

January 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 29TH TO FEBRUARY 4TH 2017

DENSE FOG DISRUPTS LIFE IN PUNJAB

Business Recorder, January 29, 2018

Lahore: Dense fog and poor visibility during the night and morning hours continue to disrupt life as the Highway Police has warned the commuters against unnecessary travelling to avoid fatal accidents.

The Met office has said that weather remained cold and dry in most parts of the country on Sunday. Dense fog prevailed over plain areas of Punjab and Sukkur division. Dense fog is likely to occur in plain areas of Punjab and upper Sindh during the night and morning hours on Monday.

As the blanket of fog disrupted normal traffic on motorways and national highways in Punjab and Sukkur division it also disrupted flight and train schedule due to poor visibility.

With regard to synoptic situation the Met office said that a westerly wave is likely to enter western parts of the country tonight and likely to grip upper parts on Monday. It may persist over northern areas till Tuesday.

Predicting rain/snowfall on Monday and Tuesday, it said rain/thunderstorm is expected at scattered places in Malakand, Hazara, Mardan, Quetta, and Zhob divisions, Fata, Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir while at isolated places in Bannu, Peshawar, Kohat, Kalat, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Sargodha divisions and Islamabad on Monday/Tuesday.

Snowfall is also expected in Malakand division, Gallyat, Naran, Kaghan, Murree,

Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan during the period.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/01/29/5-page/696776-news.html>

SOME 20,000 PREMATURE DEATHS LINKED TO AIR POLLUTION

The Express Tribune, January 29th, 2018.

Pakistan's urban air pollution is among the worst in the world. The horrific impact of air pollution is causing more than 20,000 premature deaths among adults and almost 5,000,000 cases of illness among children each year, according to the World Bank's report titled, 'Cleaning Pakistan's Air: Policy Options to Address the Cost of Outdoor Air Pollution'.

"Pakistan is [one of] the most urbanised countries in South Asia, and it is undergoing rapid motorisation and increasing energy use... Air pollution, particularly in large urban centres, damages the population's health and quality of life and contributes to environmental degradation," the report states.

It mentions that the concentrations of particle pollution — or particle matter (PM) — in Pakistan’s urban areas are much higher than those experienced in other regional countries such as Bhutan, India and Sri Lanka. In addition, while these countries have adopted a number of measures that have resulted in reduced urban air pollution, Pakistan has yet to follow suit and is paying the costs of increasingly high outdoor air pollution.

The study reveals that — from 2007 to 2011 — the reported levels of PM, sulfur dioxide (SO₂), and lead (Pb) were many times higher than the World Health Organization (WHO) air quality guidelines.

However, former Pak-EPA Director General Asif Shuja Khan adds that the report was commissioned in 2014, and the alarming figures may have been increased since — keeping in mind the impact of the smog in 2017 on health, economy and agriculture. “Currently, the impact of climate change is making matters worse, which we witnessed in the form of the dense smog last,” says Khan. “But it’s important to understand that smog alone cannot be controlled at a local level, as it requires regional cooperation.”

Pakistan’s economic hub — Karachi — is perhaps the worst hit. Its population is exposed to outdoor ambient air concentrations of PM that are much higher than WHO guidelines. Annual average PM_{2.5} ambient air concentrations are estimated at 88 micrograms per cubic meters. “Nearly 80% of the 9,000 premature deaths caused each year in Pakistan by high PM_{2.5} concentrations are in Karachi,” reads the report. The report outlines a broad spectrum of research on Pakistan’s air pollution challenges and identifies a comprehensive set of steps to improve air quality. The Express Tribune outlines some of the significant findings from the report:

Street smart?

The number of vehicles on Pakistan’s streets have jumped from approximately two million to 10.6 million over the past 20 years — an average annual growth rate of 8.5%. The number of motorcycles grew more than 450% and motor cars close to 650%.

Toxi-cities

Emissions from large-scale facilities such as cement, fertiliser, sugar, steel and power plants — many of which use furnace oil that is high in sulfur content — are a major contributor to air quality.

Where there’s smoke...

More than 54,000 tons of solid waste are generated daily, most of which is either dumped in low-lying areas or burned. Moreover, farmers in Pakistan burn sugarcane fields to ease harvesting. Predominately, dry weather in arid conditions and strong winds also generate substantial dust in most parts of Sindh and southern Punjab, elevating PM₁₀ levels in the air.

Health hazard

The worst impact of poor air quality was witnessed on the health sector. Outdoor air pollution alone causes 80,000 hospitals admission per year; nearly 8,000 cases of chronic bronchitis; and almost five million cases of lower respiratory cases among children under the age of five.

It's the economy, stupid

By 2005, the direct cost of the damage associated with outdoor air pollution was estimated at 1.1 % of Pakistan's GDP (US \$1.07 billion).

