by Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) has pointed out that Lahore residents have started facing a reduction of life expectancy by five years.

“Most doctors themselves are unaware of enormity of the situation that’s why they have not taken the call till now. They should treat this as a campaign like they do dengue and smoking,” Mr Mir said.

He termed epidemiological research as integral to know where we stood to measure the burden of smog.

Environmental activist Aysha Raja spoke about the substandard fuel being a major culprit in the contribution of particulate matter 2.5. She said while the world standard was set at Euro 6 emission standards, the Punjab Clean Air Action Plan had set its own standards which were only at Euro 4; however, even that was not being followed.

“We are currently still at Euro 2 perhaps,” she said and mentioned the high sulphur content causing a huge problem.

Currently, the desired limit of sulphur in fuel is at Euro 6 which is 5 to 10 parts per million or 0.0005g/km. But High Speed Diesel Pak-2 standard for example has 1,000 parts per million.

Students from the Huqooq-i-Khalq Movement said that they would be making climate change and the air pollution issue a major part of their student solidarity march happening on Nov 29. They expressed their anger at the indifference being shown by the government.

Parents had also gathered to protest against the health impacts of pollution.

Nida Usman Chaudhry, a participant, likened the smog crisis impact to being almost as scary as a terrorist attack.

Dr Aliya from the Jinnah Hospital said the government should give out PM2.5 masks free, especially to those of lower socioeconomic classes, because they could not afford spending Rs300 on one mask. Sanitary workers and traffic police should get these masks as they are most exposed, she said.

In the demonstration, it was reiterated that the pollutants of the greatest health concern were the fine airborne particulates produced by combustion of fossil fuels and biomass, both PM 10 but PM 2.5 being far worse. The particulate air pollution has been linked to heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive lung disease, lung cancer, premature birth, dementia, and adverse effects on brain development.

The group demanded in their petition that measures detailed by the report of the Commission on Smog 2018 must be implemented. These include publicising data and findings of air pollution impacts, development of health emergency responses at district level, the passage of the Punjab Clean Air Act to define emission and demarcate areas for clean-up, declare Smog Days when the average PM 2.5 level exceeds unhealthy levels of above 35.4 kg/m³ and the AQI exceeds 151. During this time, the children are to be kept home from school and parks are closed as these concentrations of pollutants in the air constitute a public health emergency.

Other than this, they demanded that school buses, odd-even days, and carpooling for all children travelling more than 1km to school should be encouraged and implemented, hotspots be identified (where the concentration of PM 2.5 is highest) and institute strict controls on the volume of traffic and vehicular emissions passing through, expand public transport infrastructure, shut down industrial units operating without emission control equipment, and close down coal-fired plants and transition to cleaner energy sources as a medium to long-term strategy, within 2-3 years.

Published in Dawn, November 15th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1516779>

DUST DECREASES VISIBILITY IN KARACHI

By Our Correspondent Published: November 15, 2019

KARACHI: Visibility drastically decreased from six kilometres (km) to 800 metres in Karachi on Thursday morning, mainly due to the suspension of dust particles in the atmosphere. Later in the day, it slightly increased to 1km. Moreover, as cold grips the city, the weather is expected to remain cloudy today (Friday). Light showers may also be experienced today.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), strong northwestern winds blowing at 40km per hour in the city caused the number of dust particles in the atmosphere to soar. However, reduced visibility did not cause any interruption in flight operations at Jinnah Terminal.

Meanwhile, the minimum temperature recorded in the city on Thursday was 21 degrees Celsius and the maximum temperature recorded was 30 degrees Celsius.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2099863/1-dust-decreases-visibility-karachi/>

AIR POLLUTION CLAIMS 135,000 LIVES IN PAKISTAN YEARLY

By RECORDER REPORT on November 16, 2019

Medical professionals, academics, students and environmentalists have called for initiating meaningful action on health emergency caused by air pollution.

Senior medical doctor and researcher, Dr Zulfiqar Mir said that approximately 135,000 people die prematurely every year in Pakistan due to air pollution. "Most of the deaths occur in Punjab, especially in Lahore. This is a public health emergency. We want the environmental, health and climate departments to take note of this critical issue," he said while addressing a press conference on Friday.

Emergency measures should be taken to reduce the air and safeguard the public's well-being, he said, adding: "The government should implement the existing smog and clean air policies, and go even farther to check pollution to safeguard the public's health."

Dr Alia Haider outlined measures which include transforming the two largest polluting sectors – transport and health by building a sustainable public transport infrastructure and getting polluting vehicles off the road, shutting down industrial units that are violating regulations, shutting down coal-fired power plants and transitioning to renewable energy production.

Pediatrician, Dr Intesar, and ENT, Dr ShahRukh, discussed the health impacts of breathing air filled with carcinogens and particulate matter that is absorbed into the body's organs.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/11/16/544897/air-pollution-claims-135000-lives-in-pakistan-yearly/>

‘POLITICKING’ ON PUBLIC HEALTH: GOVT RETRACTS PLEDGE TO CLOSE DOWN OLD-FASHIONED BRICK KILNS

Intikhab Hanif Updated November 17, 2019

LAHORE: The Punjab government on Saturday retracted its earlier announcement of closing down old-fashioned brick kilns in central and north eastern Punjab to control smog currently tormenting people, saying it did not want to "increase the problems of people or render anyone jobless."

The decision was made at a meeting held at the Alhamra between Industries Minister Aslam Iqbal and representatives of the All Pakistan Brick Kilns Association led by its president Shoaib Niazi.

The Environment Protection Department had earlier announced that the old fashioned brick kilns would be closed down from November 1, 2019 to prevent them from contributing to smog. Later, the chief minister extended the deadline till Nov 5.

Insiders say the decision to defer the closure was “politically motivated”. It seems the political leadership succumbed to the brick kiln owners pressure, they say. On technical grounds these units should have been closed down in the Red Zone comprising districts of Lahore, Gujranwala etc.

Smog or air pollution has reached critical levels in Lahore and elsewhere. It was touching ‘hazardous levels’ again on Saturday.

A handout issued by the government said no brick kiln would nevertheless be allowed to use substandard fuel. All would be switched over to zigzag technology till December 31, 2020. Brick kilns of central Punjab -- from Jhelum to Okara -- will be switched to it within four months in the first phase.

It was also decided in the meeting to close 84 new brick kilns using obsolete technology would be demolished on failure to transfer to new technology within two months.

An agreement will be signed with the brick kiln association for ensuring implementation on the decisions.

The minister said no brick kiln in the province would be closed as “we do not want to increase difficulties of common man by closing brick kilns”.

He said those not following the instructions would be dealt with sternly.

He said after December 31, 2020 no brick kiln would be operated without zigzag technology. He said that “steps” would be taken to control smog but no one would be made jobless by closing the brick kilns.

Published in Dawn, November 17th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1517125>

HIGH LEVELS OF DUST POLLUTION IN KARACHI CAUSING ASTHMA, ALLERGIES

Faiza Ilyas Updated November 17, 2019

High levels of dust in the city generated by construction projects and bad roads has created health hazards, as seen in the SITE area and (right) North Nazimabad. —Fahim Siddiqi/White Star

KARACHI: Health experts have raised alarm over the unusually high number of patients they are examining these days with upper and lower respiratory tract infections and allergies and believe that the major contributing factors to these ailments were high levels of dust pollution in the city and changing weather conditions.

They said patients with chronic asthma or those vulnerable to asthma, apart from the elderly and children, were the worst sufferers as these environmental conditions were aggravating their ailments.

“There is a huge increase in the number of patients reporting with upper respiratory tract infections including rhinitis characterised by a runny nose, sneezing, stuffiness and sinusitis manifesting with fever, headaches, cough and sore throat,” said Dr Qaiser Sajjad, a senior ear-nose-throat (ENT) specialist.

Dr Sajjad was of the opinion that while there could be multiple factors for poor air quality, what’s visible to the naked eye was the flying dust in the city due to the ongoing constructions, broken roads and the debris lying along roads.

“The irony is if you park your newly washed car anywhere in the city, you would see that it would be covered with dust in two to three hours.

“Dust doesn’t remain restricted to one place and spreads with the wind, at times through other means, such as vehicle tires,” he said, regretting the lack of government oversight over the construction of various development projects in the city.

‘The elderly and children under seven are more vulnerable as they have a weak immune system’

“These project developers should be bound under the law to sprinkle their construction material with water so that chances of harm by flying dust is minimised,” he said, adding that people should also take ownership of their localities and pressurise their elected representatives to ensure responsible attitude on the part of project developers.

Dr Tariq Rafi, another senior ENT specialist, was of the view that cases of allergies generally increased at the onset of winter.

“What’s, however, deteriorating environmental conditions is high levels of dust polluting the air. People should avoid going to places with flying dust or use protective masks, if they go out.

“Those who are vulnerable to allergies should also stop interaction with animals at this time of the season and try and visit places with fresh air,” he said.

In addition, one should avoid smoking/passive smoking and minimise use of air conditioners as they created dryness and circulated the same [polluted] air in the room, he suggested.

To a question about prolonged exposure to dust pollution, he said it could cause asthma and bronchitis, in both cases the airways become inflamed, making it harder for air to move into the lungs causing symptoms like shortness of breath, coughing and chest tightness.

“The elderly and children under seven are more vulnerable as they have a weak immune system. In extreme cases, there is a danger of pneumonia, which can be life-threatening,” he said.

Dr Kamran Khan, who works at the chest department of the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, is equally concerned as he is seeing a lot of cases with allergic rhinitis as well as patients whose asthma had exacerbated, requiring emergency care.

“We have been handling a high burden of such patients for over a month or so. Children and women patients are reporting more. Presently, around 1,000 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,” he said.

The hospital, he said, had to add more beds to the 100-bedded ward to accommodate increasing number of patients.

Suggesting measures for protection, Dr Nadeem Rizvi, a senior pulmonologist, said people should avoid dust, smoke and strong smell.

“Drink hot liquids as they help improve blood circulation in the throat, which increases immunity against infectious agents and throat allergies,” he said.

He strongly recommended wearing good quality disposable protective masks, especially for bike riders, which could easily be purchased from a medical store.

“If that is not available, one should at least cover the nose with a piece of cotton cloth for protection against dust pollution. But, that cloth should be washed daily,” he said.

He lamented negligence and apathy on the part of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, cantonment boards and the Defence Housing Authority, which let sweepers be exposed to dust during their duties without wearing any protective gear.

The same attitude, he emphasised, was required from employers at industries where chemicals and other harmful agents were handled.

It is important to mention here that three air quality monitoring stations of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa), which were made operational on the intervention of a Supreme Court-mandated water commission last year, have been dysfunctional once again for the past many months for want of maintenance.

Sources said that Sepa didn't have the required funds and signed an agreement with a non-governmental organisation to do the needful.

No Sep official was available for comment on the growing dust pollution in the city, the health problems being caused by it and the action taken by the department on its data.

“It also needs to explain why air quality standards were changed after devolution for Sindh as they strongly deviated from the WHO guidelines. The SEQs allow higher levels of pollutants,” a Sepa official said on condition of anonymity.

Published in Dawn, November 17th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1517103>

WILDLIFE IN PERIL: RISING HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT LEADS TO LOSS OF FAUNA IN K-P

By Ihtisham Khan / Shahabullah Yousufzai Published: November 17, 2019

PESHAWAR: The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhawa is home to an extensive variety of wildlife, including over 50 species of mammals, 42 species of reptiles and several hundred species of birds.

However, as the province's human population grows and encroaches on animal territory, the two have found themselves at odds in what could be called a human-wildlife conflict.

In the latest encounter, three rare leopards were shot dead in Darra Adam Khel of Khyber agency, while several such attacks have also been reported in surrounding regions of Shangla, Orakzai, upper Swat and Dir district, in the last few months. Previously, two leopards were also shot dead near the tribal areas of Darra Adam Khel, while another fell prey to a bullet near the hills of Nizampur, a few years ago.

According to local shepherds, the leopards are a looming threat to their livestock. "After the attack on our livestock, we waited for ten day to catch the leopard alive but it had to be shot when the situation escalated," Shakir Afridi, a shepherd party to the mob which hunted down one of the leopards in Darra Adam Khel told The Express Tribune.

The area where the encounter took place is a mountainous terrain at a distance of some 15 kilometres from the Dara Adam Khel Bazaar. "The lush green forests and hills spanning several kilometres cover the area between Torchipar, Sunkkhel, Basti Khel and Emam Khel, which for decades has served as a safe haven for many rare and endangered species of animals," said Sami Afridi, a district local. "Since the population has grown and expanded into the territory of the wild and hijacked their habitat, these animals have no option but to linger into our neighbourhoods in search of food."

As per Pakistan Wildlife Foundation's Vice Chairperson and Media Manager, Safwan Shahab Ahmed, these encounters are a result of 'human-wildlife conflict' caused by humans encroaching on animal territories. "It is because of reasons like land reclamation and military operations in K-P, that wildlife is often driven out of their natural habitat and forced to walk into human settlements."

Talking about the frequent sightings of leopards in human settlements, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Niaz Ahmed Khaskheli shared that the recent military operations in Malakand division could be a plausible reason. He believes the continued intrusion of wildlife territory agitates the animals and the loss of their habitat due to the bombings and gunfire drives them out of the woodworks only to be shot dead by the locals.

Taking notice of the situation, the provincial government has launched several campaigns to curb the killing of wildlife in the newly merged districts of Malakand and Chitral. According to DFO Kohat division Abdul Samad, the government has imposed penalties, introduced new policies and launched anti-encroachment drives in a bid to protect local wildlife from endangerment. "Two months ago a tribal man from Darra Adam Khel was charged a penalty of Rs. 1 million for killing a rare leopard, which he eventually paid" Samad shared with The Express Tribune. He further informed that according to Pakistan Wildlife Foundation's policy, in the event of any livestock harmed by wildlife, the owner is eligible for financial reimbursement by the government, provided that the attack is duly reported to the department.

Following the loss of wildlife in Darra Adam Khel and other tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhawa, the provincial government has allocated a smart budget of Rs. 365 million for the expansion and access of wildlife department in tribal districts.

The loss of endangered snow-leopard population, which according to unofficial records has fallen to 100 in the province's mountainous regions, is another matter of concern for K-P authorities. In a bid to conserve and restore the snow-leopard population, the provincial government has decided to set up wildlife departments in all eight tribal districts of the province.

However, according to locals, the government needs to introduce proper legislation for the conservation of wildlife in K-P and other parts of Pakistan. “The matter needs to be dealt with proper strategy,” opined Shakir Afridi. “The government needs to start community awareness programs in settlements close to wildlife territories and introduce wildlife sanctuaries and conservation parks to increase the falling number of endangered leopards,” he added.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 17th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2100962/1-wildlife-peril-rising-human-wildlife-conflict-leads-loss-fauna-k-p/>

IN PUNJAB, BRICK KILNS TO GO ZIGZAG BY DECEMBER 31

By Our Correspondent Published: November 17, 2019

LAHORE: Brick kilns, which haven't been converted to zigzag technology, will have till December 31, 2019, to continue functioning. This was decided during a meeting chaired by Minister of Industry and Commerce Mian Aslam Iqbal at Al-Hamra. The moot was also attended by Environment Conservation Secretary Salman Ijaz

Provincial Minister Mian Aslam Iqbal, while addressing the meeting, said he did not want to increase the problems of the common man by breaking brick kilns. He said these would continue to run, but would not be able to use low quality fuel. “If we get any complaints about brick kilns using tyres, plastic or battery cells, we will take action against them. He said no brick kilns would run on the old pattern after December 31, 2020.

The provincial minister said that providing a clean and healthy environment to people is the priority of the government and it did not intend to spread unemployment. At the same time, he stressed it was important to take steps to control smog.

As per official statistics, the Air Quality Index (AQI) of Lahore touched 189 and 346 at Jail Road and Wagha Border respectively. While as per international standard, AQI ranging between 0 and 50 is considered satisfactory and air pollution poses a little or no risk. AQI value between 51 and 100 is acceptable; however, for some pollutants, there may be a moderate health concern but for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution. It shows that AQI value 101-150 is unhealthy for sensitive groups but it may not affect the general public. AQI ranging between 151 and 200 is unhealthy that may cause health effects on everyone while members of the sensitive groups may experience serious health effects. AQI value between 201 and 300 indicates health alert as everyone may experience more serious health effects. The hazardous level is indicated with AQI 301-500 as it is a public health emergency. The entire populations are more likely to be affected.

Earlier, all public and private schools were closed due to high levels of smog in the city.

The Punjab government took a late-night decision after a sudden spike in Lahore's Air Quality Index (AQI) from less than 200 to more than 500.

