

JANUARY 2016

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

PROTEST OVER 'EXCESSES' BY SINDH GOVT

Dawn, January 31st, 2016

THATTA: Several hundred people took part in a rally organised by the Kohistan Awami Ittehad (KAI) against the Sindh government for “depriving people of their ancestral lands and rendering local employees of utilities jobless to replace them with outsiders”.

Activists of various nationalist parties and groups including the Jeay Sindh Tehreek, Jeay Sindh Mahaz and Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz and its Arisar group, turned up in large numbers at Jhimpir to take part in the rally. The participants riding cars, jeeps, vans, trucks and two-wheelers drove up to Thatta via Keenjhar lake and Nooriabad and then held a sit-in outside the Thatta Press Club blocking the adjacent section of the National Highway.

Holding flags of their respective parties and groups, the protesters raised slogans against the provincial government and condemned the atrocities, according to them, let loose on the people of Thatta and Sujawal districts.

Speaking to the protesters, Mohammed Bukhsh Marri, Imam Bukhsh Khaksheli, Khud Dino Palari, Khalid Khaskheli, Sadiq Nazir and Abdul Karim Palari of the KAI claimed that local people recruited several years ago in the SITE area water supply scheme as well as public and private industries and multinational firms were being retrenched and replaced with ‘outsiders’.

They also claimed that the ancestral lands of the people of Jhimpir were being snatched and allotted to different public sector and multinational concerns. The affected people were being paid no compensation for their lands, they claimed.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1236390>

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

A RARE OPPORTUNITY FOR GILGIT-BALTISTAN

The Express Tribune, January 19th, 2016.

Shabbir Mir

Like other parts of the country, Gilgit-Baltistan has also been plagued by the ‘CPEC fever’ these days. While the project is still in its infancy and details surrounding it continue to be sorted out, it seems that the opposition parties feel duty-bound to pass a comment on it on a daily basis, painting a bleak picture for the region with respect to its share in this \$46 billion project, which many say is the most ambitious foreign investment scheme ever launched by any government anywhere in the world.

Besides other factors, the undefined constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan has undoubtedly played a pivotal role in adding fuel to fire. As a gateway to the project, the region will offer more than 400km of its land to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that will link Gwadar port to China’s northwestern autonomous region of Xinjiang via a vast network of highways and railways.

There are no two opinions about giving Gilgit-Baltistan its due share in the project. After all, people of this region have rendered immense sacrifices to become a part of the country. Regrettably, what it has received in exchange for these sacrifices is decades-long deprivation in terms of constitutional rights, thanks to the larger issue of Kashmir.

Now what do we really mean by the term ‘due share’ in the CPEC? If we go by the opposition parties’ definition, this seems to be a total shift of authority from the federal government to Gilgit-Baltistan in matters pertaining to the project. This daydreaming must be done away with. Such a wish list is found in other provinces too, especially in Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), where politicians think they are indispensable for the corridor. F

or political gains, such a stance may be acceptable, but we can safely assume that such wishes are not going to see the light of day. Gilgit-Baltistan’s significance can’t be underestimated. But it is also a reality that this region can’t be made the centre of all economic activity that the project will bring, given that its hilly terrain eats up 98 per cent of its land. The mountainous region is inhabited by about 1.5 million people and therefore can’t offer the kind of investment opportunities that Sindh, Punjab and K-P can.

This is understood by the politicians of Gilgit-Baltistan, but the dictates of political expediency often end up determining their behaviour. In this regard, the PPP is leading the campaign against the government. It desperately needs a platform to make a comeback from after humiliating electoral losses, and is making effective use of the CPEC by playing with popular sentiments. The party ruled Gilgit-Baltistan for five years, but could win only a single seat in the polls held under the supervision of the Pakistan Army seven months ago. The party’s Gilgit-Baltistan chapter President Amjad Hussain is now trying to manoeuvre the situation and has been able to uplift the PPP’s graph in the region

. The PML-N, which bagged 15 of the 24 seats in the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly, appears to be on the back foot, at least for now. This largely emanates from the federal government’s lack of interest in securing the confidence of other parties, providing the opposition with a golden opportunity to manipulate the situation.

A solution to the constitutional issue facing the region is in sight for the first time in nearly seven decades, but that too appears to have been hijacked by the opposition. Referring to news reports appearing in the national media, they claim that China’s concerns over the disputed status of the region is forcing Pakistan to consider accepting Gilgit-Baltistan as its constitutional part. In reality, China has downplayed these reports and clarified its stance through its foreign ministry.

Chief Minister Hafeezur Rahman has repeatedly assured that two economic zones will be set up in the region and that land for one zone has been identified in Gilgit. But this has failed to pacify the opposition as it is insisting that the claim of the chief minister is not reflected anywhere in the project and that the region lacks representation at the CPEC table. Rahman is accused of “compromising the region’s interest”.

This grey area is where the federal government and Minister for Planning, Development and Reform Ashan Iqbal need to focus on to remove suspicions. The people must be told which projects under the CPEC will be offered to Gilgit-Baltistan. Will these projects comprise roads, railway networks or fibre optic cables?

The CPEC offers a rare chance to all stakeholders to work for national integrity, which will help eliminate regional biases and sectarian inclinations. This opportunity must not be lost. The federal government and the opposition parties must realise this before it is too late.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1029953/a-rare-oppurtunity-for-gilgit-baltistan/>

GOVT STARTS ACQUIRING LAND FOR RS32B ‘DISNEYLAND’ THEME PARK

The Express Tribune, January 22nd, 2016.

LAHORE: The government has started the land acquisition process for the proposed Disneyland-like theme park in Lahore. A Chinese company will build the facility at an estimated cost of Rs32 billion.

“The government has started the process to acquire 650 acres under Section 4 of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894,” Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Director General Shakeel Ahmad told The Express Tribune.

Once the preliminary investigation – required under the law – is completed, the district collector will carry out assessment of properties to be acquired.