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1620862/1-20000-premature-deaths-linked-air-pollution/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 22ND TO JANUARY 28 TH 2018

300 MANGROVE SAPLINGS PLANTED

The Express Tribune, 26 January 2018

A mangrove plantation campaign was launched on Thursday by World Wide Fund for Nature – Pakistan (WWF-Pakistan) in collaboration with Artistic Fabric and Garment Industries (AFGI), as part of Earth Hour 2018.

The launch ceremony was held at the WWF-Pakistan Wetland Centre at Sandspit in which participants from both the organisations planted 300 mangrove saplings. WWF-Pakistan and AFGI also committed on the occasion to achieve plantation of 27,000 mangrove saplings in Karachi by March 24 this year.

Speaking at the ceremony, WWF-Pakistan Sindh and Balochistan Head Dr Babar Khan said according to National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the year 2017 was among the three warmest years on record. He added that in the wake of climate change, there was a dire need to collectively work for a sustainable future.

Pakistan has the highest annual deforestation rate in Asia and its forest cover is now less than 2.5% of the country's total land, Dr Khan lamented. He stressed need for initiating massive plantation drives in and near metropolitan cities like Karachi to reduce adverse impacts of the climate change. The heatwave of 2015 in Karachi which caused more than 1,000 deaths was a result of climate change, he said.

Dr Khan informed the gathering that although Pakistan was not contributing to climate change in a significant way, it did rank among the top 10 countries most vulnerable to adverse impacts of the climate change. He urged the private sector to participate in environment-related projects in the country.

AFGI Director Ahmed Javed said he hoped that the mangrove plantation campaign would continue. He further expressed hope for similar partnerships in the future.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1618262/1-300-mangrove-saplings-planted/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 15TH TO JANUARY 21ST 2018

REMOVAL OF GARBAGE ORDERED IN PARTS OF HYDERABAD ON SHO'S PLEA

A subordinate court in Hyderabad gave on Monday a deadline of seven days to officials of the Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (HMC) to remove encroachments and garbage from parts of Hyderabad. The order came on a complaint filed under Section 133 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPc) by the SHO of the Market police station, Munir Abbassi.

Civil Judge and Judicial Magistrate Junaid Faiz Memon warned the municipal commissioner and HMC anti-encroachment cell director that failure to comply will result in a stringent order.

In his plea, SHO Abbassi pointed out localities in the limits of his police station, including Liaquat University Hospital, where garbage and untreated solid waste from the hospital were being dumped in the open. He also identified several places where donkey carts, fruit carts, illegal stalls of vendors and vehicles of transport companies obstruct the roads

“... by this conditional order the respondents are directed to dispose of garbage and remove illegal obstructions over the public way,” the order reads, giving the officials a week for compliance and submission of a report. “You are further directed to show cause within span of seven days as to why final order under CrPC 133 shall not be passed against you and in terms of failure final order in terms of Section 136 of CrPC.”

Under the Section 136 of the CrPc, whose penalty is contained in Section 188, the court can order one-month jail term and Rs2,500 penalty to the officials. If convicted, the two officials, Shahid Ali Khan and Tauheed Ahmed, will also be dismissed from service.

The HMC, which consists of 96 union committees of the city and Latifabad talukas of Hyderabad, is headed by Mayor Syed Tayyab Hussain who belongs to the Muttahida Qaumi Movement – Pakistan. The corporation is engaged in a tussle over financial resources with the Pakistan Peoples Party-led Sindh government.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1609407/1-removal-garbage-ordered-parts-hyderabad-shos-plea/>

NEW ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL APPROVES LAST YEAR'S SEQS

Faiza Ilyas

Dawn, January 17, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh government finally fulfilled a mandatory requirement under the Sindh Environmental Protection Act 2014 when it held the first-ever meeting of the Sindh Environmental Protection Council on Tuesday.

The meeting chaired by Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Coastal Development Mohammed Ali Malkani approved the Sindh Environmental Quality Standards (SEQS) notified last year.

It is important to mention here that the provision of setting up an environmental council had been a legal requirement since 1997 when the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act was formulated. In 2014, Sindh came up with its own environmental law, which also required establishment of the council.

The council, a policy making and supervisory body under Section three of the law, has wide ranging powers. The council's absence, according to experts, had been a legal lacuna, often used by industries to get stay order and prevent action against them. The environmental law, they pointed out, also called for setting up advisory bodies for each sector, which were still pending.

The Tuesday's meeting was attended by secretary of environment, climate change and coastal development department/director general Sindh EPA Baqaullah Unnar, secretary of irrigation Syed Jamal Mustafa, secretary of industries Abdul Raheem, commissioner of Sukkur Division Dr Mohammed Usman Chachar and other ex-officio members, representative of Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, SITE Association, Korangi Association of Trade and Industry, non-governmental organisations, members of academia and technical experts.

The council approved the SEQS notified earlier vide Gazette Notification No. EPA/TECH/739/2014 dated Jan 28, 2016.

The council chairman also formed a sub-committee to review the SEQS and propose necessary amendments within a period of one month.