“All Schools of Lahore (public and private) to remain closed tomorrow [on] November 7, 2019,” said Provincial Minister for School Education Dr Murad Raas in a tweet at the time.

Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar also directed the concerned staff to enhance efforts to control crop burning besides undertaking other steps to curb smog in the city.

Before that, the Punjab government submitted a report in the Lahore High Court (LHC) about the decisions taken to avert smog in the upcoming winter season.

A law officer submitted the report before Justice Shahid Karim, who was hearing a petition seeking a ban on the operation of brick kilns and burning of crop remains in the province.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 17th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2101016/1-punjab-brick-kilns-go-zigzag-december-31/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOV 18th TO 24th

NEW POLICY TO IMPROVE FOREST COVER IN SINDH FINALISED

Imtiaz Ali Updated November 18, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh government is planning to introduce a new forest policy to protect recently recovered thousands of acres from encroachers and to address the critical issue of climate change, it emerged on Sunday.

Sources said that the proposed Sindh Sustainable Forest Management Policy was in compliance with the Supreme Court's order specifically required retrieving forest lands (illegal allotments by the Board of Revenue and encroached lands) and bring the forests back in view of the climate change.

The policy underlined the urgency of bringing vacated areas under afforestation process as quickly as possible as there were apprehensions that vacated areas might be re-encroached given their vastness and remoteness in lawless kacha areas of the province.

The policy proposed the option community participation in afforestation as well as protection of existing forest stock in riverine and irrigated plantation. Thus, the proposed policy focus for community led/community involved partnership approach to restore forests in riverine areas of Sindh.

It said that the alternate to community participation was a massive fiscal investment by the government, but it was not possible to undertake such a massive investment in forest rehabilitation.

The forest management policy proposes community participation in afforestation

The total forest area in Sindh was 888,206 acres and on the directives of the apex court 218,000 acres had been retrieved from encroachers.

In addition to the retrieved land, 382,000 acres unutilized forest land available in Sindh, the sources said, adding that hence the total land ready for afforestation was approximately 600,000 acres.

The sources apprehended that in the absence of an approved policy on a partnership approach or provision of funding by the government for rehabilitation of forests, it was likely that the vacated areas and unutilized forest land might be re-encroached or re-occupied by the encroachers once again.

Therefore, the forest department had moved a summary seeking approval of the draft policy to bring the vacated and unutilized forest areas under tree cover through the partnership approach.

It also sought Rs18 billion in phases in three years —Rs6bn per annum — for rehabilitation forests by the department through its own staff.

Official documents revealed that the first-ever scientific inventory of forests in Sindh was conducted in 1994 with the technical assistance of the Asian Development Bank under a Sindh forestry development project.

Its results indicated that 21 per cent area (43,000 hectares) of riverine forests and 17pc area (13,000 hectares) of irrigated plantations were under cover of “productive/commercial tree species” and the remaining forest area was “de-gradated and occupied by non-commercial woody vegetation”.

Since then, no further scientific inventory of the state forests in Sindh had been conducted. However, in 2007 it was reported that the forests covered 2.5pc of the total area in Sindh.

Host of reasons have been cited behind the decline in the forest cover in Sindh such as “poor governance, weak law enforcement capacity of the forest department, decline in river flows and low priority assigned to forestry sector in financial resources allocation”.

Furthermore, demographic changes, hydrological changes, market forces, lack of alternatives of forest products and “land hunger” were stated to be contributory factors behind the decline of forests in the province.

Moreover, it has been pointed out in the official documents that the agro-forestry lease policy of 2005 had been proved “counter-productive and detrimental for the forests”, resultantly local communities who were traditionally dependent on the forests for their livelihood, wood for domestic use and fodder for livestock had suffered immensely.

Referring to a global paradigm shift for forest management, the draft policy pointed out that forests were considered as vital for the provision of environmental services such as climate deregulation, soil and water conservation, biodiversity conservation, pollution control and protection against natural disasters.

Thus, providing timber, fuel-wood and fodder was no longer considered as the key objective of managing forests.

Under these circumstances, it suggested that “a well-defined direction, strong political and professional commitment” was required for betterment of the society through conservation of forests.

The Sindh High Court had on Jan 30 also barred cultivation of crops on forest lands or its use for agriculture purposes.

Published in Dawn, November 18th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1517319>

STAKEHOLDERS QUESTION SEPA OVER GROWING AIR POLLUTION

By Faiza Ilyas | 11/20/2019 12:00:00 AM

KARACHI: Growing air pollution in the city and the failure of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) to ensure effective monitoring of projects during their construction and operational phases emerged as major concerns shared by stakeholders at a public hearing organised on Tuesday at the Institution of Engineers, Pakistan.

Organised by Sepa, the hearing pertained to the Pak Suzuki Motor Company Limited's (PSMCL) expansion project, which has been proposed adjacent to the company's existing facility at Pakistan Steel Industrial Estate in Bin Qasim Town.

The information shared during the event showed that the project is estimated to cost \$450 million and involves establishment of a new plant, its stor-age area and an internal road network at PSMCL's leased area of over 70 acres.

The new plant to be financed by the Suzuki Motor Corporation Japan would initially have the capacity to produce 120,000 four-wheelers annually which would eventually increase to 200,000.

The programme began with a presentation of the project by Sohalb Tariq representing the Environmental Management Consultants (EMC) Pakistan, the company which carried out the project's environmental evaluation.

Sharing findings of the EIA report, Mr Tariq said activities in the automotive plant, such as welding, painting and vehicle testing, might affect indoor air quality of the plant for which the consultants had suggested installation of ventilation systems.

The paint process, the audience was informed, would discharge effluent high in biochemical oxygen demand and chemical oxygen demand.

The plant's effluent and sewage, it was pointed out, would be discharged in drains after treatment.

'Non-hazardous and non-recyclable wastes would be disposed of to the landfill sites through municipal administration whereas hazardous waste would be sent for off-site incineration through EPA-certified waste contractor,' Tariq said.

The EIA report consultants described the project as environmentally safe if the environmental management plan was implemented by the proponent in letter and spirit.

As the floor opened for the question-answer session, stakeholders represented by a diverse range of experts, former government officials, journalists and students raised a number of concerns, including the lack of initiative on part of foreign investors to transfer skills and technology to locals and help upgrade the local industry, and the mechanisms the new plant would have to ensure non-release of hazardous compounds.

'Toothless' Sepa The most pressing concerns, however, pertained to availability of basic utilities especially water to the project, Sepa's lack of organisational capacity to enforce law and bind project proponents to fulfil the commitments they make during public hearings.

‘While air pollution in the city has reached dangerous levels, more and more projects are coming up with least compliance with environmental rules and regulations,’ said senior Engineer A.A. Chandani, adding that Sepa was failing to carry out proper post-construction monitoring of projects.

In this context, he questioned whether the department had envisaged any plan to address the pollution being generated by growing number of vehicles.

‘More vehicles on the road means more pollution. We generally talk of vehicular emissions but little understanding exists about the hazardous pollutants released by tyre-road friction,’ he observed, asking what would happen when 160,000 more vehicles would come on city’s already congested roads.

He also questioned why many industrial units were ‘illegally’ getting supply of fresh water when it was only meant for domestic purposes.

Stakeholders also shared concerns over the status of treatment plants in the city and said none of the existing ones were functioning while work on new projects was suspended.

They urged Sepa to make its operation transparent and upload the NOCs (no-objection certificates) it granted to proponents so people could see the conditions the department had attached for project’s development.

Replying to some of these questions, Sepa’s Director General Naeem Mughal said that the department was planning to set up an overseeing committee comprising stakeholders from various fields to monitor projects.

He agreed to the reservations over growing pollution in the city and expressed the resolve to prosecute the parties whose projects were causing pollution.

‘We would ask the Pak Suzuki company to implement the standards which it follows in Japan,’ he said, emphasising that industries should upgrade their treatment plants, recycle their waste water and use it.

He also informed the audience about the monitoring process the department had undertaken for vehicular emissions.

https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=20_11_2019_116_008

70 BABY TURTLES RELEASED INTO THE SEA

By Our Correspondent Published: November 20, 2019

KARACHI: At least 70 green baby turtles were released on Tuesday morning at the Hawkes Bay Beach.

The visitors at the beach were not allowed to disturb the activity.

Officials of the Sindh Wildlife Department (SWD) said that it was the first release of the season, adding that more such activities will occur in the coming days as the breeding season will continue till February.

Historically, three types of turtles, including the green turtles, hawksbill turtles and olive ridley turtles, used to visit Pakistan during the breeding season. “Only green turtles visit our waters now,” said Provincial Conservator SWD Javed Mahar. Adnan Khan, the deputy conservator of the department, said that a team has been deputed at the Marine Turtle Conservation Unit located at the Hawkes Bay Beach. “They look after the babies and release them when they can easily walk to the waters,” he added.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 20th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2102926/1-70-baby-turtles-released-sea/>

‘IN LAHORE, SMOG TOUCHES ALARMING LEVELS IN NEARLY TWO YEARS’

By Imran Adnan Published: November 20, 2019

LAHORE: Even though air quality of provincial capital and adjoining district touched alarming level during the current season for the past two years, neither the previous government of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) nor the Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI) regime could rein in contributors of air and environment pollution.

A non-governmental organisation (NGO) working in the environment sector, WBM Foundation, highlighted that owing to the negligence of environmental protection agencies in Pakistan, as many as 2,000 traditional brick kilns are operational in South Punjab till September.

It pointed out that like other South Asian countries, winter conditions are causing severe environmental issues in Pakistan, especially in South and Central Punjab, which are not only affecting routine life but also intensifying respiratory diseases among masses.

It indicated that even though in several areas of the country deep swamp conditions were being witnessed during October to December since past two years, but neither the provincial nor federal government took any serious step to deal with this situation.

It pointed out that a delegation of Nepalese environment experts visited areas in South Punjab in September and highlighted the fact that over 2,000 traditional brick kilns are working in the area.

It states that these obsolete brick kilns are causing extreme toxic smoke in the deeper air and cause severe environmental pollution. Citing estimates of Nepalese experts, WBM Foundation, highlights that cooking around 1,000 bricks in coal-fired kiln pollute two kilometres of the areas with toxic smoke, which causes deep flames combined with fog in the winter. However, with new zigzag technology, this pollution could be reduced up to 40%.

Though citizens of Pakistan, especially Punjab, are facing severe smog for the past three years the government has only five air quality stations which clearly states the seriousness of the government.

The WBM Foundation warns that in the absence of detailed quality data the government would not be able to formulate a comprehensive strategy to deal with this environmental hazard.

Speakers at a recent seminar organised to raise awareness on smog highlighted that besides the environment, smog has also an economic aspect. The seminar indicated that in the 90s used to harvest and plough fields manually.

After crop harvesting, the usual practice was to leave crop residues for 4-6 weeks to enhance nutrients for the next crop. However, with the rise of population, farmers have to leave manual practices and adopted mechanised harvesting to meet food demands. Though this practice benefited a lot but compromised air quality with burning crop residue in fields to cut their costs.

In cold season when prices of conventional fuel, including firewood, coal and gas skyrocket, the poor segment of the society are left with no other option to find the cheapest source of fuel. To curb environmental pollution the government has imposed a ban on obsolete technology brick kilns. A similar ban was also imposed last year but almost two years have been passed the government has failed to announce any sort of relief for brick kiln workers for this period.

Punjab Minister for Industries and Trade Mian Aslam Iqbal has announced that all brick kilns in the province will be transformed on zigzag technology till December 31, 2020. Brick kilns of central Punjab from Jehlum to Okara will be transferred on zigzag technology within four months in the first phase. Brick kilns will be closed forever that fail to transfer on new technology within the stipulated time.

It was also decided in a recent meeting to close 84 new brick kilns that were made on obsolete technology. These brick kilns will be demolished on failure to transfer on new technology within two months. An agreement will be signed with the brick kiln association for ensuring implementation on decisions.

Iqbal said no brick kiln in the province will be closed as we do not want to increase difficulties of the common man by closing brick kilns. He said no brick kiln will be allowed to use substandard fuel, strict action will be taken if there comes a complaint. He said that after December 31, 2020, no brick kiln will be run without zigzag technology.

He said it was the topmost priority of the government to provide a clean environment to the people. He said steps would be taken to control the smog but no one would be made jobless by closing the brick kilns.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 20th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2102856/1-lahore-smog-touches-alarming-levels-nearly-two-years/>

CITIZEN INITIATIVES MAY REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

By Rana Aamir Aslam Published: November 20, 2019

BHAKKAR: Environmental pollution and ever-increasing population have greatly affected human life, particularly in urban areas.

In cities, the lack of open and cultivated places, and the negligence of citizens towards greenery, has resulted in a polluted atmosphere. The need to have parks and green walking paths has been so greatly valued among the public.

In view of this problem, developed and developing countries are promoting rooftop gardening and farming in newly-constructed buildings. These green buildings not only allow horticultural enthusiasts

to fulfill their need of having greenery in their spaces, but also contribute to the reduction of air pollution.

Terrace farming is not a new concept. Traces of this method can be found in Roman history, dating back to the 6th century BC and during the Muslim era of 11th century Egypt. After Muslim rulers of Egypt started taking interest in the construction of 14-storey buildings, terrace farming was promoted and kitchen gardening was done on roofs. Horticulture was also promoted on roofs and vegetables were also grown with a modern and reasonably well arranged irrigation pattern.

Fast forward to today, the urban trend of building several concrete floors in a building discourages terrace farming due to a lack of space for horticultural activity. Pakistan does not currently have the custom of designating green spaces in buildings, as compared to developed countries.

There is a lack of research regarding different aspects of human life. Metropolitan cities lack open spaces needed to grow plants in large buildings for natural beauty and clean air.

There are many citizens in the country who do not have open spaces for gardening.

Citizens need to be encouraged to commit to regular gardening on the roofs of their homes, flats, apartments, or offices, and keep their roofs green by using available equipment to grow plants. Decorative plants can be grown on roofs while certain vegetables and fruits can be easily grown to meet kitchen needs.

To achieve this goal, some tips and precautions should be followed for gardening in limited spaces to avoid any potential damage to residential buildings.

Planting vegetables on rooftops can significantly reduce seasonal effects of heat during summer. In urban areas, where sun exposure increases the temperature of concrete walls, the shorter the distance between paved buildings, the lesser the air passages increase the intensity of the atmosphere. The presence of vegetation and greenery in such areas contributes to lower temperature.

In cooler areas, these plants also help to increase the temperature and keep the environment clean. Moreover, the plants on rooftops provide you with an atmosphere, where one can spend a few moments of relaxation.

Choosing appropriate plants is also an important step for gardening on roofs. One of the key things to keep in mind is that whichever plants are selected for gardening on the roof, their size and the amount of soil needed for the roots will depend on your roof capacity.

Certain plant species require much more space and may end up becoming a burden on the roof or require too much soil. There are also plants and fruit trees available in Pakistan that you can easily grow in pots. From a nursery, one can select lemon, malta, guava, apple, grape and many other plants that are commonly referred to as 'China plants'. As the size of these plants is small and because they grow a good number of fruits, citizens often opt for these when gardening at their homes. Vegetables such as tomatoes, chilies, mint, coriander, eggplant, sesame seeds, cucumber, pumpkin, carrot, radish, corn and other varieties can also easily grow in limited space. Along with these, there are also seasonal ornamental plants, as well as permanent decorative plants, whose trimming and easy care allows you to build an entire garden on the roof of your home.

Similarly, the practice of vertical gardening is also being promoted nowadays. For the first time in Pakistan, 'Qadir Bakhsh Farms' in Faisalabad has introduced vertical walls in which you can easily

grow decorative plants as well as vegetables and fruits. This is a very suitable method for vertical gardening which satisfies a gardener's hobby where there is a lack of space. Precautions

Whenever roof gardening or planting is planned, the roof of the building must first be evaluated to see if it is sufficient for growing plants. Secondly, there should be proper arrangement for excess water emissions. The amount of sunlight on the roofs should also be evaluated and plants should be selected accordingly. For plants that need more sunshine, sunny places should be selected while plants that need less sunshine should be placed in shady areas. Large plants should be placed where other plants, that need more sunlight, are not affected by the larger plants' shade. Smaller plants should be kept in places where there is a suitable environment for nourishment.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2102899/1-citizen-initiatives-may-reduce-environmental-problems/>

AI CAMPAIGN RAISES GLOBAL CONCERN OVER LAHORE'S AIR QUALITY

Xari Jalil November 22, 2019

LAHORE: "Urgent Actions" – an Amnesty International (AI) campaign has raised serious concerns about how the hazardous air quality in Lahore has been posing a risk to the public health.