“The government wants to acquire land at the earliest. To avoid any litigation and delay, it has chosen a site where land is mostly owned by the state,” Ahmad said. He said that after fulfilling all legal obligations, the government would ask the investors to start developing the facility.

He said the Chinese company, Golden Bean, would build the park and an aquarium near Kala Shah Kaku along the Lahore-Islamabad Motorway (M-2).

“The mega project will take nearly two years to complete. The provincial government and the PHA are facilitating the project,” Ahmad said. The Chinese company will build the park from its own resources.

Earlier, Commissioner Abdullah Khan Sumbal said that the provincial government had guaranteed uninterrupted electricity supply through special feeders for the project. The government will also construct a road leading to the park.

The commissioner said the theme park would have a rollercoaster, a five-star hotel, an aquarium and business and shopping centres. He said the Chinese investors had expressed their willingness to develop the park at a recent seminar on Investment Opportunities in the Punjab.

Golden Bean has built the Fantasy Amusement Park in Changchun, China. The park has a single ring double spiral rollercoaster, an 88-metre Ferris wheel, a large pendulum for 42 people, boat surfing and a rapid windmill.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1031943/entertainment-facilities-govt-starts-acquiring-land-for-rs32b-theme-park/>

PACT SIGNED FOR GWADAR PORT CITY MASTER PLAN FEASIBILITY STUDY

Dawn, January 23rd, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China on Friday signed a letter of exchange for the feasibility study of Gwadar Port City Master Plan Project costing Rs410 million under a government-to-government arrangement.

Economic Affairs Division Secretary Tariq Bajwa and Ambassador of China to Pakistan signed the letter of exchange on behalf of their respective governments.

China agreed to finance the project under grant assistance and subsequently a meeting was held in Beijing on Aug 25 between Chinese ministry of commerce and the government of Pakistan to discuss Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan Project.

Accordingly, the implementation mode, objectives and scope, time-frame arrangement of the project were discussed and the minutes of the meeting duly concurred by the ministry of planning, development and reforms were signed by ministry of commerce and EAD on Nov 24, 2015.

EAD Secretary expressed his government’s gratitude for the financial and technical support being provided by Chinese over the years, specially the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1234736>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD JANUARY 11TH TO JANUARY 17TH, 2016

PROTEST OVER DELAY IN COMPLETION OF BRIDGE

Dawn, January 17th, 2016

KHAIRPUR: A large number of people on Saturday protested against delay in the construction work of an overhead bridge being made to connect Khairpur city and Pir Jo Goth at the Shah Hussain bypass on the National Highway.

Speaking to journalists, the protesters said that because of the delay in the construction work being carried out by the Sindh government for the past three years, people, including government servants, private employees, patients, students and others travellers, were facing a great deal of hardship.

A katcha route was being used alternatively, but many vehicles became stuck in it, they said.

Huge pillars of the bridge constructed and placed on both sides of this route were also creating problems for travellers, the protesters said.

They said that due to the delay in the construction work, patients' transportation to hospitals in time of emergency was being severely affected and several patients had died on their way to hospital.

Besides, they added that the dust in the air in the area was also causing breathing problems.

They said they were compelled to keep their shops closed because the construction material was lying on both sides of the road.

They appealed to the chief minister of Sindh to take notice of the problem and get the construction work completed at the earliest.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1233401>

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February 2016

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

OLD GRAVEYARD DUG UP AND NO ONE KNOWS WHO'S DOING IT

Sameer Mandhro

The Express Tribune, February 26th, 2016.

One of Sindh's oldest graveyards, Lakho Pir, is being dug up for sandstone and no one from the district administration has any clue who is behind it.

At least 10 dumpers of sandstone have been shifted from the archaeological site in the past two weeks. According to Lakho Pir graveyard's gatekeeper, Manthar, heavy machinery was brought in two weeks ago. "I asked them not to dig or take out the stones but they didn't listen to me," he told The Express Tribune. "I don't know who is behind this [quarrying]."

Spread over 144 acres, Lakho Pir – the graveyard that dates back at least 800 years – is located 244 kilometres (km) away from Karachi and around 12km from Keenjhar Lake in Thatta. It is considered one of the oldest cemeteries of Sindh, followed by Raj Kapoor graveyard near Sujawal and an unnamed one located between Jungshahi and Thatta. It also houses the tomb of saint Makhdoom Lutfullah alias Lakho Pir.

The quarrying of sandstone was banned in 2007 after some archaeologists, including the then Sindh antiquities department secretary Dr Kaleemullah Lashari, intervened. “It is an illegal activity and cannot be allowed under any circumstances,” said Lashari.

According to Dr Lashari, the law does not allow anyone to dig near a historical site. Unfortunately, he pointed out, there is no line of demarcation around this site. “If it [quarrying of sandstones] continues, it will destroy archaeological evidences,” he feared.

The law prohibits mining within at least 200 feet of such sites, pointed out Dr Lashari. “It is an illegal practice,” he said, adding that a similar excavation was carried out in 2007 but the government put an end to it immediately.

Manthar remembers the 2007 contractors and how they took away marbles from the graveyard. The quarrying of sandstones began in 1998, according to him, and continued around the graveyard area without any checks by the authorities. Some rare tombstones were also taken away by researchers, he claimed. “It is happening everywhere. I can’t stop them alone.”

The gatekeeper has little choice but to watch as large dumpers filled with sandstones trample over the centuries-old graves, demolishing quite a few along the way. “The new route [which passes through the graves] has been made recently by the contractor,” said Manthar.

However, Manthar’s supervisor Taqi Muhammad aka Babo Shah, who is the caretaker of Lakho Pir graveyard, insisted that the contractor is merely cleaning up the site. “They are not digging but taking away the garbage [sandstones],” Mohammad told The Express Tribune.

According to him, a politician from Thatta approached him to allow the excavation of sandstones. “It is happening with my permission,” he confirmed, not realising that quarrying has been banned by the government since 2007. Muhammad added that he allowed the sandstone to be taken away as it disturbs the followers when they arrive in the area for the annual Urs.