The sub-committee will be chaired by secretary of environment, climate change & coastal development department and will comprise 11 members: Gulzar Feroze of FPCCI, representatives of KCCI, SITE association, KATI, Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ghulam Murtaza representing Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources, environmental expert Shahid Lutfi, Prof Rasool Bux Mahar of Mehran University of Engineering & Technology, Jamshoro, Prof Shabbar Ali of NED University, additional director general of Sepa Waqar Hussain Phulpoto and director regional office Sepa Ashique Ali Langah.

Mr Malkani directed Sepa to prepare a draft on council's rules and procedures within 30 days for review of the council members.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1383347/new-environmental-council-approves-last-years-seqs>

GREEN CAMPUS PROJECT: NED UNIVERSITY TO PLANT 2,500 TREES, PLANTS
The Express Tribune, January 18, 2018

FRESH AIR: The company involved in planting the trees will also be responsible for maintaining these trees for a year. **PHOTO: EXPRESS**

KARACHI: The NED University of Engineering and Technology has initiated a green campus project in view of the university turning 100 years old in 2021. Under the project, a campaign has started to plant 2,500 plants and trees, out of which 100 have already been planted.

The site plan of the project has been prepared in which 16 types of plants and trees will be planted. Initially, 70 date trees have been planted from the central door of NED till the walls of Karachi University (KU).

Other projects were also initiated which includes changing the lighting at the varsity to LED lighting. The expenditure of the projects will be borne by the alumni of the varsity.

An ex-student, Sohail Bashir, who works for a Japanese company has taken the responsibility of planting date trees and has already planted 70 of them. The company involved in planting the trees will also be responsible for maintaining these trees for a year.

The date trees will be planted as far as the wall that unites NED with KU. Inside the university, the plantation will take place in the soccer field, car parking area, vicinity of Habib Bank Limited and National Bank of Pakistan, tennis court, basketball complex and other places.

According to the plan, Royal Palm, coconut palm, washing to new palm, Senegal date palm and traveler palms and other types of trees and plants will be planted.

NED University Vice Chancellor (VC) Sarosh Lodi said that a graduate of the varsity, Asad Jafar, works as the chief executive officer of a company that has agreed to install LED lighting. Lodi said talks were held with Jafar, who agreed to install the LED lights without any profits. Funds for the installation are being arranged, Lodi said.

The VC said that details of the project will be published on the website soon and everyone can choose a position of their choice to plant a tree with their name. He said those cooperating with the university include two alumni members, Ajmal Farooqi and Bashir from Saita Corporation. Others include Arif Raza from Amcorp Engineering and Construction (Pvt) Limited, Faisal Naqvi from Gasco Engineering, Ameerul Islam from Jersey Precast, Kazim Mansoor from Soilmat Engineers and Ghulam Farooq and Farhat Adil.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1611285/1-green-campus-project-ned-university-plant-2500-trees-plants/>

MURAD ORDERS DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST AREA ON 20,000 ACRES

Dawn, January 20th, 2018

KARACHI: The Sindh government has decided to develop a forest area over 20,000 acres between Karachi and Hyderabad to improve the overall environmental conditions in both cities where huge land belonging to the forest department is lying barren.

This emerged at a meeting presided over by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Friday at CM House.

Issuing the necessary directives to the forest department for developing forests blocks, the CM said each block should be spread over 10,000 acres. This would not only improve the environmental pollution of Karachi and Hyderabad, but also result in increasing the surface area of forest covered land, which is at present 3.3 million acres, in the province amounting to 10 per cent of the total land.

He said the forests could be watered through drip irrigation system.

The meeting was attended by chief secretary Rizwan Memon, principal secretary to CM Sohail Rajput, chief conservators and other officers concerned. Giving a presentation, forest & wildlife secretary Asif Hyder Shah said that the total forest land in the province of Sindh is 3.3 million acres which comes to 10 per cent of Sindh's surface area. The forest includes mangroves or coastal forests, barrage area agricultural sustainability through trees/forestry, riverine forests and irrigation plantation (IP) and range lands — desert-trees as tools for drought management.

He showed a base map of 140,914 square kilometers of forests which include irrigation plantation over an area of 202,622 acres, riverine forests over 595,511 acres, range lands over 1,129,000 acres, and mangroves of 1,500,000 acres.

Talking about the achievements of the forest department, the official said that mangroves have been planted over an area of 175,000 acres during the last five years. “We broke the Guinness world record of planting trees in one day in 2009, and again set a new record by planting 847,275 in 2013. On this the chief minister gave him a new target of planting one million mangroves in March. “I would personally launch the drive on March 23,” the chief minister said.

Giving details of major achievements of the forest department during 2017-18, the forest secretary said that 21,000 acres or 8.92 million mangrove plants were planted in six months, another 21,000 acres would be planted in June 2018, and in order to protect the new plants a community watch and ward system has been developed. He added that natural regeneration of about 180 to 200 million plants has been made.