It says that every person in this city of over 10 million people, is at serious risk for developing complex health issues thanks to bad air quality.

"Urgent Actions" is a campaigning tool that AI has been using to mobilise global support for the victims of human rights' violations and for prisoners of conscience

Previously, it was issued regarding the Asiya Bibi blasphemy case.

The human rights organisation is currently mobilising the world's population to campaign for Lahore's constant smog problem, and to speak for the millions who live in Pakistan's second largest city.

The smog -- the 'fifth season' -- as it is called now, occurs between October and February in the region when several factors combine and worsen the already unhealthy air. Poor fuel quality, uncontrolled industrial emissions, and open burning of garbage as well as crop stubble are some of the causes.

On Wednesday, once again, Lahore was enveloped by a blanket of thick smoke, creating visibility issues and slowing down traffic, especially in the downtown. People travelling between cities said that they could sense a burning odour.

Air Visual Earth showed Wednesday's Air Quality Index (AQI) to have shot up to a maximum of around 852, while other readings showed AQI of 555, 471, 396, 481, etc. Most of these pockets were in central Lahore, but even surrounding areas have readings of 235, 256, and in one place 429.

The minimum AQI that was recorded was 192, which according to the international benchmarks means the air is "very unhealthy".

The citizens are unhappy with the way the issue is being dealt with.

South Asia Campaigner at AI, Rimmel Mohyidin on Wednesday said the government's inadequate response had raised significant human rights' concerns.

"We are calling on our members around the world to write to the Pakistani authorities to tell them to stop downplaying the crisis and take urgent action to protect people's health and lives," she said.

According to a 2015 report published by the UK medical journal, Lancet, more than 310,000 people die each year in Pakistan because of poor air quality.

For one in every two days this month, the air quality in Lahore has been classified as "hazardous" by air quality monitors installed by the United States Consulate in Lahore and the Pakistan Air Quality Initiative (PAQI). The government shut schools down on at least three days this month, and once again November 22 has been announced a holiday.

Since October, at least seven days have seen air quality reach hazardous levels.

Prolonged or heavy exposure to hazardous air can result in asthma, lung damage, bronchial infections, or heart problems and can lead to shortened life expectancy.

Article 12.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Articles 11.1 (f) and 12 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 and Article 24 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child of 1989 give people the right to have their lives protected. Failing this, the state would have been committing a human rights' violation.

The smog issue is regional and cities across South Asia are consistently reporting 'unhealthy' or 'hazardous' air quality levels.

For example in Delhi air quality monitors have even given a reading of 999.

Apart from Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and other cities in Punjab also show signs of worsening air quality.

The most vulnerable sections of society are the low income workers, such as labourers, construction workers and farmhands, as well as women, the elderly, children and those who are already suffering from such diseases.

Marginalised groups are particularly vulnerable as the nature of their work forces them to be exposed to hazardous air throughout the day.

The fact that health care is not easily affordable to all means that only those who can afford it will be able to access health care and other preventative measures, while the others suffer in silence.

Published in Dawn, November 22nd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1518107>

DRIZZLE LIKELY TO REDUCE SMOG IN LAHORE

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated November 23, 2019

LAHORE: Hazardous smog continued to pester people in Lahore and some other cities in Punjab on Friday.

It remained cloudy throughout the day in the provincial capital and drizzle at some places in the evening appeared to have reduced the intensity of smog to some extent.

According to the Met Office website, the Air Quality Index in Lahore was 199 in the evening. The US Consulate said it was 441 at 6am and 402 at 8am (hazardous).

The Met Office said rain might reduce the level of smog in the next 24 hours. It said a westerly wave is affecting western and upper parts of the country and likely to persist in the northern parts till Saturday morning.

It expected isolated rain-thunderstorm in districts of upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, north Punjab, Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir and Islamabad in the next 24 hours.

It reported that Pasni received 79mm of rain, Turbat 34, Dalbandin 32, Panjgur 28, Pishin 23, Chaman 22, Gwadar 18, Jiwani 17, Kalat 15, Quetta 14, Mastung 13, Nokkundi, Ziarat 09, Khuzdar 07, Barkhan 01, Dir (upper 41, lower 15), Pattan 38, Malam Jabba, Parachinar 20, Kalam 24, Mirkhani 18, Saidu Sharif, Chitral 12, Balakot 11, Drosh 10, Kakul 6, Cherat 4, Tahktbai, Bannu 3, Peshawar 1, Garhi Dupatta 18, Muzaffarabad 17, Rawalakot 6, 7, Bhakkar 5 and Attock 2mm.

Kalam received 3 inches of snow and Malam Jabba 1 inch.

Published in Dawn, November 23rd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1518281/drizzle-likely-to-reduce-smog-in-lahore>

TURNING BARREN LAND INTO DENSE FOREST IN A SHORT TIME

Faiza Ilyas November 23, 2019

KARACHI: “Nothing could be more exciting than to turn a barren tract of land into a dense forest within a short span of time. When I learnt this technique in 2009, I was overwhelmed by the feeling that I have found a treasure that I must share in my home country and across the world.”

That’s how Shubhendu Sharma, a Bangalore-based urban forest grower and trainer, responded to Dawn in an interview on Friday when asked what was so powerful and motivating that made him quit his job as an industrial engineer at one of the world’s leading car manufacturing companies and become a forest grower.

In his mid 30s, Sharma is the director and founder of Afforest, a service provider for creating natural, native, maintenance-free but low-cost forests.

The company has trained people and grown forests in some 20 Indian states and 10 countries so far including the Netherlands, the US, Singapore, Iran and Nicaragua.

“I learnt this technique from Japanese botanist and ecologist Akira Miyawaki when he came to Bangalore in 2009 to assist the company I was associated with in reducing its carbon footprint,” he recalled, adding that he documented the whole process and it took him one and a half years to take it up professionally.

In Karachi, Sharma along with his team member and jungle tree expert Gaurav Gurjar and Shehzad Qureshi, heading the Urban Forest, conducted a two-day workshop on Miyawaki forest method for 15 nature lovers.

The day also marked the fourth anniversary of the Urban Forest, a neglected park in Clifton which was adopted by Qureshi who created a small forest of native species here with Sharma's support.

"I remember, this park was full of garbage when we decided to work here. Shehzad got all the solid waste removed from this place from his own resources. The second challenge we faced was to collect seeds of indigenous species," he said, regretting the penchant people generally have for exotic species which now dominated the city's landscapes.

"You can see that this small forest in the middle of the city attracts so many different bird species and butterflies which you won't see at any other place. The forests created through this method become self-sustaining in two to three years."

He also talked about the forest he has created in his home's backyard which, he said, was visited by hundreds of birds.

At the closing ceremony of the workshop, German Consul General Eugen Wolfarth, who distributed certificates among the participants, appreciated the effort and said that urban forests were very much needed in the city to tackle air, noise pollution and fight climate change.

Qureshi urged the participants to practice what they have learnt and play their role in improving the environment of the city.

Giving her feedback on the workshop, Asma Nasib heading a tissue culture laboratory in the Defence Housing Authority said that it was a great learning experience as the trainers showed them how to grow 21 native species in a 100-square-metre patch.

"We can only wish that the government takes an initiative and turns hundreds of the city's barren parks green with the help of this cost-efficient method," she said.

Irfan, a software engineer based in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, expressed his resolve to implement the method back in his hometown.

"We all talk of plants and trees. But, what is the need of the hour is to grow forests to protect our communities, nature and environment."

Akram Awan, who has a deep interest in butterflies and is preparing to write a book on the insect, was there to educate workshop participants about the kind of trees and plants they needed to grow in forests to attract this vanishing beautiful creature.

Sharing his feelings, Gurjar said: "Trees and forests can't differentiate [between people and borders].

Humans call themselves to be a superior creature in terms of intelligence than the rest but I believe that there is a lot we can learn from other species and one of them is coexistence."

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1518297/turning-barren-land-into-dense-forest-in-a-short-time>

AIR QUALITY INDEX DEVICE INSTALLED IN PESHAWAR

By Our Correspondent Published: November 24, 2019

PESHAWAR: With the smog situation in parts of the country worsening, an indigenously-developed device to monitor the air quality in the city has been installed.

The Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) device, developed by the Directorate of Science and Technology (DoST) three experts from Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, has been installed in the National Institute of Management Sciences (NIMS) Peshawar.

The device has been designed to understand the impact of air quality on health and used to make decisions to reduce short-term exposure to air pollution by adjusting activity levels during increased levels of air pollution.

It collects various elements in the air such as dust particles (PM 10, PM 2.5), surface-level gases (Ozone, nitrogen dioxide, carbon dioxide, ammonia and carbon monoxide) along with temperature, humidity and heat index.

The team said that Canada was the first to adopt AQHI in 2005, which calculates a single, combined number with three inputs such as dust particles, ozone and nitrogen, resulting in an entire picture of air quality having both gases and dust particles. Hong Kong adopted AQHI by adding two more inputs including 10-micron dust particles and Sulphide gases.

Team members Dr Zubair and Dr Khalid Khan remarked that the device developed locally can assess 10 serious air pollution parameters.

The added that so far, they have installed eight gadgets stations at various major spots in Peshawar which are connected to a cloud server in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Data Center for the collection of environmental data.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 23rd, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2104894/1-air-quality-index-device-installed-peshawar/>

PUNJAB GOVT PROPOSES ARTIFICIAL RAIN TO REDUCE POLLUTED AIR IN LAHORE

By Imran Adnan Published: November 24, 2019

LAHORE: Following scattered drizzle in different areas, the rising level of smog witnessed a temporary reprieve in the provincial capital on Saturday. The international air monitoring agency, AirVisual's air quality forecast indicates the atmosphere of the city will remain in the unhealthy range from Sunday (today).

Air quality statistics show that following scattered drizzle in the city, the air quality index (AQI) of the provincial capital dropped from the level of above 300 to 111 over the weekend. However, the atmosphere of the city is still unhealthy for sensitive groups with atmospheric particulate matter (PM2.5) reading of 39.8 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, which was hovering above 195 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ a couple of days ago.

Environment experts underline that a high PM 2.5 reading is a matter of great concern for the government because it indicates that the air is contaminated with very fine particles of less than 2.5 micrometers of dust and other harmful elements. These particles are 3% of the diameter of human hair, which can only be detected through an electron microscope.

They warn that the PM2.5 particles have the tendency to stay in the air longer due to their small size and light nature. “It increases chances of humans and animals inhaling them into their bodies because particles smaller than 2.5 micrometers are able to bypass the nose and throat and penetrate deep into the lungs. It was stated that some may even enter the circulatory system.

In several studies, health experts have proved a close link between exposure to fine particles and premature death from heart and lung disease. Fine particles are also known to trigger or worsen chronic disease such as asthma, heart attack, bronchitis and other respiratory problems.

Presiding over a meeting to control smog, Punjab Minister for Finance Hashim Jawan Bakhat said it would be an uphill task for the government to overcome the issue of smog without the due participation of citizens. “The government has already made laws to curb environmental pollution,” he said.

The Punjab Transport Department was ordered to ensure that no unfit vehicles would run on the roads. He continued that the government had a plan to incentivise the local industry to keep the air clean by reducing or abolishing duty and taxes on materials and equipment. He said this would make the air clean, adding that the federal government was being mobilised to slash or remove duties.

Bakhat said the government had decided to make vehicle clearance mandatory from Vehicle Application Centres by April 2020. All departments, including Environment, Industry, Agriculture and Transport, will be taken on-board to deal with vehicles emitting used smoke. He also directed the finance special secretary to ensure the immediate release of funds to tackle the smog issue.

Lahore Division Commissioner Spokesman told The Express Tribune that Commissioner Asif Bilal Lodhi proposed that the government use artificial rain techniques to get rid of smog in Lahore and adjoining districts. He highlighted that a proposal had already been sent to the Punjab Finance Department and estimates suggested some Rs300 million were required to seed clouds for artificial rain in selected areas. He further said the proposal would be sent to Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar from Punjab Finance Department for final approval.

Speaking to the media on Friday, Lodhi expressed hope the government will give its nod to the proposal, despite the heavy investment, as the health of millions of citizens could not be at risk for the sake of a few hundred million.

Amnesty International has also issued an urgent action warning for hazardous smog that has engulfed the provincial capital for the past few weeks. “The air in Punjab, Pakistan’s most populous province, is so toxic that people’s health and lives are in grave danger. Schools have been forced to shut down, respiratory illnesses are on the rise and people are having trouble breathing,” the warning states.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 24th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2105434/1-air-quality-lahore-still-unhealthy-despite-rain/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOV 25th TO DEC 01st 2019

AIR POLLUTION AGGRAVATES IN PUNJAB

By RECORDER REPORT on November 25, 2019

The air pollution in Punjab had aggravated after dry and cloudy weather with open garbage burning in Lahore and other major districts with poor air quality left uncontrolled.

Director General Punjab Environment Protection Department (EPD) Tanveer Ahmad Warraich said, "The main issue of air pollution and smog in Lahore city consists of vehicular emissions, industrial gaseous releases, particularly steel units, open garbage burning and scrap burning in the provincial capital."

Talking to APP, the DG EPD said the fifth smog season was taking place in Lahore and other parts of the country. The trans-boundary pollution along with indigenous pollution and smoke producing elements had further aggravated the situation, he added.

He said only in Lahore there were estimated 2,700 scrap burning units who regularly burn different substances to extract raw material whereas over 400 steel manufacturing units were operating with very few having wet scrubbers installed to curb dark emissions.

To a question, he said there was Section 144 imposed on open household garbage burning in Lahore where direct First Information Report (FIR) was to be issued against any culprit found violating the law.

In order to penalize the people burning garbage on the spot was a difficult task due to paucity of resources and it was also not possible to mitigate the smog risk with public cooperation.

Responding another query, he said the rice crop stubble burning was done in Sahiwal, Faisalabad, Lahore, Gujranwala and Sialkot Divisions where rice crop husks were burnt after the harvest.

"Unless we convince the farmers to adopt the happy seeder technology that removes the rice husks and sows wheat seeds automatically, no change in stubble burning could be achieved. We have to give incentives and subsidies to the rice farmers to shift to latest technology," he added.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/11/25/547368/air-pollution-aggravates-in-punjab/>

PUNJAB GOVT SEALS 356 BRICK KILNS TO REIN IN SMOG

By Our Correspondent Published: November 25, 2019

LAHORE: In a frantic move against brick kilns, industries and vehicles to rein in an alarming rise in smog and atmospheric pollution, the Punjab government has launched a massive crackdown and sealed 356 brick kilns besides imposing heavy fines on violations.

The local administration has also slapped over Rs800,000 penalties over violations. Lahore Division Commissioner Asif Bilal Lodhi has highlighted that the government has decided to tighten the noose

on sources of atmospheric pollutions, which are triggering smog in Lahore and adjoining areas. The government has adopted a zero-tolerance policy against atmospheric pollution and it would not accept any negligence in an ongoing anti-smog drive, he maintained.

He indicated that during anti-smog drive the local administration has imposed Rs821,000 fine on brick kilns and industries for spreading pollution, besides awareness-raising activities in different areas of the metropolis and adjoining districts.

As many as 190 cases, including 58 in Lahore, have been registered in different police stations over violation of environment laws of the provincial.

The government has also sealed 356 brick kilns across Lahore Division, including 286 in Lahore. A campaign against smoke emitting vehicles is also underway. So far 2,166 smoke-emitting vehicles, including 795 in the provincial capital, have been challaned.

Following crackdown and imposition of the ban, Lodhi pointed out, brick kilns are fast converting to new zig-zag technology to avoid a ban.

The commissioner has directed all deputy commissioners to take strict action against violators of ban on burning crop residue in fields. He instructed them to keep a strict check on violators even on weekends and holidays and submit a report to his office.

Following scattered drizzle and tightening the noose on violators of environmental laws, the steep decline is witnessed in smog level in the provincial capital.

Air quality data of an international atmospheric pollution monitoring agency, AirVisual, show a moderate level of atmospheric pollution in the provincial capital. It points out that the Air Quality Index (AQI) of the city is hovering around 100, which was touching the hazardous level of above 300 during last week.

It also reports a decline in PM 2.5 reading from 100 to 35 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ on Sunday. PM 2.5 reading indicates a state of contamination with very fine particles of less than 2.5 micrometres, which are only 3% of the diameter of human hair. Environment experts warn that these PM2.5 particles have tendency to stay longer in the air due to their small size and light nature, which increase chances of humans and animals inhaling them into their bodies because these particles smaller than 2.5 micrometres are able to bypass nose and throat and penetrate deep into the lungs and some may even enter the circulatory system.