The contractor has been directed strictly not to dig out anything, he added. “Heavy stones are cut into pieces and are taken away to Karachi. It doesn’t ruin the site,” he said.

Meanwhile, Sindh mines and minerals department’s assistant director for Thatta, Rabel Sarwar, denied issuing any lease to a contractor in the area. All machines will be taken into custody if someone is found quarrying stones in the limits of the archaeological site, he added.

Sindh’s archaeology director Qasim Ali Qasim pointed out that Lakho Pir has not been declared a protected site as yet. He added, however, that the law still does not allow anyone to continue such activities within or around the historical location.

“It would be stopped immediately,” he assured, adding that the district officials will be directed to submit a report. He promised to contact the district administration and the police to look into the illegal digging.

What is unfortunate is that the penalty for this crime is negligible. According to Sindh Archaeological Act, 1975, the maximum punishment is six months in jail or Rs5,000 as fine, said Qasim.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1054553/mysterious-excavations-old-graveyard-dug-up-and-no-one-knows-whos-doing-it/>

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

FORMER BONDED LABOURERS DEMAND GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCE LAND REFORMS

Business Recorder, February 17, 2016

A large number of freed bonded labourers, hailing from different Hari camps around Kotri, Hyderabad Umerkot, Sanghar and other areas of Sindh participated in a rally on Tuesday (yesterday) to highlight demands of implementation of land reforms, setting up Hari courts under Sindh Tenancy Act 1950, distributing of state land to landless peasant families and end of bonded labour in agriculture and brick kilns sectors.

The rally was organised by Sindh Land Reforms Movement (SLRM), a network of around 35 civil society organisations working on human rights, labour rights especially for the rights of bonded labour in agriculture and brick kiln sectors.

The rally led by peasant women with civil society activists Karamat Ali, Executive director Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER), Puhali Sario of Sindh Hari Porhiat Council, Dr Ghulam Hyder Malookani of Greed Rural Development Organisation (GRDO), Hari leaders Veero Kolhi, Manoo Bheel, Ghulam Hussein Malokhani, Lali and others.

The peasants decried that due to non-implementation of the Sindh Tenancy Act the farmers are being deprived of their due share in crops. The bonded labour has crept in the agriculture sector and hundreds of thousands of peasants are kept in bondage in various areas of Sindh. “We demand the Sindh Assembly members to enact Bonded Labour Abolition Act and cases be registered against the violators of the law.”

They pointed out that hundreds of worker is freed through courts, but no case is registered against the landlords, who keep these workers under custody in their private jails in Sindh. Unfortunately, the perpetrators are freed and the freed workers do not find any job after getting themselves from bonded labour. The workers associated with brick kiln units in Sindh demanded of the government to remove the gap in wages and bring the wages up to the level of workers in Punjab.

They said it is unfair to implement the two laws simultaneously for workers in the country, saying the workers in Sindh are being paid wages less than those of Punjab. Some leader pointed out that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has recently announced an agriculture relief package of over Rs 341 billion for farmers, which should be implemented to provide relief to the workforce in the agriculture sector. They said this package will not benefit to Sindh farmers, especially for landless peasants. The Punjab farmer’s movement is motivating the farmers there.

There should be broader movement at national level so the farmers in Sindh may get their rights as per law. The peasant leaders expressed concerns saying this announcement is only for landlords and it could not benefit to landless peasants.

For instance, subsidies for rice and cotton will support exporters and this will not benefit to landless peasants. They also raised voice that there is nothing about the support for indigenous seeds to be given to farmers.

This PM package should have been promoted indigenous seeds to benefit local farmers, because GM seed is not only causing destruction of soil fertility, it cannot be used for next crops. The peasant activists, keeping eye over the weather pattern changes and ups and downs, saying there is no contingency plans to address the issues, as frequent disasters have caused destruction and displacement.

That is why hundreds of families of farmers displaced during frequent floods in 2010, 2011, 2012 and then are still out of their homes. There is no plan for their rehabilitation. This should be kept in mind to avoid any further destruction for the poor families.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/17192/>

PEASANTS DEMAND LAND REFORMS, SETTING UP OF HARI COURTS

Dawn, February 17th, 2016

HYDERABAD: A large number of farm workers and labourers along with activists of various civil society organisations took out a rally here on Tuesday against bonded labour. They also demanded effective implementation of land reforms and the Sindh Tenancy Act, 1950.

Hailing from Hyderabad, Kotri, Umerkot, Sanghar and other districts, they participants raised slogans against unchecked bonded labour and exploitation of farm workers, brick kiln labourers and their families. They demanded setting up of hari courts and distribution of state lands among peasant families as per the commitment by successive provincial governments.

The rally was organised by the Sindh Land Reforms Movement (SLRM) — a network of 35 civil society organisations — in collaboration with some leading rights organisations including the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler) and Sindh Hari Porhiat Council (SHPC).

Speaking to the participants, Piler executive director Karamat Ali, SHPC leader Punhal Sario, Dr Ghulam Hyder Malookani, Veero Kolhi, Manoo Bheel, Ghulam Hussain Malookani and others said that owing to a lack of will for the implementation of the Sindh Tenancy Act, 1950, farmers were being denied their due share in their produce. They were of the view that hundreds of thousands of peasants were forced in bonded labour in Sindh while a similar situation prevailed in the case of brick kiln workers.

“We demand enactment and effective implementation of the proposed Sindh Bonded Labour Abolition Act under which offenders can be punished by courts,” Karamat Ali said.

He noted that hundreds of peasants and their families found to be forced into bonded labour had been set free by various courts over the past decades but the offenders had never been booked or punished. Landowners used to keep peasant families on their lands like prisoners as if the workplaces were their ‘private jails’. Unfortunately, he added, while the culprits always escaped punishment, the freed peasant families remained without a livelihood as no other landowners would hire them for moving courts to seek justice.