The chief minister was told that riverine forests over 5,000 acres or 100 million seeds have been broadcasted. New IPs have been made over 1,000 acres which come to 700,000 plants; 12 million container plants in the nurseries have also been developed. The forest department has also carried out linear plantation over an area of 400 kilometres.

The chief minister directed the secretary for forest to issue notices to the lessees who have violated lease conditions. He also directed him to remove encroachment from the land of forest.

Taking serious notice of huge expenditures on payments of pensions, CM on Thursday ordered for a ‘high level’ investigation into the issue.

He issued the order while presiding over a meeting of the three-year budget strategy, 2016-17 to 2020-21, at CM House.

The meeting was attended by the principal secretary to the CM, and all the concerned officers of finance, planning and development and Sindh Revenue Board (SRB).

During a presentation, the chief minister was told that during 2015-16 fiscal, pension payments were recorded at Rs52.8 billion and they went up to Rs70bn in 2016-17. They continued to show the increase this fiscal year when it were counted as Rs76bn. On this the CM said the amount being spent on the payment of pension was extraordinarily huge and “seems to be dubious”.

He ordered his principal secretary to constitute a high-power inquiry and audit committee to investigate the payments. “The audit and inquiry should be launched from the districts where huge payments have been made,” he said.

He added the audit must be carried out professionally and in a transparent manner.

“You can hire the services of any professional auditor, if you need it,” he said.

The chief minister also directed the finance department to computerise the entire pension system, along with the payments, and number of pensioners.

Mr Shah was told that in 2015-16 the development expenditure was Rs137.3bn, in 2016-16 it swelled to Rs210.1bn, and in 2017-18 it was Rs344.1bn.

The meeting was told that during the last three years the revenue receipts had shown an increase of 8.9 per cent while the next year an increase of 14pc was expected.

The chief minister asked his finance and planning and development team to make budget strategy, particularly relating to development as per projected figures.

It was also pointed out that in the head of services on sales tax Rs61.5bn were received in 2015-16, Rs78.5bn in 2016-17, and Rs100bn were expected in 2017-18; while in 2018-19 it would be more than Rs115bn.

CM Shah, during a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador Yao Jing who called on him at CM House, said the people of Karachi were expecting work on the much-anticipated Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project to begin. He said he had discussed its financial cost with the CPEC authorities, but it could not be started on the birth anniversary of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

The visiting ambassador was quoted by a spokesperson of CM House as telling the chief minister that the KCR was in the pipeline and its financial close was expected by the end of next month.

The chief minister said his team was in China and with the support of Ambassador Yao Jing, it would be approved.

He hoped the work on the KCR project would begin on March 23.

“I am going to give the good news to the people of Karachi in March who need KCR so dearly,” he said.

In the meeting they also discussed other projects including the Dhabeji Special Economic Zone, and Keti Bandar Power Project. The spokesperson said the Chinese ambassador on the invitation of the chief minister promised to visit Thar next month.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1384005>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 1ST TO JANUARY 7TH 2018 MANGROVE DEPLETION

The Express Tribune, January 1st, 2018.

While the president of the world’s most powerful country actively denies climate change, more wisdom prevails over a local, uneducated fisherman in Pakistan, who recognises that depleting mangroves along the coastline correlate with catastrophic weather events such as tsunamis and cyclones. It is a tragic fact that along with this type of natural habitat, marine life is being disturbed, which will result in heavy impact on ecological systems of the Indus River and Arabian Sea.

The diminishing populations of various fish and crustaceans is proof. Whether one is for or against the capturing of crustaceans and fish from mangroves, it must scientifically be acknowledged that there is a vicious cycle that follows, impacting livelihoods, marine life, and the larger ecological system.

Mangroves should be reviewed to determine the magnitude of threat after being acquired by the Sindh Forest Department. Until a centralised body with executive power steps in to rescue mangroves, the depletion will continue. Private housing schemes with purely financial profiteering interests continue to exert control and kill the ecology of the Indus River system. Reforestation is against the interest of housing developers and thus, the situation is rendered helpless unless control is taken or stipulations for mangrove preservation are enforced against them.

Organisations working for the protection of mangroves such as Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum must be supported. Others such as the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency and Sindh Forestation Department require enhanced oversight to ensure fair practices are followed and there are honest intentions to protect mangrove forestation.

It is time for individuals and organisations to abandon selfish mindsets. Once the mentality of working for the betterment of the country and its people becomes the driving factor, only then will Pakistan’s flora and fauna flourish.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1597623/6-mangrove-depletion/>

MINISTER BLAMES INDIA FOR ALARMING SMOG LEVEL Business Recorder, January 3rd, 2018

Abdul Rasheed Azad

Federal Minister for Climate Change, Mushahidullah Khan has said that neighboring India is responsible for increasing smog level in Pakistan, adding he has already written a letter to the Foreign Office to take up the issue with India. While talking to media persons here on Tuesday he stressed that concerted efforts are needed to protect the country from increasingly devastating fallouts of manmade climate change problems.