Atmospheric pollution level in the city remained so high during the current month that the government closed private and public schools thrice during the current month as smog level touched hazardous range.

Lahore topped twice on the most polluted cities ranking during the current month. However, atmospheric pollution level has witnessed a decrease following rain and strict enforcement of environmental laws. The government has appealed citizens to play their role in curtailing atmospheric pollution as it would be impossible for the government to control smog in absence of public cooperation.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 25th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2105891/1-punjab-govt-seals-356-brick-kilns-rein-smog/>

PM SLAMS PAST RULERS OF PUNJAB OVER POLLUTION

Syed Irfan Raza November 26, 2019 Facebook Count

ISLAMABAD: Launching Clean Green Pakistan Index (CGPI) as part of his government's efforts to curb pollution and reduce the impact of climate change, Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday criticised the previous governments of Punjab for rising pollution in Lahore and nearby cities.

Indirectly lashing out at the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) that ruled Punjab for over the past decade, PM Khan said: "More than 70 per cent trees in Lahore have been axed and a concrete jungle has been created there over the past decade."

Speaking at the CGPI launching ceremony, Mr Khan said: "Lahore has reached close to New Delhi in terms of pollution rate, but nobody had thought about it."

In the initial phase of the CGPI, 19 cities including Lahore, Gujranwala, Rawal-pindi, Faisalabad, Sargodha, Sahiwal, Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Okara and Bahawalpur have been selected to compete on certain issues of public interest. They will be judged on addressing issues such as safe drinking water, solid waste management, liquid waste management, city beautification, cleanliness of streets, usability of parks, tree plantation, total sanitation/hygiene and community participation.

Launches Clean Green Pakistan project with focus on province

The PM reaffirmed his commitment to making Pakistan "clean and green" and urged the masses to join in the efforts. The concept of 'Naya Pakistan' will change the country's destiny, he said. "The change of Naya Pakistan will first come into the minds of people and then on the ground," he explained.

He recalled that the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had planted one billion trees in five years.

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam said that students and youth were being encouraged to join the campaign. Services of people, who would register themselves for and participate in the CGPI, would be rewarded by the government, Mr Aslam announced.

Sharing future plans to protect the environment, the adviser said the government aimed to introduce electric cars to reduce harmful emissions.

He said the government had introduced multiple campaigns and drives to combat climate change, including the billion trees tsunami and Clean Green Pakistan.

Later, a delegation of MoneyGram, headed by its CEO and Chairman William Alexander Holmes, called on the Prime Minister at PM Office.

Finance Adviser Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh and Commerce Adviser Abdul Razak Dawood were also attended the meeting.

MoneyGram International Inc. is a globally recognized American money transfer company, which is offering its services at approximately 350,000 agent locations in more than 200 countries. It is facilitating overseas Pakistanis, with its 7,000 partners across the country to send their remittances back home.

Welcoming the interest evinced by MoneyGram International towards expanding its business in Pakistan, PM Khan highlighted significant growth in home remittances, witnessed during the last financial year that he said was expected to further grow in coming years.

The PM also discussed an incentive package, which was under consideration of the government, to attract greater remittances through legal channels.

While briefing Mr Khan about the company's profile and portfolio in Pakistan, William Alexander Holmes said MoneyGram, in line with the present government vision, was complementing its efforts towards financial inclusion especially encouraging emigrants to utilize formal channels for safe and speedy transactions.

The prime minister assured the delegation that his government would provide all possible facilitation to the company in expanding its business in the country.

President of China-Pakistan Friendship Association and former Under Secretary General of the United Nations Ambassador Sha Zukang also called on Prime Minister Khan.

Ambassador Sha is leading a delegation of major Chinese companies visiting Pakistan to explore Pakistan's business potential and to invest in the country.

The prime minister while welcoming the delegation to Pakistan underscored the closeness and depth of Pakistan-China ties.

Calling CPEC as a transformational project, Mr Khan invited the Chinese companies and investors to invest in diverse sectors in Pakistan.

The PM said the CPEC, a flagship project of President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative, would not only reinforce Pakistan's economic development but would also contribute to regional prosperity. "Its second phase will focus on industrialisation, agriculture and socio-economic development," he added.

Ambassador Sha underscored that Pakistan and China were all-weather strategic cooperative partners and their partnership was aimed at promoting peace, development and prosperity in the region. He said the special relationship between the two countries was reflected in expression of warmth by the Chinese people towards Pakistan on every occasion.

He said Chinese investors were confident about Pakistan's economic potential and expressed the hope that the economic relationship between the countries would reach the level of their excellent political relations.

Ambassador Sha's delegation includes companies related to real estate, construction, engineering, textile, IT and industrial sectors.

The delegates who visited Peshawar on Monday are also scheduled to visit Lahore, Karachi and Gwadar during which they will meet leading bankers, industrialists, entrepreneurs, financial experts, business chambers, and senior officials to deepen its insights and understanding of the economic opportunities in Pakistan.

Published in Dawn, November 26th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1518841/pm-slams-past-rulers-of-punjab-over-pollution>

LAHORE CHOKES ON ‘UNHEALTHY’ AIR ONCE AGAIN

By Our Correspondent Published: November 26, 2019

LAHORE: Following little respite on Sunday, atmospheric pollution once again surpassed the ‘unhealthy’ level. The Air Quality Index (AQI) measured over 156 in the provincial capital on Monday.

Data of international air quality monitoring agency, AirVisual, shows that atmospheric particulate pollution level once again surpassed the safe range. AirVisual’s monitors indicate atmospheric particulate matter (PM2.5) reading of over $65 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, which means that Lahore’s air is contaminated with very fine particles of dust and other harmful elements of less than 2.5 micrometres.

These PM2.5 particles have a tendency to stay in the air longer due to their small size and lightweight. This increases the chances of humans and animals inhaling them because particles of such a small diameter can bypass the nose and throat to penetrate deep into the lungs. Some may even enter the circulatory system.

Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar, in a press statement on Monday, blamed the previous Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) regime for the current smog issue. He said the merciless cutting of hundreds of trees in Lahore was one of the major causes of smog. “It was the result of past rulers’ wrong priorities,” he said.

He highlighted that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was committed to getting rid of environmental pollution. “The incumbent government is successfully implementing the Clean and Green Pakistan programme to promote a green environment in the country.”

The CM said various steps have been taken to protect the environment and increase forest cover over Punjab. “A comprehensive strategy has been formulated to deal with the hazardous effects of climate change and new programmes will be initiated to improve the environment,” he maintained.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Muslim League (PML) leader Moonis Elahi proposed that the government include the subject of the environment in the academic syllabus and educate the coming generations on the hazards of environmental pollution and climate change. He highlighted that according to various studies, the majority of Pakistani nations is unaware of the impact of climate change and environmental pollution.

Addressing Punjab Eco Friends Environment Policy Workshop, PML’s Research and Conveying Wing Team Leader Rizwan Mumtaz Ali announced that his party held Punjab’s first environment policy convention in December. He added representatives from PML and eco-friends from all over the province would be nominated.

The workshop was attended by representatives of PML Punjab’s Youth Wing, Women Wing, MSF and Eco Friends of Gujranwala, Faisalabad, Sahiwal, Bahawalpur and Lahore.

Addressing workshop Eco Friends of Gujranwala appreciated pilot model for providing environmental education and training to students of schools, colleges, universities and religious seminaries in its own district.

As of November 2019, Pakistani authorities still don’t publish any real-time PM2.5 air quality data. All data comes from non-government sensors and the U.S. State Department. The US Embassy in

Islamabad, and the three US consulates in Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar began monitoring and publishing real-time PM2.5 data online in the first half of 2019.

Environment experts have warned that these PM2.5 particles have tendency to stay longer in the air due to their small size and light nature, which increase chances of humans and animals inhaling them into their bodies because these particles smaller than 2.5 micrometres are able to bypass nose and throat and penetrate deep into the lungs and some may even enter the circulatory system.

Atmospheric pollution level in the city remained so high during the current month that the government closed private and public schools thrice during the current month as smog level touched hazardous range.

Lahore topped twice on the most polluted cities ranking during the current month. However, atmospheric pollution level has witnessed a decrease following rain and strict enforcement of environmental laws.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 26th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2106409/1-lahore-chokes-unhealthy-air/>

CLEAN, GREEN PAKISTAN?

Editorial November 27, 2019

PRIME MINISTER Imran Khan on Monday inaugurated the Clean Green Pakistan Index, a project that will, in its initial phase, rank 19 cities in Punjab and KP on their cleanliness and ‘green’ character. This ranking, the government hopes, will invoke a competition among cities for improving their infrastructure and environmental sustainability. The cities are to be judged on different criteria including sanitation, beautification and the usability of public spaces. Even before he became prime minister, Mr Khan attached a great deal of importance to conserving the natural environment — unlike previous dispensations. He has also raised the issue at several international forums, including the UN General Assembly in September. The new project, then, is in keeping with his vision of a green Pakistan. However, how workable is it considering the paralysis in the local governments of Punjab and KP, as well as in the national economy? It is unclear to what extent the local administrations will be empowered to take decisions and if they can furnish or request additional funds for building parks, etc. In fact, for all the prime minister’s endeavours, his government has failed to come up with a comprehensive strategy for mitigating the effects of climate change.

While the prime minister was not wrong in saying during the CGPI inauguration that the previous Punjab government was responsible for turning Lahore into a concrete jungle, the fact does not detract from the PTI’s own abysmal performance, its ‘billion-tree tsunami’ in KP notwithstanding. For example, the flagship development project of the PTI in KP, the Peshawar BRT, has been criticised on numerous counts, ranging from the destruction of public spaces to the use of substandard material for construction. Moreover, the PTI’s own state minister for environment, Zartaj Gul, downplayed the eye-burning smog in Punjab, indicating that it had been exaggerated by those with ‘vested interests’. International rights groups have called out the government over its inaction in tackling the smog hazards but so far there is no clear plan for improving the air quality of Lahore. Meanwhile, the ban on the sale and manufacture of single-use plastics has seen very limited implementation and factories producing them have hardly been checked. There is a lot the government can do to match its words

with actions and deliver on its promises of an unpolluted environment by taking small but sustainable steps. However, blaming past dispensations while ignoring its own shortcomings is not the answer.

Published in Dawn, November 27th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1519118/clean-green-pakistan>

SINDH, PUNJAB PLAIN AREAS: RAINFALL MAY REDUCE CHANCES OF DENSE FOG THIS MONTH: MET

By RECORDER REPORT on December 1, 2019

Pakistan's agriculture plains are more likely to receive frost this December, while the scale of smog in Punjab may decrease with dropping temperature in days to come.

"The above normal rainfall during the month may decrease the chances of dense fog/ smog in plain areas of Sindh and Punjab," the Met Office has forecast in its December outlook.

Above normal precipitation is expected in western and northern parts of Pakistan, whereas southern may receive a below normal rainfall. However, three to four weather systems are likely to approach during December, which are expected to cause scattered light to moderate rainfall Western, Central and Northern parts of the country.

Snow is also expected to fall over high mountains in north Balochistan, Kashmir and Northern areas of Pakistan in December.

A below normal temperature is likely in the northern parts of the country while above normal in southwestern parts in December. A cold wave may reach during the third and fourth week of December, which may cause significant drop in a nighttime temperature in the most parts of the country.

Punjab: Above normal rain may fall along the western border while below normal rainfall is predicted along eastern parts of the province. Shallow to dense fog may persist in central and major southern chunk of the Punjab. The rainfall spell during second half of this month will cause to reduce the chances of dense fog in plain areas of Punjab.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Fair changes of precipitation in the first week in KP province. Night temperature may fall 2-3 degree from normal in northern parts of province.

Balochistan: Above normal rainfall is expected in the northwestern parts of the province with snowfall is over northern parts of the Balochistan.

Sindh: Normal to slightly below normal rainfall is likely to occur in upper parts of Sindh. Temperatures may drop 1-2 degree below normal over Sindh. Shallow to moderate fog is expected in plain areas of the province. GB and AJK: Above normal rainfall with heavy snowfall is expected over GB, while normal to slightly below normal precipitation is expected over AJK and surrounding areas.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/01/549269/sindh-punjab-plain-areas-rainfall-may-reduce-chances-of-dense-fog-this-month-met/>

PM ANNOUNCES AMBITIOUS PLAN TO CURB SMOG, IMPROVE AIR QUALITY

By MUHAMMAD SALEEM on December 1, 2019

Announcing the government's ambitious plan to curb smog and improve air quality, Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday unfolded six points ranging from import of clean (environmental friendly) oil, using environment-friendly technology for crop burning, improving the quality of locally-produced oil, using latest technology for steel furnaces and brick kilns and urban forestry over 60,000 kanals in Lahore.

Addressing a news conference here on Saturday accompanied by Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar and Special Assistant Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan, the premier said that smog was badly impacting the lives of citizens and would have devastating consequences in the future. "We have decided to take action against it through importing Euro 4 fuel, which will reduce the 90 per cent of the pollution. By 2020, we will switch to Euro 5, which is cleaner than Euro 4. Currently, about 50-60 percent imported oil is Euro-2 which caused air pollution, he said, adding: "The people will have to decide whether they are willing to afford a slight costly fuel to save the lives of their loved ones."

PM Imran Khan said that oil refineries in the country will be given three years time to improve their fuel quality, otherwise these will be forced to shut down. Unfolding the measures, the PM said the government had decided to shift the focus of the auto industry towards electric vehicles. "We are holding talks with the car industries because they have certain reservations," he said. "An incentive policy will be introduced in 2020." He added that "buses that run across our cities will either be hybrid vehicles or electric. Or, we may insist on CNG."

The PM said that crop burning in India and Pakistan as well as smoke from factories and brick kilns was all contributing factors to air pollution, the biggest contributor was vehicular smoke. He said that imported machinery will be brought in which will facilitate the farmers to make use of the post-harvest crop, making it possible for it to be sold. This will ensure that there is no need to burn the crop, drastically reducing the air pollution caused otherwise. He then spoke of steel factories and brick kilns which are the main sources of the hazardous, fine air particles known as PM2.5.

The PM said that import duties on scrubbers will be removed, so that the steel factories can purchase them. Scrubbers are systems that use liquid (typically water) to remove particulates from industrial exhaust streams.

Talking about smog and pollution in Lahore, the PM said that an urban forestry initiative will be undertaken in the city. "We have identified 60,000 kanals of land where we will grow trees so they can clean the city's air," the PM said.

Some 70 per cent decline has been witnessed in the number of trees in Lahore during the last 10 years. The PM said, "70 per cent drop in tree cover has far-reaching consequences." With a dense tree cover, pollution particles are absorbed by the leaves. And with them being cut, the city had faced a great loss, he said.

The premier said, "The impact will be slow; these are steps which should have been taken 20 years ago but no one bothered. We feel that every year people should see an improvement (in air quality). And in three years a significant difference will be seen," he added. Answering a question, the PM said the country has come out of difficult time and positive changes would be seen.

To a question regarding non-payment of salaries to media men and their retrenchment, the PM asked Information minister Mian Aslam Iqbal to look into the matter and report.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/01/549248/pm-announces-ambitious-plan-to-curb-smog-improve-air-quality/>

WAHAB URGES CITIZENS TO SUPPORT BAN ON NON-BIODEGRADABLE PLASTIC BAGS

By Our Correspondent Published: December 1, 2019

KARACHI: In light of the Sindh government's failure to fully implement the ban on non-degradable, single-use plastic bags in the province, Adviser to Sindh Chief Minister on Law, Environment, Coastal Development and Climate Change Barrister Murtaza Wahab has appealed to the public to support the provincial government's efforts directed towards enforcing the ban.

In a press statement issued on Friday, Wahab said that no ban at the retail level can be successful without public's participation. He advised the buyers to check whether the plastic bag in which the shopkeepers give them goods are banned or not. The adviser also appealed to the shopkeepers to consider the long-term benefits of the ban on non-degradable plastic bags instead of prioritising the short-term benefits of not complying with the ban and the convenience of using non-degradable bags.

He made these appeals to the citizens in light of a series of complaints received from the media and the public at large, highlighting the use of the banned items across the province.

Sources close to the adviser said that Wahab has repeatedly issued directives to the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) to persistently carry out raids at markets and check if the banned plastic bags are still being used.

However, according to the statement issued by the adviser, during most of the raids conducted in different markets of Karachi and other urban centres, hardly a few shopkeepers were found to be using non-degradable plastic bags. It is mentioned in the statement that most shopkeepers were found to be using oxo-biodegradable plastic bags, the use of which is not prohibited.

The sources further disclosed that SEPA, which is authorised to implement the ban on non-degradable plastic bags, has not devised any mechanism for enforcing the ban. Therefore, SEPA officials have to request police officials to accompany them when carrying out inspections at markets, so as to ensure retailers' compliance with the ban.