Some speakers highlighted the case of brick kiln workers in the province and referred to the yawning gap between the wages paid to them and their counterparts in Punjab. They urged the government to fix the matching wages.

They said that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced a Rs341 billion relief package for farmers a few months ago which must be implemented on a priority basis across the country, including Sindh.

They called for a massive movement at the national level so that farm workers and labourers could get their due rights.

They apprehended that amount of fund would be usurped by feudal lords and agriculturists leaving workers lot without any benefits.

In this regard, they made mention of heavy subsidies on rice and cotton granted by successive governments, and noted that the beneficiaries were only landowners, agriculturists, millers, exporters and other such wealthy stakeholders of the farm sector.

Activists of some civil society organisations drew the provincial government’s attention to the plight of hundreds of peasant families who were displaced during the 2010, 2011, 2012 floods and could not still be rehabilitated. They urged the government to implement the plans chalked out over the period for their rehabilitation.

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

CHAOTIC LAND UTILISATION

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, February 8th, 2016

AFSHAN SUBOHI

REINVIGORATING fresh air, eye soothing waves of multiple shades of green over vast stretch of farm land, cows standing proud in front of mud plastered houses, dogs lazily strolling around, hens nervously chasing chicks to hurl them to a safe corner, carefree healthy people busy in daily routine. This is 4-Chak Ramdewali, an old village at 15-minute drive from Faisalabad, that residents fear might disappear over the next five years.

A brief visit to the village where half the population is of Hindus late January was delightful. The village did lack basic physical and social amenities — a proper sewage system, piped water and natural gas supply — that could improve the living conditions. A two-room dysfunctional dilapidated school building tells a tale of neglect and misplaced government priorities.

The change, however, this writer learnt, was in the making but not for the better. “Big patches of land where you see standing crops have already been acquired by a real estate company. Some people are resisting but I don’t think they would be able to hold ground for long. Offers are too attractive to ignore,” Shehzad Saleem, a dejected man standing next to his family’s sugarcane field, told this scribe.

“For generations this has been our home. Like many others I work in Faisalabad and send children to school there but never considered moving out. My family home here has given me a rare opportunity: to enjoy the bliss of nature without compromising on my dream of a regular better paying job. Our hearts sink as we know the builders will destroy farms and 4-Chak Ramdewali will soon disappear,” he lamented.

Asked what can be done to save the prime agriculture land, he said, “These are private farms and purchase offers are many times more than the assessed value of the land. We see no option but to accept the destiny and try to make most out of it,” he added.

People related to the field and the senior government officers in Islamabad with rural background confirmed to Dawn that the trend is pervasive particularly in Punjab.

“It is sad and self-destructive. We are letting greedy realtors erode the base of the rural economy. The scale of the activity threatens the food security and future of cash crops. The massive housing schemes on fertile land are a folly that will not go unpunished by nature,” a senior economist at the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) warned.

Commenting on a legal recourse to check the activity, experts said they were not aware of any policy framework that defines rules of land utilisation in the country.

Planning Commission Chief Economist Dr Nadeem Javaid accepted the absence of comprehensive legal framework for land use and the ensuing confusion over domain. “We have inducted a chapter in the 11th Five-Year Plan (available on its website) on town planning but this is all we can do. The implementation of economic guidelines rests with different tiers of the government,” he said over phone from Islamabad focusing more on the role of municipalities in cities and lapses therein.

PIDE Vice Chancellor Dr Asad Zaman did not mince words: “The issue is very serious and no one is paying attention to it. The neglect is rooted in the tendency to strive for immediate gain ignoring long-term consequences. The assumption that market can guide and drive towards better solutions has proved to be wrong. Often, short-term profits lead to long-term catastrophes,” Zaman remarked. He mentioned global financial crisis and climate change in support of the argument.

“Who will bother for the land utilisation policy when realtors are thriving on new schemes, landowners are getting good price and prospective buyers are gaining opportunity that did not exist earlier. Town planners feel such development would curtail pressure of rural migration to cities,” he added.

“Pakistan, like an innocent person, unaware of its strengths and weaknesses, is being exploited and abused by greedy interest groups,” commented a senior economist.

The nation has yet to learn to value its assets and through collective campaign and action protect them from short sighted greedy elements by forcing authorities to plug loopholes in the policy framework and lags in its implementation.

There is no land utilisation policy in place and no one has been assigned the responsibility to sort it out so far. Many states may have not been able to apply their policy effectively, but they do have one that demarcates land dedicated for agriculture, for transformation to semi- and urban areas, industrial estates, ecological and hazard-vulnerable areas. They set the land use patterns for each category.

Dr Shakeel Ahmed Khan, former federal wheat commissioner, told Dawn that the Saarc Committee on Food Security did include the issue in its recommendations. “I was Pakistan’s nominee on the committee that drew guidelines for all Saarc countries to put in place land utilisation policy in rural area to protect prime agriculture land from encroachment,” he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1238146>

‘BIG STICK POLICY’ BEING USED TO ACQUIRE LAND FOR ORANGE LINE PROJECT

Dawn, February 10th, 2016

KHALID HASNAIN

LAHORE: The civil society has strongly protested against the government for using police force and state machinery to drive residents of Parachute Colony out of their houses within the next couple of days for Orange Line train despite a stay order issued by the Lahore High Court against the project.

On the other hand, residents of the Parachute Colony protested against the Shahbaz government for flouting the stay.

“On Tuesday, Misri Shah Station House Officer Shabbir Awan visited our locality, ordering us to receive compensation of Rs1 million (for each house) and vacate the houses (18 in number) within two or three days,” Shakeel, a resident, complained while talking to Dawn.

“If you (residents) will not receive compensation and vacate the houses within a couple of days, you will be evicted forcibly. And then you will not be given even compensation,” he quoted the SHO as warning the residents.