The minister also urged media to join hands to boost resilience against adverse climate change impacts, which are posing dangers to the country. The minister said that the government will soon unveil the Wildlife Policy which will focus on joint efforts to enhance forest cover in all the provinces. He said the government intends to constitute Climate Change Authority (CCA), adding the four-member authority would be headed by an expert. He said that over 100 subject specialists would also be included in the CCA.

Mushahidullah Khan said, "Pakistan has taken a number of important steps towards climate-friendly development including ratification of Paris Agreement and passing of Climate Change Act while steps are being taken to establish provincial climate change centers as well." The National Climate Change Policy 2016 gives legal effect to meet Pakistan's obligations under international conventions relating to climate change. The policy document in any field is a living document and requires continuous update and incorporation in the country's planning documents.

"We must join hands today to mitigate the climate risk to the world by bringing together businesses, governments and public bodies to accelerate sustainable development, advance the green economy and promote use of natural resources with sanity," he said. The common global menace of climate change, which has put the sustainability of the planet earth at risk, cannot be tackled alone and everyone should play its due role in enhancing awareness about the hazards of environment change, he said and added that the incumbent government has already devised forestry policy.

He said that he has suggested to the government to allow import of wood to avoid cutting of trees. He said he has issued directives to plant 100 trees to replace every single tree cut down. Responding to a question, he said the claims of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government of planting 1.08 billion saplings is appreciable.

In response to another query, he said former President Asif Ali Zardari was not a political personality as he had never remained associated with any student movement or any political movement. The statement of Asif Ali Zardari terming Pakistan Awami Tehreek chief Tahir-ul-Qadri as replacement of Nawabzada Nasrullah was simply lamentable.

He said he has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Pakistan Tobacco Company to sponsor the construction of boundary wall of Botanical Garden being constructed on 785 acres of land at Bani Gala, Islamabad. The inauguration ceremony for constructing boundary wall around Botanical Garden would be held on January 10 and the project would cost Rs 80.5 million.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/01/20180103332361/>

‘18TH AMENDMENT ALLOWED PUNJAB TO ADDRESS HEALTH, HYGIENE ISSUES’

Dawn, January 03, 2018

Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: The 18th constitutional amendment, passed in 2010, has received a lot of criticism from lawmakers and think tanks over the years.

But on Tuesday, a representative of the Punjab government told the National Assembly Standing Committee on Inter-Provincial Coordination that the watershed legislation had not only empowered the provinces, but was leading to improvements in health and hygiene standards.

“Before the amendment, we used to have to run from pillar to post in the federal capital the sake of minor issues, but no one bothered to address them. However, after the 18th amendment, Punjab has addressed a number of health-related issues itself,” Irfan Khaliq, deputy secretary of the Punjab Livestock and Dairy Development Department told the committee.

Speaking in response to a briefing by Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (Drap) CEO Dr Mohammad Aslam – who had suggested that provinces should not be allowed to make policies as it was creating problems and was against international practice – the official from Punjab noted that Drap had failed to deliver.

Dr Aslam alleged that provincial legislation was making it difficult for Drap to implement its policies. “Though all provinces are represented in Drap, but they are now considering issuing licenses for medicine and fixing prices on their own, which will create problems. There should be only one policy across the country,” he had suggested.

But Mr Khaliq noted that the country was plagued by a host of issues when it came to health and hygiene standards, particularly where food was involved, and no effort had even been made to look into these issues and correct them.

He was of the opinion that not only had the health of Pakistanis been compromised, but the country was also losing out on opportunities to earn foreign exchange by exporting locally-produced meat.

Due to a lack of conducive policies, he said Saudi Arabia was not interested in importing meat from Pakistan, and was getting its supplies from countries such as Somalia.

“Here, hormones are given to livestock to increase the production of milk, but these create problem for human beings. Vegetables are being cultivated in contaminated water; there was no livestock policy for the past 70 years,” he lamented, adding that after the 18th amendment, Punjab had been able to formulate its first-ever livestock policy.

“According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan, the country’s annual production of milk is 54 billion litres, but actually, the annual production is closer to nine billion litres... the rest of the milk is prepared with formalin, urea and whey powder, which is causing more and more people to develop cancers,” he claimed.

He claimed that three-quarters of infectious diseases were transferred from animals to humans, but deplored that this problem was left unaddressed by policy-makers.

“Due to power outages, formalin is being used to preserve cooked food in the absence of proper refrigeration facilities... the use of formalin was stopped in the US in 1906, but it is still being used here,” he maintained, adding that Punjab was using its power under the 18th amendment to take remedial measures.

In Canada, medical practitioners have to obtain separate licenses to practice in different states, Mr Khaliq said, highlighting how in many countries, standards differed from region to region.

He also highlighted how Drap, in certain cases, provided legal cover to medical stores who were selling substandard medicine.

“Whenever we take action against such stores, they show us Drap approvals... but we have no way of verifying them. We are not satisfied with Drap, and I’m sure quite a few irregularities will be revealed if some investigative agency is directed to probe its affairs, he said.