Meanwhile, it has also been reported that before a raid is carried out at any market, the focal persons of the relevant market are informed about the development. Hence, the shopkeepers then hide the banned plastic bags and replace them by oxo-biodegradable bags to deceive SEPA officials.

Earlier, in a meeting with the provincial secretary for environment, climate change and coastal development, representatives of the Pakistan Plastic Manufacturers Association said that while large-scale manufacturing of the banned plastic bags has been stopped, these are still being manufactured by cottage industries. They said that the association cannot stop them from manufacturing banned plastic bags, as cottage industries are not members of the association.

Participants of the meeting further discussed that they have received reports of banned plastic bags being transported to Sindh from Iran, via Quetta, and Punjab. In Punjab, there is no ban on the use of non-degradable plastic bags while in Iran they come at a very low price, they pointed out.

An environmental expert, speaking on condition of anonymity and reflecting on reasons behind the government's failure to fully implement the ban, said that all relevant representative organisations should have been taken on board before placing the ban. This would have ensured that alternative solutions were made available to buyers and traders, he added. However, no other result could have been expected when the ban was imposed without an awareness drive being launched prior to it, he said. The expert, however, added that if citizens support the ban, SEPA may attain some level of success in implementing it.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 1st, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2109636/1-wahab-urges-citizens-support-ban-non-biodegradable-plastic-bags/>

December 2019

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 02nd TO 08th 2019

GOVT TO TRAIN BRICK KILN WORKERS, SAYS ZARTAJ GUL

December 2, 2019

ISLAMABAD. Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul on Sunday said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government had successfully approved a policy to train brick makers how to use latest technology.

“The government has charted out a comprehensive plan to significantly reduce the origin and effects of pollution, including smog,” she said while talking to a news channel.

She said Lahore was the highly-affected city by smog and pollution. “The major cities are over-populated and increased vehicle emissions are contributing to pollution and global warming,” said Zartaj.

The minister said that measures were being taken to reduce air pollution caused by vehicular emissions.

Illegal construction activities have also contributed to deforestation and pollution, she said, adding: “It is high time to take notice of environmental issues to save our future generations”.

She said adopting “Euro 4 petrol” in public service and other vehicles will help reduce emissions.

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201912020043&EN_ID=11201912020016&EMID=11201912020006

SEPA SHUTS DOWN OVER 100 ILLEGAL BRICK KILNS

By Our Correspondent Published: December 3, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) has stopped operations of more than 100 illegal brick kilns in Yousuf Brohi Goth of Khuda Ki Basti one of the neighborhoods in Gadap Town.

According to a statement issued on Monday, the technical team of SEPA carried out a raid, with the help of local police, at small-scale brick kilns which were burning pieces of used tyres and clothes as fuel, causing alarming levels of air pollution in the surrounding areas.

The SEPA team which was headed by Regional Office Director Dr Ashique Ali Langah took action for the closure of all illegal brick kilns soon after confirming their lack of authorisation to manufacture bricks. Besides, reads the statement, their emissions were exceeding the permissible limits as set by Sindh Environmental Quality Standards (SEQS).

According to the Sindh Environmental Protection Act, 2014, the environment protection agency is authorised to take action against those polluting activities which are legally being carried out by any legal entity. While those working illegally for conducting any type of service or manufacturing operation do not fall under the regulatory ambit of SEPA.

However, said an internal source, SEPA in compliance with the orders of superior authorities, responded to public complaints lodged by those in the surrounding areas of the brick kilns, and went an extra step from its domain by closing the operations of these illegal brick manufacturing units which were causing massive air pollution.

According to sources of the Sindh Government, the responsibility of taking action against illegal manufacturing units falls under the Sindh Industries Department which usually does not work diligently in the field and this time SEPA relieved it by performing its duty.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 3rd, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2110650/1-sepa-shuts-100-illegal-brick-kilns/>

COSMETIC EFFORTS: SEPA UNABLE TO IMPLEMENT BAN ON PLASTIC BAG

By Sameer Mandhro / Creative: Mohsin Alam Published: December 4, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh's government campaign against the use of non-biodegradable plastic bags seems to have fizzled out almost as quickly as it had started. The ban on the use of the said bags, which came into effect on October 1, seems to have done little to curb the use of the plastic bags that have become a source of environmental degradation and health problems.

The move was aimed at raising awareness among consumers as well as ensuring that manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers had ample time to switch to alternative products.

Now, two months after the ban came into effect, plastic bags are commonly being used at shops and retail outlets across the province.

“It was an artificial ban,” commented a shopkeeper in Saddar, who asked not to be named. “It was just like the ban on gutka consumption and manufacturing,” he remarked, while chewing the same.

“No one has even visited us,” said a milk vendor in Kharadar. “We heard through the media that plastic bags won’t be available in the market anymore. But they are available everywhere,” he added.

Several other shopkeepers in the old city areas told The Express Tribune that they would not purchase the banned plastic bags if they aren’t available in the market. “We can easily purchase them. The non-biodegradable plastic shopping bags are expensive,” said one shopkeeper.

Another shopkeeper, Haji Ishaq, said that the new plastic bags would be an additional burden on consumers. “But I think it would be in our favour if the government’s orders are fully implemented,” he added. Referring to a newspaper report, Ishaq said that non-biodegradable plastic bags have created an environmental mess. “Look at the gutters. They are choked. I see people burning garbage with these bags and I can hardly inhale fresh air,” he lamented.

Meanwhile, a retailer based in Lyari, said that the factories manufacturing the banned plastic bags were functioning as per routine. “All factories are openly manufacturing the same stuff,” said the retailer, Abdul Manan. “I just heard that the police [at the start] had asked factory owners to stop manufacturing shopping bags banned by the government,” he narrated. But that too didn’t last long.

Like other shopkeepers, Manan believes that such orders by the government actually open a new door for local police. “They double their bhatta [extortion],” commented Manan.

Meanwhile, the non-biodegradable plastic bags are openly being manufactured in small factories in Shershah, Ghani Chowrangi and Saeedabad.

The Sindh government’s notification regarding the ban, issued well before the deadline, warned that anyone found selling or using the banned plastic bags would be fined. In case of continuing contravention or failure, they would be slapped with additional fines which may extend to Rs10,000 for every day the contravention continued.

Meanwhile, the Sindh Environment and Protection Agency (SEPA), which is actually supposed to implement the orders, has limited field staff. For the provincial capital, it has less than 20 persons who can raid and inspect the markets and factories. In the absence of support from the local police, the agency can hardly conduct any raids.

When reached for comment, a SEPA official told The Express Tribune that the local police were not cooperating with their teams. “We don’t have our own force and it’s always a risky job to conduct a raid or ask shopkeepers to stop using banned items,” said the official. He added, however, that several factories had shifted their production to plastic bags, weighing 30 micros or above, which do not harm the environment.

The banned plastic bags, said the SEPA official, were now being imported from Iran via Balochistan and Punjab. “We can’t keep a strong check on the borders,” said the official.

Meanwhile, the Additional Director General of SEPA, Waqar Phulpoto, said that raids have been conducted across the province, including Karachi, Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, Sukkur, Larkana and other towns. “We don’t have our teams in all districts,” he said. “But we try our best to enforce the orders.”

Admitting that the use of banned plastic bags in the city and other areas of the province continued unabated, Adviser to Sindh Chief Minister on Environment, Coastal Development and Law, Barrister Murtaza Wahab, said that the SEPA teams couldn't conduct raids without the support of local police.

"The public must support the government's orders. It's for their own interests," he appealed.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 4th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2111184/1-cosmetic-efforts-sepa-unable-implement-ban-plastic-bag/>

EPA TO GET 10 NEW AIR QUALITY MONITORS

By APP Published: December 5, 2019

ISLAMABAD: Balochistan government has planned to install 10 new Air Quality Monitoring Stations (AQMS) in the border areas to monitor the air quality in the province.

Talking to APP on Wednesday, an official of Balochistan Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Lab Incharge Engineer Muhammad Khan said the provincial government has allocated Rs600 million for the installment of AQMS on various sites including Taftan, Chaman, Gwadar, Khuzdar, Hub, Loralai and other locations.

The provincial EPA had been collecting air quality data since 2003 which was not available in digital form, he said, adding that the authority would make efforts to make the data online.

"The air quality recorded in Quetta has ideal level of declined pollutants," he added. The official said that the provincial government had declared Astola Island as a marine protected area and was also working to protect the environment of Charna Island near Karachi.

He said that around 89 brick kilns were operating in the adjoining areas of the provincial capital that had badly affected the air leaving a thick layer of pollution suspended in the ambiance.

Khan said the brick kilns were shut down and shifted outside the city as a single brick kiln was using over 10-12 tonnes of coal per day that was causing increase in smoke and pollutant ratio.

"The two furnace oil plants have also been ordered to shift their business out of the city. There is 100 percent compliance report in this regard and it has helped improve the air quality in Quetta city," he added.

Muhammad Khan said there were more than 10,000 two-stroke auto rickshaws running in Quetta city which was causing dangerous situation with respect to smog outbreak in the provincial capital.

The government had banned them to ensure pollution-free environment in the city, he added.

"Our teams are equipped with proper gadgets to check the emissions of vehicular fleets at random," he said.

The government had phased out 60 buses in the last month that were creating air pollution, running on intercity routes and different city thoroughfares, that were using non-compliant diesel fuel containing high ratio of hazardous sulphur dioxide.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 5th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2111898/1-epa-get-10-new-air-quality-monitors/>

LAHORE EMERGES AS FOURTH MOST POLLUTED CITY IN WORLD

By Our Correspondent Published: December 5, 2019

LAHORE: Air quality monitors of local and international agencies, on Wednesday, once again ranked the provincial capital in the red zone as the city has been hovering between the third and fourth most polluted place in the world.

The official air quality statistics of the Punjab Environmental Protection Department (EPD) also showed that smog and atmospheric pollution level in the city remained in an 'unhealthy' range with Air Quality Index (AQI) of 182 in city and 269 in Wagha Border area.

On the other hand, to rein in air cleaners' prices and minimise adverse effects of incessant smog, the provincial government has requested the federal government to waive duty and taxes on import of air cleaners, face masks and scribes used for safety in smog.

Similarly, international air quality monitoring agency, AirVisual, monitors indicated AQI readings between 159 and 230 in different areas of the provincial metropolis. It recorded atmospheric particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) reading of over 141.2 µg/m³, which means that Lahore's air is highly contaminated with very fine particles of dust and harmful other elements of less than 2.5 micrometres as the safe limit for PM_{2.5} is between 0 and 35.

PM_{2.5} particles have the tendency to stay longer in the air due to their small size and lightweight and increase chances of humans and animals inhaling them into their bodies because particles of such small diameter can bypass nose and throat and penetrate deep into the lungs and some may even enter the circulatory system.

Health experts warn that the incessant smog is putting every resident's health at risk and people are facing more problems with each passing day.

They have observed that smog was causing eye, viral infections and chest congestions to citizens. Most of the patients in hospitals are suffering from the aforementioned diseases.

Presiding over a meeting, Punjab Finance Minister Hashim Jawan Bakht highlighted a summary has been forwarded to the federal government for removal of duty and taxes on air cleaning products and masks.

"The provincial government is ensuring the provision of financial assistance for the installation of clean production technology in industries causing pollution and promotion of green investment through Punjab Green Development Programme," the minister said. "For this purpose, the World Bank has been taken into confidence."

The procurement of the latest monitoring equipment for the environment protection department and the establishment of green buildings is being ensured as well.

Along with it, a consultative system is being introduced to ensure public participation and projection of environment-related information.

The draft regulatory act has also been formulated for the eradication of polythene bags and the use of disposable plastic items and the draft act would be presented to the legislative committee of the Punjab cabinet for approval in the next few days, he added.

The provincial minister maintained that people should be sensitised about the hazardous effects of environmental pollution, the use of precautionary measures and the steps being taken by the government so that no hurdle could be created in administrative action against the delinquents.

The minister said not only India is responsible for the prevalent situation of smog in Lahore but local public and private transport, burning of crops' residual and the smoke emitting from factories and brick-kilns have a major part in it. The government and people have to work jointly to control it, he added.

The minister directed the Environmental Protection Department to recruit professionals to expedite its organisational efficiency and the services of the World Bank should also be solicited for the procurement of the latest machinery.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 5th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2111951/1-lahore-emerges-fourth-polluted-city-world/>

SEPA MOVES AGAINST POLLUTERS

Staff Reporter December 06, 2019

KARACHI: Over 100 illegal brick kilns were closed down by the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) over the past three days in Karachi.

In addition, the agency issued an Environmental Protection Order (EPO) against a builder for carrying out construction in Block 7 of Clifton.

“More than 100 small-sized illegal brick kilns in Khuda Ki Basti and a factory extracting oil from animal remains in the area of Port Qasim were closed down by Sepa team over the past three days.

“Area residents were suffering from severe health problems related to breathing, heart and skin. Therefore, the police got them closed on the spot,” says a press release.

The agency also issued an EPO to a firm engaged in the construction of a high-rise in Bath Island without submitting the project's environment impact assessment (EIA) report to the agency, the press release adds.

Published in Dawn, December 6th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1520614/sepa-moves-against-polluters>

WALK TO CREATE AWARENESS ABOUT SMOG

By RECORDER REPORT on December 6, 2019

A special walk was organized by the Peace for Life Welfare Foundation to raise awareness about smog and highlight prevention measures here on Thursday.

Representatives from the Department of Environment, Waste Management, Social Welfare, WASA and civil society participated in a large number. They were carrying different placards inscribed with instructions on the growing diseases due to environmental pollution and precautionary measures.

President Foundation Mian Amir Razzaq told media that the purpose of the walk was to keep the environment neat and clean by creating public awareness and people should know the importance of trees and how much damage pollution is causing to the environment. Representative of the environment department speaking on this occasion said the main cause of SMOG is burning of crop in India, while vehicles are also adding to the air pollution.

A comprehensive program has been chalked out to eliminate smog and environmental pollution. In Lahore and other major cities of Punjab, the environment has been affected due to cutting of trees.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/06/550890/walk-to-create-awareness-about-smog/>

MARINE LIFE UNDER THREAT FROM PLUMMETING OXYGEN LEVELS: STUDY

AFP Updated December 08, 2019

MADRID: The loss of oxygen from the ocean due to climate change might have “dire effects” on sea life, fisheries and coastal communities, a global conservation body said on Saturday.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said that around 700 sites had been identified globally with low oxygen levels — up from only 45 in the 1960s.

In the same period, the group warned, the volume of anoxic waters — areas totally devoid of oxygen — have quadrupled.

The ocean absorbs around a quarter of all fossil fuel emissions, but as global energy demand continues to grow there are fears that the world’s seas will eventually reach saturation point.

Oceans are expected on current trends to lose 3-4 per cent of their oxygen globally by 2100.

The IUCN study says loss of oxygen is affecting species across the food chain

However, most of that loss is predicted to be in the upper 1,000 metres, that is the richest part of the ocean for biodiversity.

“With this report, the scale of damage climate change is wreaking upon the ocean comes into stark focus,” said IUCN acting director Grethel Aguilar.

“As the warming ocean loses oxygen, the delicate balance of marine life is thrown into disarray.”

The largest peer-reviewed study to date on ocean oxygen loss concluded that de-oxygenation is already altering the balance of marine life to the detriment of species that need more of the life-giving gas.

Species such as tuna, marlin and sharks — many of which are already endangered — are particularly sensitive to low oxygen levels due to their large size and energy demands. But loss of oxygen is

affecting species across the food chain. The biomes that support around a fifth of the world's current fish catch are formed by ocean currents that bring oxygen-poor water to coastlines.

These areas are especially vulnerable to even tiny variations in oxygen levels.

“Impacts here will ultimately ripple out and affect hundreds of millions of people,” the IUCN said.

The group this year issued a landmark assessment of the world's natural habitats, concluding starkly that human activity was threatening up to one million species with extinction.

Ocean life is already battling warmer temperatures, rampant overfishing and plastic pollution.

The World Meteorological Organisation this week said that due to man-made emissions growth, the ocean is now 26 per cent more acidic than before the Industrial Revolution.

“Ocean oxygen depletion is menacing marine ecosystems already under stress from ocean warming and acidification,” said Dan Laffoley, a senior marine science adviser at the IUCN.

“To stop the worrying expansion of oxygen-poor areas, we need to decisively curb greenhouse gas emissions as well as nutrient pollution from agriculture and other sources.”

The IUCN report also found that pollution around coastlines was having a significant effect on oxygen levels, with fertiliser and agricultural run-off promoting more algae growth, which in turn depletes oxygen as it decomposes.