Shakeel said the Parachute Colony was established near divisional superintendent’s office of Pakistan Railways (near Bohrwala Chowk) and immigrants had started living there after migrating from India in 1947.

“The Parachute Colony is an approved katchi abadi of the LDA and the residents have ownership documents, such as registry, allotment letters, utility bills, etc.” he said, adding that since the government wanted to get colony’s land for Orange Line forcibly, the residents had challenged the action in the LHC which issued a stay order against land

acquisition. If the government got our houses vacated forcibly, it would be not only violation of court orders but also trigger mass protests, he warned.

The SHO has rejected the residents' stance, terming it baseless.

“The police are supposed to accompany the government officials visiting the Parachute Colony for resolving issues. The purpose to go with the government officials is to protect them since the residents used to abuse or quarrel with them over land acquisition. I just remained silent there,” he explained, adding that he went to the colony with the LDA team, headed by a director.

The LDA officials told the residents to receive the compensation and if there was any stay, they should provide it to the government, the SHO said.

Talking to Dawn, civil society activist Rahimul Haque criticised the government for violating the court stay.

“The attitude of the state towards its citizens is so arrogant. This government wants everything dismantled by hook or by crook for the Orange Line,” he deplored, adding if the government didn't honour the court orders, the civil society and the residents would stage more protest demonstrations.

On the other hand, the compensation process at all designated one-window camps is under way for the last five days. The people whose land/property is being acquired for the project partially or completely reportedly continue to visit these centres for receiving compensation, subject to production of documents.

According to a document, the district price assessment committee (DPAC) is assessing the per marla cost of the residential and commercial property, situated in various parts of the city along the Orange train route.

The property rates assessed near the stations or locality of Dera Gujran and Islam Park, Salamatpura, Mahmood Booti, Shalamar Gardens, Baghbanpura, UET, Sultanpura, railway station, Lahore Hotel, Lakshmi, Hall Road and Anarkali are from Rs1.05m to 3m per marla.

The cost of property being acquired in the areas from Chauburji till Thokar Niaz Beg has been assessed from Rs1.5m to Rs2.2m.

As per formula devised by the government, the total compensation calculated for each property includes total assessed cost of the land, land acquisition charges, structure cost and disturbance and shifting allowance and business loss cost.

“If the land cost is Rs2m, this amount's 15pc will be added into the cost of land and an affectee would get Rs2.3 million. The other costs/charges are being paid separately to each property owner,” an LDA's land acquisition collector told Dawn at Thokar Niaz Beg's one window/camp office.

According to a Traffic Engineering and Transport Planning Agency (Tepa) official, the structure assessment cost is being paid under the building rules and regulations and a notification has been issued by the assessment committee in this regard.

“So, we are paying Rs1,200 per sqft if the building's age is not more than 10 years and Rs950 per sqft for the structure attaining an age below 20 but over 10 years,” he added.

He said such cost is evaluated on the basis and kind/make of structure such as RCC, frame, bricks/T-iron girder. He said if the cost appears to be Rs0.5m against the demolition of 50pc of the covered area, 50pc (Rs250,000) of the structure cost

(Rs0.5m) will be added to the compensation. And the same amount would more be included in the total compensation as business loss charges, the official maintained.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1238535>

DIAMER-BHASHA DAM: 70-80% OF LAND ACQUIRED, REMAINING TO BE BOUGHT SOON

The Express Tribune, February 11th, 2016.

Shahzad Anwar

ISLAMABAD: Around 70-80% of required land for the Diamer-Bhasha Dam has been acquired while the remaining will be purchased in one and a half month, said Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Secretary Tahir Hussain.

“The land acquisition process, which began in 2010 after signing an agreement with the landowners, was to be completed by December 31, 2013, but it was stalled due to delay in payment of compensation within the agreed time frame,” Hussain explained while briefing the sub-committee of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan.

“The government could arrange only Rs10 billion out of the total cost of Rs54 billion.”

He said a new agreement was reached with the people displaced by the project in January 2015, for which a 25% increase was approved by the ministerial committee on June 22, 2015.

“Diamer is a Sunni-dominated, unsettled tribal area where sectarian incidents are taking place and no other than a Sunni government employee is appointed there,” he said.

Hussain said the G-B government had declared Diamer as a division, an officer of the rank of commissioner had been posted there to supervise the land acquisition process and a dedicated team had been constituted for the project.

“One hundred per cent of the field work for private land re-verification along with computerisation of data has been completed in a record time by 50 revenue officers. The first tranche of Rs29.33 billion has also been released,” he added.

Furthermore, in order to ensure transparency, computerised record of all land acquisition is being maintained. A contract agreement has been signed with Suparco that has verified the field data of 28 mouzas.

“Special monitoring teams have saved Rs2.7 billion due to effective measurement.”

“Progress on confidence-building measures including construction of model villages, health, education, livelihood and other development programmes was slow,” the G-B chief secretary noted, saying timely release of funds was among the impediments that needed to be removed.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1044177/diamer-bhasha-dam-70-80-of-land-acquired-remaining-to-be-bought-soon/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 1ST TO FEBRUARY 7TH 2016

METRO TRAIN PROJECT: NOW AFFECTED VILLAGERS TURN VIOLENT

Dawn, February 1st, 2016

LAHORE: A number of villagers, including women and children, forcibly stopped work on the Orange Line Metro Train project on Sunday in Kotli Ghassi area near the Quaid-i-Azam interchange (Dera Gujran).

Holding clubs, they damaged the machinery and tried to grab hold of workers and officials, but they managed to escape.

The protesters raised slogans against the government for paying DC (district collector) rate for acquiring their agriculture land.

They said they wouldn't allow the government to acquire their land forcibly until they were compensated reasonably. A few days back a similar violent protest was also staged by residents of Samanabad, a purely urban locality, which also forced workers and engineers to beat a hasty retreat.