“We are not in favour of empowering Drap; the provinces are not a hurdle to be circumvented,” he said, responding to the contention made by the Drap CEO.

Lawmakers such as Sardar Mohammad Shafqat Hayat Khan and Rana Mohammad Hayat Khan also suggested that provinces should legislate to improve health standards and ensuring food quality.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1380504>

**KPT SPENDING RS500M MORE ON SHIPS’ MAINTENANCE BECAUSE OF SEA POLLUTION,
SENATE BODY TOLD**

Dawn, January 3rd, 2018

Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: The Karachi Port Trust (KPT) is spending between Rs350 million and Rs500 million extra on maintenance of its ships due to increasing pollution in the sea, KPT chairman Rear Admiral Jamil Akhtar told a parliamentary committee on Tuesday.

“We have to dock our boats and tugs to clean the propellers and the shafts of plastic and polythene bags. Pakistan Navy is facing the same problem of having to spend five times more on maintenance of its ships.

It will not be long that foreign ships stop coming to our harbours,” Jamil Akhtar told the Senate Standing Committee on Maritime Affairs.

The committee met for a briefing on steps taken to clean the polluted water containing sewage and industrial waste that is fatal for marine life, poisoning seafood and degrading human environment.

Describing himself a victim, Rear Admiral Jamil Akhtar said that increasing sea water pollution had created an emergency situation that demanded immediate action.

“Seeing is believing. We will like to invite the committee to see the disaster happening on the ground,” Jamil Akhtar said.

The director general of Ports and Shipping, Asad Chandna, shared similar concerns when he told the committee that from 450 million gallons and 500 million gallons raw sewage was being discharged daily directly into the sea without any solution in sight to stop the pollution.

“It has caused severe degradation for our eco system, marine life, and destruction of mangroves and causing damage to naval ships anchored and operational in and around naval jetty and dock yard,” said Asad Chandna.

According to the official, the severity of inflow of solid waste and slurry material into the navigational channel was so high that the KPT required Rs1.5 billion annually to dredge the harbour. The department has also hired four boats which scoop the inorganic waste and floating marine debris from the water on a daily basis including polythene and plastic. Approximately five to ten tons of debris is collected from the navigational channel daily which costs the KPT Rs10 million annually, the official lamented.

Asad Chandna informed the Senate committee that following the Supreme Court’s order, a judicial commission had been formed that had now made its personal issue to solve the problem of increasing pollution. “The commission summons a progress report from all departments concerned fortnightly,” he said.

The commission also published a report spread on 300 pages highlighting the seriousness of the pollution along the coast where the once red sandy beaches have now turned grey and black.

The official read some excerpts from the report for the committee, saying that all 6,000 industrial units including the 1,400MW thermal power plant and Pakistan Steel Mills, one of the largest industrial units, were dumping their untreated waste directly or indirectly into the Karachi and Gharo Creek areas. Approximately 500MGD industrial and domestic waste water was being generated and discharged through Lyari and Malir rivers into coastal areas, the report said.

“Untreated industrial and domestic waste water are a source of serious hazard to the coastal areas of Karachi, which is one of the highly polluted coastal belts in the world resulting in massive economic losses to the country through decrease in the export potentials of fisheries. Industries are continuously

discharging untreated effluent and appear to refuse to conform to the Sindh Environmental Protection Act,” Asad Chandna quoted from the report submitted with the Supreme Court.

The chairman of the committee, MQM Senator Muhammad Ali Khan Saif, accepted the invitation of KPT chairman Rear Admiral Jamil Akhtar to visit the ports and harbours to examine the situation on the ground.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1380419/kpt-spending-rs500m-more-on-ships-maintenance-because-of-sea-pollution-senate-body-told>

March 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 26TH TO MARCH 31ST 2018

GM CROPS CAUSE NO HARMFUL IMPACT ON ENVIRONMENT: EXPERTS

Business Recorder, 27 March 2018

ISLAMABAD: The introduction of genetically modified (GM) crops in Pakistan has confirmed that GM crops have no harmful impact on environment and no such crops came in the market without risk assessment.

Experts told Business Recorder here on Monday that the environmental friendly technology of the GM crops would benefit the environment, increase the productivity and improve the livelihood of farmers.

They said that the most common intricate and emotive debate growing in the communities now days is about the environment impact of genetically modified (GM) crops. Over the years, numerous researchers have indicated that genetically modified crops have no harmful impact on the environment but still some show their concerns regarding environment.

According to industry experts, No GM crop has ever come in the market without its risk assessment. After number of field trials and evaluations at the research areas these crops also pass through rigorous regulatory reviews and only after their approval these are commercialized. During this process, GM crops are also thoroughly evaluated for environmental effects and stakeholders assess the biotech crops for any risks to the environment.

The major problems faced by our environment are growing population, global warming and loss of biodiversity. They all have an enormous impact on our environment. By year 2050, there will be 9.5 billion people living on this planet and without adopting modern technologies, feeding these people will require plantation on a lot more land.