World leaders will gather in Marseille in June for the IUCN's World Conservation Congress.

Policymakers are currently in negotiations at the COP25 climate summit in Madrid charged with ratifying a comprehensive rulebook for the 2015 Paris accord.

“Decisions taken at the ongoing climate conference will determine whether our ocean continues to sustain a rich variety of life, or whether habitable, oxygen-rich marine areas are increasingly and irrevocably lost,” said IUCN global marine and polar programme director Minna Epps.

Published in Dawn, December 8th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1521029/marine-life-under-threat-from-plummeting-oxygen-levels-study>

OVER 500 WILD BIRDS RESCUED, RELEASED

By Our Correspondent Published: December 8, 2019

KARACHI: Over 500 wild birds of different species were rescued in a raid near Cantonment Railway Station on Saturday. The birds were later released near Haleji Lake, one of the province's major wildlife sanctuaries, around 60 kilometres from the metropolis.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, Sindh Wildlife Department (SWD) official Naeem Ahmed shared that the raid was conducted following a tip-off. “There was no resistance from any side; the birds were lying on the roadside,” he added.

The owner of the birds arrived at the SWD office, located at the Old Freemasons Lodge near Karachi Press Club, with lawyers following the raid, attempting to convince the staff to return the birds to him. However, said Ahmed, not a single bird was handed over.

Rasheed Khan, a wildlife department official, posted at Haleji Lake, told The Express Tribune that the birds released at the sanctuary belonged to four different species, namely the common myna, bank myna, red-vented bulbul and white-cheeked bulbul.

“These are local species, found in both rural and urban areas,” Khan explained, adding that releasing them near the lake meant that they could go back to their habitat. “If we release them in the city, they can easily be killed by predators.” He said that some of the birds were injured and would go back to the wild a few hours later.

The provincial wildlife department has recently imposed a ban on the sale and purchase of wild birds, which are trapped in different parts of the province. Over 60,000 trapped birds have been released in Sindh since February. Department officials said that some families had been involved in the business of selling these birds for years, adding that they had been warned to stop.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 8th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2113654/1-500-wild-birds-rescued-released/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 09th TO 15th 2019

ACHIEVEMENT OF ‘BILLION TREE TSUNAMI’ TARGET: GOVT URGED TO PLAN TREES ALONG MOTORWAYS, RAILWAY TRACKS

By RECORDER REPORT on December 9, 2019

Target of ‘Billion Tree Tsunami’ could be achieved by launching linear tree plantation along 4260 KM long motorway and 11881 KM long railway track in Pakistan.

Addressing a meeting of the Research and Development Department, Engineer Ahmad Hassan, former Vice President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) said that the climate change has become one of the biggest challenges to the existence of mother earth. He said that well established economies have taken intensive measures to control the growing pollution but it is very difficult for the fragile economies like Pakistan to enhance its depleting forest cover and maintain the existing pattern of socio economic life without any ill impact on economic growth due to growing pollution.

Continuing, he said that Pakistan is basically an agriculture country and melting of glaciers and gradual increase in temperature has disturbed the entire crop pattern as well as our crop production.

“Water scarcity has also become a major threat which may also complicate the health related issues due to the non-availability of potable water,” he added.

Regarding tree plantation, he appreciated the 'Billion Tree Tsunami Campaign launched by Prime Minister Imran Khan, but expressed apprehensions that due to the social attitude and mindset, general public is reluctant to protect the newly planted saplings and hence their mortality rate jumps to more than 90 percent in specific areas particularly in urban areas.

He said that government has been providing incentive to the farming community as well as civil society to contribute their voluntary role in enhancing forest cover within the country. He said that plants need full protection until they become mature by developing their roots up to the underground water level and for this situation, the government must concentrate on planting trees along motorways and railway tracks which are well protected.

He said that for the irrigation of these saplings innovative approach of trickle down irrigation system could be adopted to avoid unnecessary wastage of water. He also proposed that the government select such varieties of trees which could bear fruits throughout the country in according to their regional and climatic ecology.

"These fruits could not only be marketed in fresh form but also be utilized in along value added chain of processed food," he added.

Copyright Business Recorder, 2019

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/09/551549/achievement-of-billion-tree-tsunami-target-government-urged-to-plan-trees-along-motorways-railway-tracks/>

SMOG HITS LAHORE AMID RAIN FORECAST

Intikhab Hanif Updated December 11, 2019

LAHORE: Hazardous smog that was the worst in the region once again blanketed Lahore on Tuesday, causing eye, nose and throat irritations and aggravating pulmonary diseases.

Smog also lowered temperatures as it continued to block the sun till around 10am.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) was all-time high at some places. It was higher even than in Delhi which normally is considered the most polluted city in the northern parts of the subcontinent.

The US Twitter account indicated AQI at Lahore was 567 at 9am, 613 at 10am and 564 at 3pm. The overall average was between 449 and 495.

The Met department said AQI was 553 at 4pm while media reports indicated that it was 455 at Shimla Hill, 400 at Liberty Market, 434 at Upper Mall and 470 at Sundar Industrial Estate.

The Met office said rain and strong winds to be caused by an approaching westerly wave from Iran might clear Lahore and other cities of smog to some extent in the next two to three days.

It said the westerly wave was likely to approach the western parts of the country on Wednesday (today) and expected to grip most parts of the country on Thursday.

Scattered rain-thunderstorm with snowfall over hills is expected in upper districts of Balochistan during Wednesday and Thursday. Light to moderate rain-thunderstorm is also expected in Sindh (Sukkur, Larkana, Shaheed Benazir-abad, Karachi) from Wednesday (night) to Thursday.

Widespread rain-thunderstorm (with snowfall over hills) is expected in most districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Islamabad from Wednesday (night) to Friday.

Isolated heavy falls are also expected in Dir, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Hari-pur, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Narowal and Islamabad on Thursday.

Widespread rain with snowfall over the hills is also expected in Kashmir and at scattered places in Gilgit-Baltistan from Wednesday to Friday.

Fog is likely to subside in the plain areas of the country.

In its daily forecast, the Met department said weather on Tuesday remained cold and dry in most parts of the country and very cold in the northern areas.

Minimum temperature in Skardu was -8 degrees Cel-sius, Astore -7, Gupis -6, Bagrote -4, Kalam -3, Gilgit -2 and Parachinar and Rawalakot -1.

Though the onslaught of fog on Lahore is attributed by some to crop burning in the adjoining areas of India, experts reject this notion and point out the local causes.

Imran Khalid, who holds a PhD in Environment Policy, says that in autumn and winter, the warm air does not allow the cooler air underneath to rise, which leads to visible smog and this is what is being witnessed in Lahore.

Published in Dawn, December 11th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1521577/smog-hits-lahore-amid-rain-forecast>

SEVEN QATARIS HELD FOR TRYING TO HUNT HOUBARA WITHOUT LICENCE

Saleem Shahid Updated December 11, 2019

QUETTA: Seven Qatari nationals, including four members of the royal family, were arrested for attempting to enter Nushki for hunting houbara bustard without permission of the Foreign Office.

Official sources told Dawn that the Qatari nationals were travelling towards Nushki on Monday evening when they were intercepted and taken into custody by Levies personnel at Galangoor checkpoint on the Quetta-Nushki highway.

Nushki Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq Sasoli confirmed the arrest of the Qatari nationals. He said they were clad in local dresses in a bid to dodge security forces, but the Levies officials intercepted them at the checkpoint.

“The Qatari nationals, including four members of the royal Qatari ruling family, were entering the area for hunting of houbara bustard without having proper hunting licence which is issued by the Foreign Office,” Mr Sasoli said.

Four of the visitors belong to the royal family, says Nushki’s deputy commissioner

He added that the personnel handed over the custody of the seven Qataris to the officials of the wildlife department.

The four members of the Qatari royal family were identified as Sheikh Mohammad bin Mansoor Jasim, Sheikh Khalid bin Ali, Sheikh Abdullah bin Jasim and Sheikh Ahmed bin Ali Khalid.

The wildlife department officials registered a case against the foreigners. During the course of initial investigations, it emerged that the Qatari nationals had reached Quetta on Dec 2. As they had three-month visa, the wildlife department officials informed them on their arrival that they could not enter the hunting area of Chagai district without having a proper hunting licence issued by the FO.

The local authorities had last month arrested two Qatari nationals for trying to hunt houbara bustard in Chagai district without proper permission.

According to Wildlife Secretary Saeed Ahmed Jamali, the FO had issued 18 hunting licences to the members of the royal families and other dignitaries of Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and other Arab countries. They were allocated 15 places in Balochistan for hunting, he said.

However, he added, only two of the 18 parties fulfilled the legal requirement of the fee imposed by the provincial government for hunting 100 houbara bustards. "These two parties were issued permission for hunting," he said, adding that \$100,000 fee was fixed for hunting 100 houbara bustards.

Meanwhile, a campaign against illegal hunting of the migrating birds in Balochistan, which was recently launched by the provincial forest and wildlife department, is under way.

Published in Dawn, December 11th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1521572>

WORLD BANK, SINDH GOVT TO LAUNCH \$200M SOLID WASTE PROJECT

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Updated December 11, 2019

KARACHI: The Sindh government and the World Bank have agreed to launch a \$200 million Solid Waste Emergency and Efficiency Project (SWEEP) for improvement and removal of waste from streets, drainage channels and canals in the metropolis.

This decision was taken in a meeting Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali held with World Bank delegation led by Catalina Marulanda, practice manager of the Urban Development Unit in the South Asia region, here on Tuesday at CM House.

The other delegation members were Lixin Gu, programme leader, Sustainable Development and Suhaib Rasheed, urban specialist.

Mr Shah said that an ADP [Asian Development Bank] scheme of Rs1.6 billion had been launched to improve solid waste management disposal in the city but "we are keen to do this on scientific manner and convert it into waste to energy".

The World Bank offered the \$200m SWEEP scheme to improve collection and removal of waste from streets, drainage channels and canals.

Under the plan garbage transfer stations in every district and its disposal at landfill site would be developed to generate energy.

The chief minister constituted a committee under P&D chairperson Naheed Shah and other members, including the local government secretary, MD SSWMB (Sindh Solid Waste Management Board) as its members. They would discuss modalities of the project so that final approval could be made by the chief minister.

The chief minister also held a meeting with Azad Jammu & Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Mohammad Farooq Haider.

He told him that his government was keen to adopt an earthquake devastated school in Mirpur, saying that the people of Sindh have a lot of respect and love for the Kashmiri brothers and sisters.

“We have decided to adopt a school in Mirpur and we will rehabilitate the building and run it like a model school,” the chief minister added.

The AJK prime minister thanked the chief minister and the people of Sindh for supporting the people of Kashmir.

He directed his principal secretary to coordinate with the AJK government and take necessary measures.

Both leaders also condemned Indian atrocities in India-held Kashmir and urged human rights bodies to become voice of the people of occupied Kashmir.

Murad Ali Shah said that his government was working hard to generate clean energy by installing wind and solar power projects.

Talking to US Consul General Robert Silberstein, who called on him here on Tuesday at CM House, the chief minister said that the country was energy-starved and the only option was to generate electricity from Thar coal.

The visiting US diplomat said he had visited the area and was very impressed with the government work.

However, he said the thing which worried him the most was locusts swarm in desert area. “It is quite horrible and must be destroyed at the earliest because some experts have told me if they were not killed this year they will cause a catastrophe next year too”.

Mr Shah said “You are right we are late and have not attacked them squarely, but now I have provided a grant of Rs10m to the federal government plant protection department to conduct aerial spray in the desert area”.

The US CG, who visited the NED Engineering College in Mithi, appreciated the step of the provincial government and said that it was a small institute.

The chief minister told him that he had already reserved a 300-acre site for the university and said that it was a dream to establish a fully-fledged university.

Mr Silberstein assured the chief minister that the American government would support the provincial government in establishing a state-of-the-art university in Thar. Mr Shah thanked him for his support.

Published in Dawn, December 11th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1521612>

MINISTER FOR CURBING INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION

OUR CORRESPONDENT, DECEMBER 12, 2019

QUETTA: Balochistan Finance Minister Zahoor Buledi has stressed the need for curbing pollution in the country to prevent the outbreak of diseases. “Industries across the world are using biofuel and emitting hazardous gases,” he said while addressing an event on climate variations in Madrid, Spain. “The world needs to take collective measures to tackle the effects of climate change,” he added. The minister said Pakistan was taking emergency measures to deal with environmental changes.

He expressed concerns over melting glaciers.” The rising sea level is a threat to the people living in coastal areas,” he noted. “Diseases like lungs cancer have become common in the world because of the dangerous gases in our environment.” The minister highlighted the ‘Billion Tree Tsunami’ campaign launched by Prime Minister Imran Khan,

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201912120166&EN_ID=11201912120054&EMID=11201912120019

ITALIAN BAGS SEASON'S FIRST MARKHOR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, DECEMBER 14, 2019

GILGIT: The season’s first markhor was hunted in Skardu town of Gilgit-Baltistan on Thursday. The first hunter, Carlo Pasco, traveled all the way from Italy to claim the trophy. According to the G-B wildlife department, Pasco successfully hunted a flared-horned markhor from the Skardu conservation area managed by the local community and forest department jointly. The hunter had paid \$85,000 as permit fee for hunting a markhor in the region. As per rules, 80 per cent of the fee paid by the hunter is given to the local community to invest on further conversation of these animals. The markhor is a large capra species native to Central Asia, Karakoram and the Himalayas. It is listed on the IUCN Red List as Near Threatened since 2015.

https://epaper.tribune.com.pk/DisplayDetails.aspx?ENI_ID=11201912140202&EN_ID=11201912140065&EMID=11201912140024

ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY: DEADLY SMOG BLINDS PUNJAB

By Asif Mehmood Published: December 14, 2019

LAHORE: Punjab has a troubled past marred with scores of environmental emergencies over the years. To fix it, we must understand the magnitude of the problem in question. It is unavoidable that we have the means to collect accurate data on the issue to strategize an effective mitigation plan for the province.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, environment department officials revealed they have insufficient equipment to monitor the province’s air quality holistically. As a result, provincial authorities lack the in-depth statistics needed to develop a comprehensive action plan to tackle the crisis.

“Currently, there are only six functional air quality monitoring centres in the province,” Environment Protection Department Director Naseemur Rehman said.

“Two of these are in Lahore and one each is located in Gujranwala, Multan and Faisalabad. The sixth one is a mobile centre and additional support is obtained from the Met department in Lahore,” he added.

In an ideal situation, Punjab would have six times as many such facilities, according to him.

“To effectively monitor air quality all over the province, we would need 30 fixed and five mobile monitoring centres,” Rehman said, adding “these would be installed across Lahore, Sheikhpura, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Multan, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Bahawalpur, DG Khan and Sargodha for optimum coverage.”

The senior official revealed that the government has taken no steps towards procuring more monitoring systems so far.

A policy to deal with smog was outlined in 2017 and a detailed report on air quality in the province was submitted to the Lahore High Court in May the following year. However, lack of credible in-depth data has been the biggest hurdle in devising an effective master plan to combat the crisis.

Experts complain zero data is available at the public level, making it nearly impossible for non-government stakeholders to come up with any plausible suggestions or proposals.

At present, deterioration in Punjab’s air quality has hit alarming levels. Data shared by the environment protection department states that the air quality index for the province currently stands at 240 with a shocking 492 recorded at Wagah.

The Pak Air Quality Initiative report states that air pollution decreases life expectancy by 60 months and causes around 135,000 deaths annually. The report also noted that smog in Punjab increases in intensity from October, corresponding with the drop in temperature.

The environment department has highlighted several causes for the recent increase in air pollution across Punjab. Industries, brick kilns, burning of crop waste and construction activities are some of the factors they have pointed out. The department has also drawn attention towards the rise in motor vehicles and load shedding- which prompts many to run generators- as other causes for deteriorating air quality.

Talking to The Express Tribune, Punjab Environment Protection Minister Muhammad Rizwan insisted he had directed several measures to control the smog in the province.

“I imposed a ban on brick kilns operating without zigzag technology in mid-November. It is still in place. The traffic police is taking action against vehicles emitting excessive smoke and the environment protection department is taking action against [noncomplying] factories,” he said.

Agriculture (Extension and Adaptive Research) Director General Dr Muhammad Anjum Ali said the agriculture department has banned the burning of crop waste.

“Cases were registered against 244 farmers for violating the ban. Our actions have significantly decreased this environmentally harmful activity,” he added.