Project director/LDA chief engineer Asrar Saeed rejected the protesters' stance, saying the government had already offered them better rates than the DC ones. "Their demands are irrational. Where the land rate is Rs150,000 per marla, they are demanding Rs1.5 million. The government can't meet such unreasonable demands," he said.

Mr Saeed claimed that the affectees were offered the best package rates the government had ever introduced in the province.

"The government is paying the per marla cost according to the market value besides the costs related to structure, relocation and business disturbance, etc," he said.

The chief engineer appealed to the residents to stay calm and support the project that was the need of the city as well as the country.

He said he had the construction work resumed after holding talks with the protesters.

Meanwhile, an LDA spokesman says the government has established one-window centres at various spots of the city district in order to start paying compensation to the affectees of the train project.

"These centres will start functioning from Monday (today) at LDA Complex/Head Office in Johar Town, Thokar, Jain Mandir and UET on GT Road.

Those seeking compensation should contact officials at these centres from 9:00am to 2:00pm daily.

They will be required to submit a written application appended with documents such as attested copies of an applicant, two witnesses' CNICs, Rs100 stamp paper/indemnity bond, Rs50 stamp paper/affidavit, a copy of registry, fard/document/application on a prescribed pro forma, a copy of mutation (intiqal), electricity and gas bills, receipt of property tax, etc," the spokesman said.

He said residents/affectees of Kotli Ghassi, Devipura, Baghbanpura, Qila Gujjar Singh, Achant Garh, Bagrian Syedan and Kot Dhoni should contact with officials at the UET centre near gate No 6; Lahore Khas (Lahore central) affectees with officials at the GCU ground centre near Jain Mandir and Amar Kot, Rakh Kambha, Niaz Baig Intersection, Kakayzai, Syedpur, Nawankot, Pakki Thatti, Mozang, Niaz Baig Mauza, Ravi Block, Kharak and Muslim Block (Iqbal Town) affectees with officials at the Niaz Baig centre.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1236683>

THERE'RE OVER ONE MILLION ACRES OF FORESTS IN PUNJAB, PA TOLD

Business Recorder, February 03, 2016

In Punjab Assembly 19th session here on Tuesday, Forest Minister Asif Awan said that there were 1.639 million acres of forests in the province. He stated that these forests were in different topographic terrains of the province. In hilly terrain of Muree, Kahuta and District Rawalpindi forests were placed on 0.171 million acres.

Punjab Minister Industries Chaudhry Shafiq in the question-hour stated that as per business directory there were 3007 factories in Punjab in year 2007. He disclosed that there were 1, 63, 778 workers working in these factories. In reply to a query, the minister said that in District Sahiwal there were 343 factories having 8922 workers employed there. Industries minister stated that boilers were placed in 288 factories in Lahore during a period 2010. In reply to a question he said that they were taking steps to uplift quality of work in TEVTA. For this, he stated that they were utilising M&E system for improvement.

Industries Minister said that under 18th Amendment measures had been taken for unified progressive syllabus in TEVTA. He said that Special German Model Training programme had been initiated in the organisation. He said that Quaid-e-Azam Industrial Estate, Sunder Industrial Estate, Multan Industrial Estate1-2, Bhalwal Industrial Estate and Vehari Industrial Estate have been established in the province.

About departments which are running under his ministry he said that in Lahore Zoo 'Zoo Management Committee' had been established on 5-4-2013. He said that 16 institutions were working under TEVTA in District Sahiwal. He said that nine of these institutions were also working in Gujrat under TEVTA organisation. On Private Members Day resolutions could not be submitted during the session. The chair later adjourned the session for today (Wednesday).

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/12896/>

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March2016

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

PROTEST AGAINST 'TEMPLE' DEMOLITION

Dawn, March 31th, 2016

HYDERABAD: Hindu protesters associated with the Shri Hinglaj Sheva Mandli temple held a demonstration outside the local press club on Wednesday in protest against the demolition of the religious building located on the Hatri bypass.

The protesters, including women, shouted slogans against police and the district administration.

Led by Bhagat Karam Chand and Pakistani Hindu Council member Omesh Kumar, they said the anti-encroachment cell, police and the Qasimabad administration took part in the demolition of the around six-decade-old temple and tortured children and women on Tuesday morning.

They said six children were seriously injured, according to a press release. They blamed that when the temple was destroyed, land grabbers and police were present there.

They claimed that it was an old temple where 150 Hindu families had been living for 60 years. They appealed to the chief of army staff, Sindh DG Rangers and the chief minister to take notice and action against those involved in the action.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1248961>

REQUIRED: PQA DEMANDS TEXTILE CITY'S LAND FOR LNG POWER PLANTS

The Express Tribune, April 2nd, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: The Port Qasim Authority (PQA) has asked the prime minister to provide 1,500 acres of land, which was earlier allocated for setting up a textile city, for building new liquefied natural gas (LNG)-based power plants.

“PQA is short of land which is needed for installing more LNG-based power production plants,” an official quoted PQA chairman as telling Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Energy.

He noted that 1,500 acres of land initially earmarked for establishing a textile city at Port Qasim was lying unutilised as nine years had passed and not a single project had been undertaken on that piece of land.

Furthermore, he said, the textile city had become a liability with a debt burden of Rs2.8 billion and its land should be handed over to the PQA for installing new LNG plants.

He also touched on the topic of coal transportation, saying it was difficult to construct a conveyer belt at Port Qasim for shipping coal to the Sahiwal coal power project within the deadline of December 2016.

Therefore, an alternative plan, or Plan-B, has been conceived for coal supply to the power project if the conveyer belt is not completed on time. For this purpose, the request for proposals has also been issued.

Elaborating, the PQA chairman said under Plan-B coal would be transported through the Marginal Wharf, which would save a substantial amount of money. As part of this arrangement, coal will be loaded onto vessels at \$4 per ton excluding the royalty of \$2.40 per ton for the PQA.

However, committee members were of the view that the alternative arrangement should not hurt the original plan. Both arrangements should be finalised to ensure an uninterrupted and smooth supply of coal to the power project, they said.