Cropland and population are not uniformly distributed and this situation is further worsened by destroying cropland due to erosion, fewer renewable resources, less water and massive urbanization, experts said. Global warming has increased due to the continuous use of fossil fuels and the destruction of wilderness and forests. Keeping in mind the global warming conditions it is predicted that the average global temperature will rise.

It is evident that climate change will alter rainfall patterns and therefore require the migration of people and shifts in agricultural practices. Keeping in view the current conditions and future predictions it is very important to ensure that future food requirements come at least from cropland currently in use.

Studies carried out since the introduction of GM technology report that instead of any environmental damage, there are lot of positive impacts of GM crops on the environment. One of the significant environmental benefits of GM crops is the reduction in pesticide use. A study assessing the global economic and environmental impacts of biotech crops for the first twenty years (1996-2015) of adoption showed that the technology has reduced pesticide spraying by 6191 million kg and has reduced environmental footprint associated with pesticide use by 18.6%.

Experts told that though there have been research reports analyzing the potential risks of biotech crops on the environment but not a single proven case of environmental damage has been reported since the introduction of technology. Instead this is one of the rigorously evaluated technologies and hence its safety to the environment and human health has been proven. Based on the evaluations, it is safe to claim that this technology is environmental friendly and has the potential to benefit the environment, increase the productivity and improve the livelihood of farmers, experts added.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/03/27/5-page/707090-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 12TH TO MARCH 18TH 2018

ARGENTINA APPROVES GMO VARIETIES FOR CORN AND SOYABEANS

Business Recorder, 14 March 2018

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina, one of the world's leading exporters of foodstuffs, approved on Tuesday the use of two corn GMO varieties belonging to Syngenta and the local unit of Dow Chemical, and one soya GMO variety belonging to Bayer SA.

The norm, detailed in three resolutions in the South American country's official gazette, comes weeks after farmers reached a deal with GMO seed producers to pay royalties for the use of second-generation seeds generated through harvests, paving the way for more modern biotech to reach Argentina.

Previously, Argentina's seed law allowed farmers to use second-generation seeds in perpetuity without paying royalties, which seed-producing companies fiercely opposed.

The Syngenta corn GMO variety is resistant to moths and ammonium glyphosphate and glufosate, while the Dow corn variety is resistant to certain herbicides. The Bayer soya variety is resistant to herbicides containing glyphosate, glufosate and isoxaflutole.

Argentina is the world's No. 3 exporter of corn and raw soyabeans and the top shipper of soyabean meal and soyabean oil.—Reuters

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/03/14/18-page/704839-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 4TH TO MARCH 11TH 2018
GM COTTON'S RETURN TO BURKINA FASO ON HOLD OVER BAYER-MONSANTO DEAL
Business Recorder, 4 March 2018

ABIDJAN: Talks with Bayer to reintroduce genetically modified (GM) cotton in Burkina Faso are on hold pending the German drug and crop chemicals maker's acquisition of US rival Monsanto, the head of the West African nation's top cotton company said on Tuesday.

Burkina Faso – Africa's leading cotton grower in recent years – became a showcase for GM cotton technology on the continent when it introduced varieties containing Monsanto's Bollgard II trait in 2008.

However, in 2016 it abandoned the Monsanto varieties, complaining they led to a drop in cotton fibre length resulting in around \$85 million in lost earnings for Burkina Faso's cotton companies.

Wilfried Yameogo, the director of Sofitex, Burkina Faso's biggest cotton company, said it initially approached Bayer in 2014 amid its troubles with Monsanto.

Bayer produces cotton traits under the TwinLink Plus and TwinLink trademarks that, like Monsanto's Bollgard II, also use genes from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) to protect against pests.

"We expressed our wish to establish a partnership with Bayer ... Bayer had shown its agreement in principle," Yameogo told Reuters.

However, it subsequently launched a \$63.5 billion bid to purchase Monsanto and talks to introduce Bayer's GM cotton traits in Burkina Faso were suspended, Yameogo said.

"They said to wait because they were in the process of managing the purchase of Monsanto. So we're waiting ... Bayer will get back to us," he said.

Bayer declined to comment on the talks.

Faced with anti-trust concerns over the planned acquisition, which the European Commission has said risks reducing competition, Bayer agreed in October to sell a portion of its seed and herbicide businesses to BASF for 5.9 billion euros (\$7.3 billion).—Reuters

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/03/04/15-page/703133-news.html>

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May 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 14TH TO MAY 20TH 2018

China's buyers balk at US corn on trade fears,

GMO controls

BEIJING: China's purchases of US corn have slowed significantly due to worries the grain might be drawn into the trade spat between the world's two largest economies, and as Chinese customs keeps the brakes on clearances for cargoes, four traders told Reuters.

Chinese buyers have cancelled multiple cargoes of corn so far this year, the latest product roiled by the China-US trade tensions, traders and industry sources said.