Environmental experts warn that Punjab can no more enjoy leverage; it needs a swift and effective plan to overcome this deadly crisis.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 14th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2117389/1-environmental-emergency-deadly-smog-blinds-punjab/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 16th TO 22nd 2019

SPECIAL PERMITS FOR HUNTING HOUBARA ISSUED TO QATARI EMIR, OTHER ROYALS

Bhagwandas Updated December 17, 2019

KARACHI: The federal government has issued special permits to Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani and nine other members of the royal family to hunt the internationally protected houbara bustard during the 2019-20 hunting season, it has been learnt here reliably.

Among the permit holders are the emir's uncle, his brother and other dignitaries of the tiny country located on the northern side of the Arabian peninsula along the coast of the Gulf. The allotted hunting areas are spread over three provinces — Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab — of the country.

The hunters can hunt 100 houbara bustards in a 10-day safari during the three-month hunting season between Nov 1, 2019 and Jan 31, 2020. The permit is person-specific.

Originally the inhabitant of the colder central Asian region, the houbara bustard, in order to avoid harsh weather conditions in its habitat, migrates southwards to spend the winter in a relatively warm environment here every year.

The bird has been placed on the list of threatened species

Keeping in view its dwindling population the migratory bird is not only protected under various international nature conservation treaties but its hunting is also banned under local wildlife protection laws. Pakistanis are not allowed to hunt this bird.

The federal government, however, specially invites royal Arab hunters to hunt it every year.

The sources said that according to the hunting permits issued by the foreign ministry's deputy chief of protocol, Mohammad Adeel Pervaiz, the names of the Qatari hunters and the areas allocated to them are: Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani has been allocated the hunting areas in three provinces. The areas are Tharparkar district, including Mithi and Nagarparkar minus the protected area in Sindh; Mashkhel tehsil in Balochistan, and Jhang and Layyah districts in Punjab.

A former deputy prime minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Khalifa al Thani, who is also a brother of the father of the emir of Qatar, has been allocated district Loralai (less Duki area) in Balochistan.

Sheikh Jasim bin Hamad al Thani, who is a son of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani (father of the emir), has been given Musakhel and Drug tehsils in Musakhel district and Sani Shoran tehsil in Kachhi district in Balochistan.

A royal family member, Sheikh Fasil bin Nasser bin Hamad al Thani, has been allotted Diplo tehsil in Tharparkar district in Sindh and Qila Saifullah district, including Kakar Khurassan and Qamar Din Karez, in Balochistan. Another member of the royal family, Sheikh Khalid bin Thani al Thani, has been given Dadu city in Sindh to hunt the protected bird.

A ruling family member, Sheikh Fahad bin Abdul Rehman bin Hamad al Thani, has been allocated Mirpurkhas district in Sindh. Sheikh Mohammad bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Thani has been given Barkhan district in Balochistan.

Sheikh Thani bin Abdul Aziz Al-Thani has been allotted Surab tehsil in Kalat district of Balochistan. Sheikh Fasil bin Qasim bin Faisal bin Thani al Thani has been given Dera Bugti district in Balochistan. Sheikh Ali bin Abdullah Thani al Thani has been given Kech/Turbat district in Balochistan.

The sources said that earlier when the ruling Tehreek-i-Insaf Pakistan party was in the opposition, it used to criticise the federal government over this issue and at that time did not allow houbara hunting in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where it was in the provincial government.

Published in Dawn, December 17th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1522656>

CUSTOMS SEIZES 11 HOUBARA BUSTARDS

By RECORDER REPORT on December 17, 2019

Model Customs Collectorate (MCC), Preventive, Karachi on Monday claimed to have seized 11 Houbara Bustards (Tiloor) at Moachko Check Point. According to details, the seizure was made on a credible information, which revealed that the smuggling of substantial quantity of Houbara Bustards from Balochistan.

Reacting on this information, MCC Preventive, Karachi has seized 11 Houbara Bustards at Moachko Check Point. The value of the Houbara Bustards, which is on the endangered list of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species ('CITES'), is estimated to Rs 1.1 million. The birds will be handed over to wildlife department after completion of codal formalities.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/17/553854/customs-seizes-11-houbara-bustards/>

ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS OBLIGATORY UPON ALL AND SUNDRY: MURTAZA

By RECORDER REPORT on December 20, 2019

Advisor to Chief Minister for Environment, Laws and Coastal Development and Spokesman of Sindh Government Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that it is our moral and legal obligation to follow the rules and regulation of Environmental Laws.

He further said that elements who violate environmental laws should correct their direction for healthy and friendly environment. He expressed these views while chairing over a high level meeting

of the environment protection agency department. He directed the officer to gear up the departmental proceeding against violation of environmental laws and prohibit the manufacturer of non-biodegradable plastic from Karachi to Kashmore at any cost.

He also said that the hospital waste recycling factories should be sealed after legal proceedings. Provincial Advisor was informed that operation against smoke and emission of vehicles is still being carried out and hundreds of vehicles owners had been fined.

Advisor further said that number of checking points be increased at different locations of the city and heavy fine should be imposed on smoke emitting vehicles. He directed that factories which are involved in burning tyres as fuel should be raided and legal action also be immediately taken against them who were spreading air pollution and no pressure must be accepted in these regard.

“Construction Industry should ensure the compliance of environmental laws in the construction of buildings of all kinds,” he concluded. The meeting was attended by Secretary Environment Khan Muhammad Mahar, Assistant Director General SEPA Waqar Phulphoto, Deputy Director SEPA and all the officers of Environment Department.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/20/554956/environmental-laws-obligatory-upon-all-and-sundry-murtaza/>

LAHORE CHOKES: AIR QUALITY SECOND WORST IN THE WORLD

By Afzal Talib Published: December 21, 2019

LAHORE: Lahore’s air quality dipped to the second worst in the entire world as per the air quality index (AQI) on Friday.

The index which accesses six main pollutants (PM2.5, PM10, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and ground level ozone) stated a gory average of 417 for Lahore.

AQI index ranges from 0 to 500, the higher the value, the higher the health risk posed by ambient air pollution.

In some areas of Lahore, the index reading reached up to 454, putting the Punjab Environment Protection Department (EPD) to shame for its claims of better air quality.

Other districts of Punjab are also suffering from this environmental catastrophe.

The poor performance of EPD has worsened the environmental crisis in not just the provincial capital but also surrounding districts. Persistent smog and worsening environment is causing severe eye irritation and respiratory problems in people who reside in these areas.

Despite warnings by the international indices that the air pollution levels are dangerously high in the province, the Environment Protection Department continues to misquote pollution levels at 174 on their website.

Smog has been crippling life in Punjab for quite some years now; triggered by torching crop wastes, burning debris, old technology brick kilns, smoke emitting factories and vehicles alongside the centuries-old phenomenon of fog.

Owing to all these detrimental factors, Lahore continues to give a tough time to pollution capitals of the world, often assuming the lead position. The environment protection department notices the urgency of smog prevention only at its onset in November. As soon as spring arrives in the country, all preventive measures are forgotten until the next catastrophic winter.

In Lahore division alone, 500 brick kilns and nearly 2800 factories emit smoke but the department fails to address the issue by ensuring blanket compliance of the environmental policies and bans.

Punjab Environment Protection Director Punjab Naseem-ur-Rehman told The Express Tribune that like the other districts of Punjab, 200,000 challans were given in Lahore and more than Rs400,000 was levied as fine. Whereas, 21 FIRs were registered, 108 old brick kilns were shut and 419 factories were sealed to reduce smog level.

Moreover, the departments shove the blame on each other or India to escape accountability, regardless of the blatant violations of the crop waste burning and other environmental protection bans within our own borders.

There are an estimated three million motorcycles, and one million domestic and commercial vehicles in Lahore have not obtained any fitness certificate. This absence of environmental protection enforcement measures has led to a further increase in ambient air pollution levels.

On the special directives of the Supreme Court, an environmental judicial commission led by Justice (ret'd) Ali Akbar Qureshi was formed. The commission had imposed a ban and dictated punishments for operating old technology brick kilns and smoke emitting vehicles and factories.

So far no drastic measures have been taken by the government, except the symbolic registration of first information reports (FIRs) and annual bans against the transgressors, to curb dangerous pollution levels across the province.

The only respite expected under such circumstances is the prediction of rain, by the meteorological department, in Punjab after December 25. Snowfall is also expected in the mountainous regions by the end of next week that would help reduce smog levels across the region. The temperature is also expected to plummet further in the province.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 21st, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2122204/1-lahore-chokes-air-quality-second-worst-world/>

POLLUTION DEATHS

By Editoria | Published: December 22, 2019

The age of Anthropocene marked the beginning of a new epoch where humans have become a geological force — our actions drastically change and affect the geological sphere. Psychologically it represents the affirmation of a geological crisis that threatens our very way of life. This new epoch shakes our unconscious morality by making us question what our lives mean in the face of death.

Even though many critics remain skeptical, it is becoming clearer by the day that we are staring death in the face.

According to a recent report by the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP), India tops the list of the most pollution-related deaths while Pakistan remains in the top five. The report also claims that 8.3 million pre-mature deaths around the world are caused by pollution — which is just one of the causes of global warming. Increasing pollution leading to increased global warming eventually exacerbates the effects of climate change. Its effects are not localised to the actions of a specific region which means that increased carbon emission from some countries affects the geological conditions of others — specifically those that are near the equator. The problem is truly universal and can only be solved as such.

Even though the effects of climate change are witnessed across the globe as the top 10 death-related countries include the largest and wealthiest alongside the poor, there is a stark difference in intensity since death rates are the highest in some of the most impoverished countries. As resources start getting contaminated, basic necessities such as clean food and clean water become scarce. The global food crisis is a case in point. It is evident that the rich and powerful are in control of these resources through monetary means while those on the fringes of society are adversely affected.

The fact is that we are all too well aware of the causes and the effects of pollution and global warming, yet we have not been able to work towards a united cause. The situation is beyond political or economic as the whole of humanity is at risk. It should be treated as such.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 22nd, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2122581/6-pollution-deaths/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 23rd TO 29th 2019

GEARING UP FOR A FOSSIL FUEL–FREE SOCIETY — II

Musa Khan Durrani Updated December 23, 2019

The first part of this article, published on Dec 9, highlighted how China is dominating the global production of lithium ion batteries (LIBs) and how Pakistan stands to learn from its experience.

Globally, electric vehicles (EVs) have been the main drivers of investment in LIB production. LIBs constitute 40-50 per cent of the cost of an EV. Over 80pc of the future LIB demand is expected to come from EVs. The remaining demand will come from applications like stationary storage and consumer electronics.

The government recently announced its National Electric Vehicles Policy (NEVP) 2019. The policy covers not only EVs but also its related industries like LIBs and charging stations. It ambitiously targets 100,000 cars, 500,000 two-wheelers/three-wheelers and 1,000 buses and trucks as EVs by the end of 2024. It further targets a 30pc share of EVs in new car sales by 2030 and 90pc by 2040. The policy also aims to convert 3,000 idle CNG stations into EV-charging stations.

These targets come with a generous fiscal incentive package for investment. The policy allows the EV imports of completely built units (CBU) at zero duty for five years while only 1pc sales tax will be collected from EV assemblers for the first seven years.

With electric vehicles in play, surplus electricity can be put to use in charging stations, which will dilute fixed capacity charges and drive down power tariffs for all user segments

The registration of vehicles and token tax will also be free on prospective buyers. Benefits under the Auto Development Policy 2016-21 also apply to new entrants in electric vehicles except that the NEVP offers further benefits. In addition, used EV imports will also be allowed for the first two years. All these incentives are expected to bring EV prices in parity with conventional vehicles.

The policy argues that EVs will not only help cut our fuel import bill (expected annual savings of about \$2 billion) but also significantly reduce traffic pollution, which currently accounts for about 40pc of total greenhouse gas emissions in the country — almost twice those in developed countries.

Clearly, the NEVP has to be acknowledged as a step in the right direction. If done right, this can be truly transformational for our industrial landscape. It is imperative for the government to treat this policy — and ensuing EV investments — as a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

The policy must aim to drive investment in other allied industries like renewable energy and power storage. It will be useful to see how China essentially preloaded the LIB demand (and production) by pushing investments in EVs.

An interesting example of how EVs can influence other, seemingly unrelated, industries in Pakistan is its impact on the local energy sector. Pakistan is currently sitting on a huge pile of idle power generation capacities — almost all of which are in the independent power producer (IPP) mode. These IPPs, which are commissioned under take-or-pay contracts with the government, charge dollar-denominated capacity payments irrespective of the plant usage. Since the government passes these capacity charges on to existing consumers, the end-user rate of electricity has been increasing exponentially.

Now with EVs in play, this surplus generation capacity can be put to use in EV charging stations, which will dilute the fixed capacity charges and drive down electricity tariffs for all other user segments like industrial, commercial and residential. Pakistan will, thus, be in a unique situation, vis-à-vis other developed countries, where an increase in power demand from EVs will end up reducing, rather than increasing, the consumers' cost of electricity.

Similarly, another major application of LIBs — the stationary storage — can help meet the intermittence issue of renewable energy, especially solar energy. Stationary storage, whether used for on-site applications like homes and office buildings or grid-scale applications, can help shave off the solar generation peaks during sun hours. The solar generation–consumption mismatch, known as the duck curve, has been a challenge for many developed countries with ramped-up solar generation capacities. The LIB storage here can solve this problem by storing excess power in daytime and discharging it in the after-sun hours.

In the context of Pakistan, the above-mentioned applications of LIBs can trigger a continuous circuit of green investments where EV demand will create demand for LIBs, and supply of LIBs for stationary storage solutions will incentivise further investment in renewable energy.

Finally, with cheap renewables in the energy mix, energy tariffs can be brought down that will, in turn, drive further demand for EVs. This self-perpetuating EV-LIB-solar-EV ‘green loop’ can truly set off a paradigm shift in our economy.

But in order to truly harness the potential of LIBs, the government will have to do this the right way. Leveraging the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the government should encourage Chinese-led JVs in LIB manufacturing with local partners responsible for local fund raising, regulatory approvals and organisational setup. Until the local EV market takes shape, these will primarily be export-oriented projects (targeting the United States and Europe) with some local demand anchorage coming from stationary storage applications.

The Chinese partner will ideally be an existing LIB manufacturer looking to relocate/expand its capacities in Pakistan. Besides other fiscal incentives under the NEVP, the relocation will provide a ‘location arbitrage’ to the Chinese partner where the United States has recently imposed a 10-15pc import duty on made-in-China LIBs.

Lastly, these large-scale giga factories can be set up in various Special Economic Zones (SEZs) envisaged under CPEC. The SEZ framework offers its own set of incentives like duty-free imports of plant/machinery and a 10-year tax holiday. Moreover, their locations provide for easy connectivity to main highways, airports and seaports (Karachi).

The economic fundamentals for EVs and LIBs are exceptionally strong in Pakistan. Investments in EVs and LIBs can spur technology transfer, improve urban air quality, reduce noise pollution, save expensive foreign exchange, employ idle power capacity, lower consumer tariffs and trigger capital flows towards multiple industries.

And yet, like almost always, the macro risks emanating from policy inconsistencies and bureaucratic red tape weigh heavier. Whether the fate of the Auto Policy 2016-21 — in the wake of the NEVP — comes under question or the dismal condition of operational SEZs is up for review, the gap between what is promised as policy and what is delivered as action is too wide to ignore. These factors form the basis of any investment decision and will thus have to be addressed.

To conclude, the government has taken a major first step in unveiling the EV policy. A federal minister also announced the entry of a Chinese LIB manufacturer in Pakistan. These are all positive developments. But these words will now have to be backed by right actions, for the stakes are too high and the (storage) opportunity too huge.

The writer heads the business advisory function at a large industrial and services group in Islamabad

Published in Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, December 23rd, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1523816>

‘MOUNDS OF GARBAGE PILE UP UNDER PUNJAB GOVT’S ‘WARY STRATEGY’

By Imran Adnan Published: December 23, 2019

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government’s wary strategy to smell a rat in all initiatives of the previous government of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the system of

accountability has transformed the entire metropolis into a giant heap of garbage, The Express Tribune learnt on Sunday.

Officials of the waste management companies, Turkish and local contractors have indicated that the waste management and collection system was 'breathing its last' owing to non-payment by the provincial government.

The government owes over Rs3 billion to the waste management companies, including around Rs1.4 billion to Albayrak and around Rs1.8 billion to OzPak.

"We have not been paid by the government since February 2019. Last week, sanitary workers – who are provided by private contractors – had announced strike due to non-payment of their dues, because of which we have to shut our operations," disclosed an official of the private contractor on condition of anonymity.

Responding to a question, he highlighted that the government had promised to pay bonus on Eidul Azha as the reward of good cleanliness campaign, but it failed to keep its promise.