An official of the Ministry of Water and Power gave updates on the laying of transmission lines from Port Qasim to Matiari, Thar to Matiari, Matiari to Lahore, Matiari to Faisalabad and power transmission from the Neelum-Jhelum and Tarbela fourth extension projects.

The transmission line from Port Qasim to Matiari would be completed in two phases. In the first phase, power lines will be laid over 45 km by December 2016 with the help of power ministry’s own resources whereas in the second phase power lines will cover 140 km by September 2017.

He pointed out that the Matiari to Lahore and Matiari to Faisalabad transmission lines were part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) programme. Both projects would be completed in 24 months after achieving financial close.

According to the official, 75% work on the Neelum-Jhelum transmission line has been done and the project is expected to be completed by the end of 2016. Work on the Tarbela-4 transmission line will be finished by June 2017.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1077384/required-pqa-demands-textile-citys-land-for-lng-power-plants/>

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

LAND RECORD: MINISTER SAYS COMPUTERISATION IN FINAL STAGES

Business Recorder, March 26, 2016

Provincial Minister for Women Development Hameeda Waheed ud Din has said that government has introduced people friendly system by eliminating obsolete system of land record. She said that the process of land record computerisation is in final stages in 143 tehsils of Punjab.

She said that not only patwari culture has been eliminated due to revolutionary step of Punjab government but the work will be done in minutes due to use of modern technology. She expressed these views during her visit to tehsil hospital and land record centre at Pindi Bhattian.

The Provincial Minister said that land record is being computerised throughout the province under a phased programme. She said that any person can get the ownership deed of the land and other details within minutes by paying nominal fee.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/29108/>

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

BANISHING SQUATTERS: ETPB SEEKS SINDH POLICE CHIEF'S HELP TO RECLAIM LAND

The Express Tribune, March 15th, 2016.

The Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) has sought help from the inspector general of police in Sindh to retrieve over 4,000 acres of land from encroachers in different parts of the province.

The development came during a meeting of the ETPB chaired by its head Siddiqui Farooq on Monday. The basic agenda of the meeting is to discuss different issues related to the trust.

After the meeting, Farooq told The Express Tribune that the board had sought help from the Sindh police chief to regain possession of the expensive land belonging to the trust. He claimed that local encroachers in Hyderabad and Sukkur had occupied over 4,000 acres of land.

The chairman said that since he took charge of the trust, the board had retrieved huge tracts of land from encroachers worth Rs8billion. Another 4,000 acres of land is still occupied by the locals in Hyderabad, which needs to be recovered. "We have requested IG Sindh to get encroachers off the land," he added.

The meeting also decided to export Amrit Jal (or holy water) from the holy well of Gurdwara Nankana Sahib. He said that the ban was lifted in order to facilitate the Sikh community. Last year, the board had gifted over 5,000 bottles of Amrit Jal to the community living in Europe.

He said that the provincial and federal governments have also taken positive steps for the safety and security of the Hindu community and a temple will soon be constructed in Islamabad.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1065842/banishing-squatters-etpb-seeks-sindh-police-chiefs-help-to-reclaim-land/>

DIAMER-BHASHA DAM: PROCESS OF LAND ACQUISITION TO BE COMPLETED THIS YEAR: MINISTER

Business Recorder, March 15, 2016

Naveed Butt

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Water and Power Abid Sher Ali has said that the process of land acquisition for Diamer-Bhasha Dam will be completed this year and construction work would start next year.

The minister told this to the National Assembly on Monday while replying to supplementary questions of the members. He said that negotiations are underway with different banks for financing of the project but the government is resolved to fund it from its own resources if no financing was available.

He said that China did not offer financial assistance to Pakistan for the construction of Diamer-Basha Dam.

He said that the electricity of 9000MW to 10000MW would be added to the national grid station by 2018. He said that power load shedding in the country would be overcome at the end of 2018.

Answering to a question about Nandipur Power Project, the minister said that this project is generating 425MW of electricity. He said that many projects of power generation are on-going and most of the projects would be completed in 2017.

He said work on Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project is in full swing and the project is expected to start generation by August next year.

In written reply to a question, the minister said that the source of energy produced from various resources along with generation cost is as follows: hydel cost of generation Rs 1.78/unit, gas Rs 7.97/unit, nuclear Rs 8.33/unit, IPPs Rs 9.06/unit, import from Iran Rs 10.49/unit, RFO Rs 11.74/unit, biogases Rs 11.78/unit, Coal Rs 12.06/unit, wind Rs 14.31/unit, HSD Rs 18.61/unit and solar generation Rs 22.81 unit.

Parliamentary Secretary for Health Dr Darshan also informed the House that branded Sovaldi tablets for oral treatment of Hepatitis C and its generics are registered in the country.

He said that since the devolution of Ministry of Health in 2011, four hepatitis control programmes are working for the prevention and control of viral hepatitis in the country. These programmes are under the administrative control of provincial health departments and have their own PCIs. There is no hepatitis control programme at federal level.

He said that the prices of Hepatitis medicines have been fixed by the ministry. The prices of these medicines are Hepatitis C: Sovaldi 400mg tablets (Ferozsons) (Originator brand from Gilead USA), Rs 38,000/28's Sofosbuvir 400mg tablets (Generics).

The Parliamentary Secretary said that the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan, Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination is trying its best level to make these drugs available for patients in Pakistan at minimum possible level and the steps have been taken as (i) Generics of sofosbuvir tablets have been registered at maximum retail price of Rs 5,868/28's which is lowest in the world.

He said that these generic drugs are available at approved MRP or at lower prices which will increase competition to help availability of this drug at affordable prices, (ii) the Ministry of NHR&C was instrumental to get new hepatitis-C drug "Sovaldi tablets" for Pakistani patients at subsidized rates under Patient Access Programme by M/s Gilead Sciences, USA for developing countries.