Now some traders say they have halted buying from the United States completely despite signs some of the trade tensions may be starting to ease. Chinese Vice Premier Liu He met officials this week in Washington for talks aimed at resolving the tensions, and Beijing announced on Friday it was dropping its probe into US sorghum imports.

The waning appetite from one of the world's top consumers of corn will unnerve US farmers, who have been hit hard by the prolonged trade spat between Washington and Beijing.

Some Chinese corn buyers switched to rival supplier Ukraine earlier this year, as Beijing tightened controls on processing genetically modified strains of the crop. Corn from the United States is mostly genetically modified.

"I have washed out more than 20,000 tonnes of US corn in the recent couple of months because getting a GMO processing certificate has still been impossible, and the situation is very unclear with the ongoing Sino-US trade war," said a trader based in southern China.

The Ministry of Agriculture, the General Administration of Customs, and the Ministry of Commerce did not respond to requests for comment.

US pork, apples, logs and Ford Motor Co vehicles are still being held up at Chinese ports as customs increased scrutiny of goods shipped from China's top trading partner.

The United States was the second-largest exporter of corn behind Ukraine into China last year, shipping in just over 750,000 tonnes worth about \$180 million.

Shipments have been noticeably slower this year.

"There haven't been many offers of US corn in the market. Few buyers would consider buying from America, as there is a risk," said Cherry Zhang, an analyst with Shanghai JC Intelligence.

Another trader who cancelled over 10,000 tonnes of US corn in February and bought from Ukraine instead, has stayed away from shipments from the United States since.

"You just can't get the GMO processing permit. There might be some political calculations, given the Sino-US trade tension," the trader said.

US President Donald Trump proposed 25 percent tariffs on some 1,300 Chinese products in early April, and China shot back a list of similar duties on major American imports, including soybeans, planes, cars, beef and chemicals.

“Soon after America proposed 25-percent tariffs on some Chinese products, many of our clients washed out their (corn) cargoes,” said a source at an international trading house.

“We are not trading US corn now. No one is willing to take the risk,” the source said.

China’s purchases of US soybeans have also come to a grinding halt, as fears grow that Beijing will take further action to curb imports of US crops.—Reuters

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2018/05/20/15-page/717899-news.html>

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June 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUN 18th TO JUN 24th 2018

Japan, South Korea ban Canadian wheat imports over bioengineered plants

RECORDER REPORT | JUN 19TH, 2018 | OTTAWA

The world’s sixth largest wheat producer sought to reassure trading partners on Monday that genetically modified wheat plants discovered on an Alberta farm were few and posed no food safety risks, after Japan and South Korea halted Canadian wheat imports.

Wheat sales contribute about Can\$11 billion (US\$8 billion) to the Canadian economy each year. The temporary import bans were another blow to Canadian farmers who faced costly delays in getting grains to markets this year due to a disruption in rail shipping to ports blamed on winter storms.

“South Korea and Japan have initiated a temporary suspension of trade in wheat while they undertake a review of the comprehensive investigation and testing already completed by Canadian officials,” trade department spokesman Jesse Wilson told AFP.

“That testing concluded that this wheat is not in the food supply, it has never been approved or used in trade and that the wheat was isolated to a few plants along an access road,” he said in an email.

Ottawa, he added, “is working with foreign trading partners to ensure they have all the necessary information to make informed decisions and limit market disruptions.”

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency announced on June 14 that a genetically modified (GM) wheat plot was discovered last summer by a farmer in Alberta who was surprised to see wheat resist after a Roundup spray.

Canadian authorities determined the herbicide-tolerant wheat was a banned Monsanto GM wheat line (MON71200), which had been used in several confined field trials two decades ago in Canada and the United States.

The stray GM wheat was found about 300 kilometers (185 miles) from one of those testing sites.

Unauthorized GM wheat was also found in US states of Oregon in 2013, Montana in 2014 and Washington two years ago. But these were not the same strains as those found in Canada.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2018/06/20180619382945/>

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August 2018

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 30TH TO AUGUST 5TH 2018 WORKSHOP HELD ON GM CROPS

By Our Correspondent

Published: August 1, 2018

LAHORE: The American Society of Plant Biologists, an international body working on the advancement of plant sciences, organised a workshop on 'Risk assessment of Genetically Modified (GM) Crops'. The workshop, held at the Centre of Excellence in Molecular Biology (CEMB), covered a wide array of topics including scientific, commercial, and environmental aspects of GM crops. CEMB Director Dr Tayyab Husnain stated that the academia and industry collectively needs to raise awareness about the advancements in modern agriculture to counter misconceptions hindering agricultural growth. Commercial GM crops have been grown since 1996, and are present in 30 countries. In 2017, millions of farmers in 24 countries grew a record 469 million acres of GM crops. This has led to dramatic improvement in food and fiber production, as well as more sustainable farming practices.

Published in The Express Tribune, August 1st, 2018.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1770559/2-workshop-held-gm-crops/>

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