"The government is continuously giving false assurances about release of our outstanding payment. On numerous occasions, we get to hear that if some accountability agency brings forensic report against the waste management companies then how will the government recover the payments from you," he said.

"All the government officials are reluctant to make any payment to public service companies constituted during the previous regime," he revealed, adding that it was not the case that the government was not releasing payments but it was hesitant to clear the outstanding bills of the waste management companies for fear of accountability.

"We believe it is a temporary phase. Both Turkish companies are keen to work in Pakistan and have already applied for pre-qualification in new tendering," he underlined. "After new assurances about the release of outstanding payments both companies have managed to bring back some workers for waste removal from the city but it would not work long if the government failed to clear our bills."

Meanwhile, following annoyance expressed by Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar over poor cleanliness in the city, the Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) chairman tendered a public apology in a news conference on Sunday over the inconvenience caused to citizens due to poor waste management.

Addressing a news conference, he claimed that all the reservations of the Turkish companies have been addressed and the zero-waste operation in the city has been restored.

"Lahorites will witness a visible difference in the cleanliness of the city during next 24 to 48 hours as no officer or worker will go home till successful completion of the operation," he said.

Contrary to Turkish contractors' stance, LWMC chairman tried to give the impression that international contractors are trying to pull out of the Pakistani market.

"The international contract is going towards closure and the department has learnt a lot from it. In future, the LWMC will ensure a more transparent system so that local contractors can also participate," he underlined.

He further said maintaining cleanliness in the city was the company's priority and the company was using all possible means to ensure timely removal of waste from the city.

He added that till now more than 10,000 tonnes of waste has been removed in an environment-friendly manner whereas the operation was still underway.

The chairman and LWMC Managing Director Rao Imtiaz Ahmad visited multiple areas of the city, including the workshops of LWMC and Turkish contractors to ensure the proper functioning of zero-waste operation on the ground.

“We would not sit contentedly until the completion of the zero-waste operation and all the resources will be used to provide citizens with a clean environment. All team of the LWMC is in the field despite anything, the LWMC MD said.

He also added that citizens would not be disappointed and the LWMC complete its operation within 48 hours. He directed all the officers to resolve the complaints of the citizens.

Though the LWMC officials claim that Turkish contractors have resumed waste collection operations, zero-waste operation pictures released for media clearly indicated that the issue was not yet resolved as neither Albayrak nor OzPak vehicles participated in waste collection campaign.

An official disclosed that the LWMC management was trying to “teach a lesson to Turkish contractors” that the company could collect waste from the city without them that was why it mobilised some local contractors for waste collection.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 23rd, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2123196/1-mounds-garbage-pile-punjab-govts-wary-strategy/>

SPECIAL HOUBARA HUNTING PERMITS ISSUED TO BAHRAIN KING

Bhagwandas Updated December 24, 2019

KARACHI: The federal government has issued special permits to King of Bahrain Sheikh Hamad bin Isa bin Salman al Khalifa and five other members of his family to hunt the internationally-protected houbara bustard during the 2019-20 hunting season, it is learnt here reliably.

Besides the king, the hunting party includes his uncle, his country's interior minister, adviser on defence, cousins, and other people of the kingdom located on the northern side of the Arabian peninsula in the Gulf.

Originally belonging to the colder central Asian region, the houbara bustard migrates every year southwards to winter in a relatively warm environment here.

Owing to ruthless hunting by Arab hunters, the population of the migratory bird has declined because of which it is not only protected under various international nature conservation conventions, but its hunting is also banned under local wildlife protection laws. Pakistanis are not allowed to hunt this bird.

Under a code of conduct issued by the foreign ministry, a hunter can hunt 100 houbara bustards in a 10-day hunting spree during the three-month-long hunting season between Nov 1, 2019 and Jan 31, 2020. According to the special hunting permits issued by the foreign ministry's deputy chief of protocol Mohammad Adeel Pervaiz and delivered at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain in the federal capital, the names of hunters and the areas allocated to them are: King of the Kingdom of Bahrain Sheikh Hamad bin Isa bin Salman al Khalifa has been allocated Jamshoro district (including Thano Bula Khan, Kotri, Manjhand and Sehwan tehsils).

The king's uncle, Sheikh Ebrahim bin Hamad bin Abdullah al Khalifa, has been allowed to hunt the migratory bird in Sujawal district's Shah Bunder tehsil.

The king's cousin, who is also his interior minister, Lt Gen Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah al Khalifa, will hunt in Naushahro Feroze district in Sindh and Jaffarabad district in Balochistan.

The king's adviser on defence, Sheikh Abdullah bin Salman al Khalifa, will carry out the hunting of the protected bird in Sujawal district's Jati tehsil.

A cousin of the king, Sheikh Khalid bin Rashid bin Abdullah al Khalifa, has been given Tando Mohammad Khan, while his another cousin, Sheikh Ahmad bin Ali al Khalifa, will hunt in Hyderabad and Malir (excluding Malir Cantonment and Dhabeji areas) districts.

Published in Dawn, December 24th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1524059>

CM LAUNCHES 'CLEAN & GREEN PUNJAB' DRIVE

By RECORDER REPORT on December 25, 2019

Inaugurating Clean and Green Index Punjab and Clean and Green Punjab campaign, Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar Tuesday said that provincial government in collaboration with World Bank is going to launch a comprehensive project to cope with the challenge of climate change.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of Clean and Green Punjab Campaign in Lahore Tuesday, the CM said Pakistan, especially Punjab, had been affected most by climate change. He also got registered at the portal as a clean and green champion.

Addressing the gathering, Usman Buzdar said climate change, smog and natural calamities were affecting cities and overcoming them has become a major challenge. "Prime Minister Imran Khan raised voice against climate change at the international forum while the Punjab government is following the vision of clean and green Pakistan," the CM said, adding: "Local governments have been established under Punjab Local Government Act and Commissioners and DCs have been given the charge of administrators."

He said administrative officers would have to set new trends for clean and green Punjab so that the elected representatives could take the administrative officers as role models. He said healthy competition would be held with regard to the clean and green program among 319 local governments and clean and green Punjab competitions are being held in the province on the pattern of the federal government. As many as 12 districts in Punjab province and seven KPK districts had been chosen for national-level competitions, he added.

He said decision would be made about the performance of 319 local governments in cleanliness competitions on the basis of their performance which would be based on seven points and best performing districts and their administration would be appreciated at the national and local level. He asked the field officers to deliver so that Punjab could lead to the clean and green campaign. Punjab government would provide every possible support as it was an important project which could never be ignored, he added.

Advisor to PM Malik Amin Aslam said that planting 10 billion trees programme had proved very successful in KPK and Punjab was also vigorously taking part in trees' plantation program.

Law Minister Raja Basharat and Housing Minister Mian Mehmood-ur-Rasheed also spoke on this occasion.

Secretary local government said Prime Minister Imran Khan would announce the names of best performers on March 23 and added that chief minister had given approval to recruit 25,000 sanitary workers and sewer men.

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<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/12/25/556259/cm-launches-clean-green-punjab-drive/>

SUPREME COURT ORDERS ACTION AGAINST AIR POLLUTION

By Our Correspondent Published: December 25, 2019

KARACHI: The Supreme Court (SC) directed the Sindh Home Department Secretary and the Sindh Inspector General Police on Tuesday to take action against air pollution caused due to coal consumption. A two-member bench comprising Justice Mushir Alam and Justice Sajjad Ali Shah was hearing the plea pertaining to the reduction of air pollution at the SC Karachi Registry.

Petitioner Advocate Venu Kumar Adwani maintained that despite judicial orders, no steps were being taken to control air pollution. He argued coal storage should be monitored at government level and vehicles that don't adhere to environmental guidelines should not be loaded with coal.

The SBIT officials informed the court that loading is carried out when steps are taken against pollution. They maintained that they are not responsible for when the vehicles are on the road.

The petitioner argued that those selling their product [through these vehicles] are also responsible. He maintained that the SBIT should bound industrials with regards to environmental pollution. It spreads from the berth to the railway tracks, he said.

Port Qasim authorities told the court that a project to lay out a track from the berth is being pursued and will be completed in 12 to 18 months after the approval of the PC-1.

The court remarked that dumper vehicles should ensure compliance with environmental guidelines when carrying coal from the storage. The bench observed that the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) was responsible for bounding industries to take steps against air pollution caused due to coal consumption. The court directed SEPA to monitor the storage of coal and visit coal consumer industries while directing coal consuming industries to also adhere to environmental rules.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 25th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2124481/1-supreme-court-orders-action-air-pollution/>

KAILASH FORESTS THE LOSERS IN EXTREME WEATHER

By Adnan Lodhi Published: December 26, 2019

PESHAWAR: Winters in the remote Kailash valley can mean mounds of snow and temperatures falling to as low as -7° Celsius. At the peak winters—December to February—the valley retreats into virtual hibernation, seeking comfort in the confines of their homes where they can burn firewood to keep themselves warm.

Locals estimate that a single household in the valley can burn up to 80 kilogrammes of firewood every day in the biting cold. On the other hand, hotels and guesthouses in the tourist-focused segment of the valley can burn through 200 kilogrammes of firewood daily.

To fuel such voracious need for wood, hundreds of trees are chopped down every winter. The abundant use of firewood and continuous cutting of trees has started taking a toll on the valley's natural, scenic beauty.

This has put the remote Kailash valley at the risk of expedited deforestation, and in turn, its protected way of life.

Kailash, a popular tourist destination, is comprised of three valleys including Birrir, Rumbur, and Bamburet.

Known as the residence of the ancient indigenous Kaislaha tribes — who some attribute as descendants of Alexander the Great — the valleys welcome thousands of local and international tourists every year.

Many of these tourists, who are itching to see for themselves Pakistan's picturesque north, particularly through the Kailash Valley to experience the spring festival of Chillum Joshi in May, Poo in August and the winter festival of Chowmoss in mid-December.

In the recently concluded Chowmoss' festival, hundreds of tourists have gathered in the valley to experience and partake in the winter festival. The tourists, both local and international, shared their fascination for the heritage, culture and traditions of the Kailasha community, which has been granted protected status by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

As much as the influx of tourists contributes to the local economy, the Kailasha people are critical about the impact such tourism has on local ecology.

The visiting tourists, for their part, tend to criticise the K-P government for remaining oblivious to the timber mafia in the area, which they believe are responsible for the fast receding forests in the valleys.

Until a few years ago, trees of Diyar (Deodar – Himalayan Cedar), Walnut and Sycamore could be seen covering the hills in the valley, but today, these same hills appear barren, said a local.

Locals of the valley say they do not have access to utilities such as gas which they can burn to keep themselves warm during the winter. As a result, they are forced to cut trees to use as firewood.

“We are aware of the loss of forestation and we care about the issue but we have no other way of keeping warm besides cutting trees and burning wood when the temperature drops to -7° Celsius in the winters,” said Azmat Ali, a local of Birrir Valley

Shamsuddin, another local believes that it is the government’s fault for not providing access to gas in the valley.

“Past governments have made several promises of providing gas, but to date, we are forced to rely on firewood for heat,” he said, adding that much of the valley relies on tourism as a means of income and the valley’s economy will surely take a hit if tourists stop visiting due to nude hillsides.

“The timber mafia and locals are felling trees at an alarming rate and it seems that there is no one left to take notice of the issue. Our valley is also worst hit by global warming in last few years and we have started noticing the changing weather patterns,” said Mahrab khan a tourist guide in the Kailash Valley while talking to The Express Tribune.

“We demand the government to take prompt action and also provide access to Sui gas to the locals of the valley before it is too late,” he added.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 26th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2125027/1-kailash-forests-losers-extreme-weather/>

POPULATION OF HOUBARA BUSTARD IN PUNJAB DECLINING: REPORT

Faiza Ilyas Updated December 29, 2019

KARACHI: The population of houbara bustard has declined in Punjab over the three-year period from 2017 to 2019, suggesting that hunting of the bird in the province is not sustainable, says a report recently approved by the Houbara Bustard Commission.

Appointed by the chief justice of the Lahore High Court in 2017, the commission was tasked with conducting field surveys to assess whether the hunting of houbara bustard was sustainable.

To estimate the bird’s population at three sites and across Punjab, data was collected as per standard protocols and analysed using standard principles of statistics.

“The overall estimated population of houbara (bustard) in Punjab was 6,223, 6,759 and 5,302 individuals during December 2017, December 2018 and December 2019 surveys, respectively, suggesting a decrease in the population of houbara in Punjab province over the years,” says the second supplemental report of the commission.

This report dated Dec 26, 2019 follows two earlier reports of the commission — the final report dated Feb 25, 2018 and the supplemental report dated Feb 8, 2019.

Surveys show that hunting of the bird is not sustainable

According to the findings of the recent report, estimates of houbara bustard population for 2019 when compared with those of 2018 and 2017 have shown decrease in Cholistan (from 4,299 in 2017 to 3,575 in 2019) and Thal area (from 591 in 2017 to 0 in 2019).

However, a slight increase was observed in Rajanpur-Rojhan area (1,333 in 2017 and 1,880 in 2018) when compared between 2017 and 2018 and decrease (1,880 in 2018 and 1,727 in 2019) when compared between 2018 and 2019.

During the December 2019 surveys, it was observed and confirmed that more feeding points were established in the sampled transects after 2017 and 2018 surveys at the Cholistan site. Further, it was reported that about 500 captive birds were released at the Cholistan site in September 2019 before the surveys.

A few birds tagged at both legs were also observed during the survey. The addition of feeding points and captive birds in the counts has also affected the comparison of 2018 and 2017 results.

“In fact, the population decline that has been established during 2019 surveys could be more severe if the feeding points were not added and captive birds were not released before the December 2019 surveys.

“We highlight, in conclusion, that populations of houbara observed in sampled transects (direct counts) and estimated populations have declined in the Punjab over the three-year period from 2017 to 2019. This suggests that hunting of houbara in the Punjab province is not sustainable,” the report says.

The commission found that Arab dignitaries supported significant development activities in the areas, particularly in the fields of human development, housing, access to potable water, health and education and infrastructure development (roads and airports).

“They have also resourced better wildlife management in some of the areas that has impacted on the revival of indigenous wildlife species such as the Chinkara in Cholistan under pressure and threat from illegal hunting.

“These findings are applicable to the areas surveyed by the commission’s teams in Cholistan and Rajanpur-Rojhan. However, such level of support and commitment was not found in Thal area.”

The LHC had imposed a complete ban on hunting houbara bustard and other rare migrating birds in January 2018 till a final survey of the hunting areas by a commission.

Advocate Sheraz Zaka and Kalim Ilyas on behalf of petitioners had submitted that houbara bustard was a vulnerable species and that the government should be restrained from allowing hunting permits before the next survey to be held in November.

The commission headed by Dr Pervez Hassan formulated survey teams, including representatives of the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan, Punjab Wildlife and Parks Department, International Union for Conservation of Nature-Pakistan, Zoological Survey of Pakistan and Houbara Foundation International Pakistan.

Published in Dawn, December 29th, 2019

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1524975/population-of-houbara-bustard-in-punjab-declining-report>

PROTECTING ENVIRONMENT

By Editorial Published: December 29, 2019

It is imperative for Pakistan to work towards countering the devastating effects of climate change and global warming considering the fact that we are among countries most vulnerable to impacts of erratic weather patterns. Recently Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul warned housing societies in the federal capital against violation of environmental laws and using greenbelts for commercial purposes. She said stern action would be taken against violators of relevant laws, though she admitted that “some housing societies are using greenbelts and parks for commercial purposes.” The second part of the minister’s statement is not surprising given our propensity to take pride in not sticking to the rule of law. She said the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency was holding public hearings on development projects and housing societies, and her ministry would further strengthen and empower the EPA to take strict action against the violators. The minister said such societies had obtained no-objection certificates by declaring parks and greenbelts commercial plots in their environmental assessment reports submitted to the EPA. She warned that if they were found violating the law, their NOCs would be cancelled.

She said PM Imran Khan had removed the cap on the construction of high-rise buildings in Islamabad with a view to encouraging horizontal expansion of the city with the aim of protecting greenery. The minister said the government had also taken serious notice of the use of mercury in cosmetics beyond the permissible limits and the use of the metal in filling teeth cavities. Legislation is being prepared to prevent the use of mercury for these purposes. Mercury is a harmful substance.

We welcome the government’s action being taken for protecting the environment. It is mostly human activity that is harming the environment. This is because of reckless consumption. Mankind has made the planet Earth look like: “I came; I conquered; I made it awkward.” This needs to be reversed.

Published in The Express Tribune, December 29th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2126656/6-protecting-environment/>