In USA it is available at \$1000 per tablet while Pakistan was given a subsidized price of US 11-12 dollars which is almost 100 times subsidized.

Replying to a question, Parliamentary Secretary for National Food Security Rajab Ali informed that under Prime Minister's Kissan Package, around 28 subsidy claims for October and November last year amounting to over eight billion rupees have been paid to phosphatic fertilizer manufacturers and commercial importers.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/03/15/8-page/741055-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 7th TO MARCH 13th 2016
SC REJECTS REPORT ON RS5 BILLION UNREGISTERED STATE LAND PROJECT
The Express Tribune, March 8th, 2016.

The Supreme Court (SC) rejected on Monday the computerised record of unregistered state land in Karachi prepared by the Sindh Board of Revenue (BoR) at a cost of around Rs5 billion.

A five-member larger bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Anwar Zaheer Jamali, directed the Sindh chief secretary to nominate a competent officer to perform the task of registering all unregistered government lands in the city.

The bench, which also included justices Amir Hani Muslim, Sheikh Azmat Saeed, Faisal Arab and Khilji Arif Hussain, was hearing the case of registration of lands during the week-long Karachi law and order suo motu implementation proceedings which resumed at the SC's Karachi registry on Monday.

The apex court inquired from BoR officials regarding progress on surveying and registering unregistered state lands in Karachi, as ordered by the apex court in October 2011. In June 2014, the court had again granted six months to the authorities to complete the task.

The head of BoR's land administration and revenue management information system, Syed Zulfiqar Shah, told the court that the record of 625,000 acres of unregistered (na-class) state land had been computerised in all districts of Karachi under the Rs4.9 billion project initiated in light of the apex court's directives.

The judges rejected, however, the report after finding flaws in the process of computerisation which was full of tampering as it did not match the microfilms dating back to 1985. Shah explained that the record was computerised after due verification by each district's deputy commissioner.

Justice Muslim, who has an expertise in the subject, told Shah the available record had already been tampered with many times. "The land record since 1985 has largely been tampered with multiple entries in respect of a single piece of land. If you see a single page, it is dotted with fake entries entirely," he told the officer.

The apex court termed the entire exercise, which BoR out-sourced under the Rs4.9 billion land record restructuring project, a futile activity, as the records did not match the original microfilms prior to the tampering of records.

The chief justice observed that the court had issued directives for registering state lands, which was, otherwise, the Sindh government's duty [to maintain authentic land records].

The bench also criticised chief secretary Muhammad Siddique Memon for not filling the important seat of BoR's senior member, observing that the government always appoints 'incompetent and medically unfit' officers on the post, who go on leave when the court takes up the matter.

"If one officer is sent to jail for six months, everyone will mend [their] ways," warned a visibly irritated Justice Muslim, as he questioned officers why the available record was not verified from the central control room.

The bench asked the chief secretary if there was a competent officer, whom the government could appoint as the BoR's senior member with an undertaking that he would not be transferred unnecessarily. The chief secretary then named Rizwan Memon for the post.

The bench directed him to officially authorise the said officer to perform the task and present a formal notification in this regard in the court by Tuesday (today).

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1061111/registering-state-land-sc-rejects-report-on-rs5-billion-unregistered-state-land-project/>

LAHORE SIGNAL-FREE PROJECT: DISPLACED TENANTS AWAIT COMPENSATION

Dawn, March 9th, 2016

LAHORE: Dozens of tenants displaced by Ferozpur Road's signal-free project staged a protest demonstration at Chungi Amar Sadhu on Tuesday against the government for not paying compensation to them despite the completion of the project two years ago.

Carrying placards and banners, protesters blocked Ferozpur Road and put the traffic out of gear for one-and-a-half hours amid anti-government chants.

Up to 100 tenant shopkeepers were affected due to the project under which shops and commercial buildings along the road were demolished. The land was acquired for the remodelling of Qainchi, Ghazi Road-Chungi Amar Sadhu-Khaira intersections to make Ferozpur Road signal free.

They said that on April 17, 2014, Adviser to the Chief Minister Khwaja Hassaan had assured them of compensation under business disturbance and shifting charges in a few days. Since then, none of the government functionary bothered to contact them.

“The affected people, under the Traders Association, also submitted an application to the office of LDA's director general, but to no avail,” said Attiqur Rehman, secretary general of the association.

They said if the people enlisted as displaced tenants, were not compensated within a week, they would block the metro corridor first and then surround the Chief Minister Secretariat on The Mall.

PLANTATION: The City District Government of Lahore (CDGL) on Tuesday planted 1,000 saplings along Wahdat Road.

According to a spokesman, the CDGL and its nine constituent town municipal administrations will plant thousands of saplings along major roads and intersections of the city during the drive. He said besides this, the PHA and forest department will also plant saplings at various spots of the city.

Also, various price control magistrates on Tuesday got 86 shopkeepers arrested besides imposing a Rs30,500 fine on others for overcharging, hoarding and selling substandard commodities in open markets.

PAKISTAN DAY: The divisional administration with the CDGL, towns and the Parks and Horticulture Authority will organise several events to mark the Pakistan Day.

In this regard, according to a spokesman, the Lahore commissioner held a meeting, stating that from March 17 to 23 a variety of events such as a picture exhibition, paragliding, fireworks, seminars and walks.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1244451/lahore-signal-free-project-displaced-tenants-await-compensation>

PPP TO TABLE BILL TO PROTECT INDIGENOUS PROPERTY

The Express Tribune, March 11th, 2016.

Shabbir Mir

GILGIT: Pakistan Peoples Party plans to introduce a bill in the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly to give ownership rights of barren land to locals.

The development came weeks after the G-B government allocated a vast area of barren land in Diamer district to the army to ensure security for the China-Pakistan Economic Project (CPEC).

“We have done [our] homework and the bill will be tabled in the next session,” PPP G-B President Advocate Amjad Hussain told The Express Tribune. The bill will be titled the G-B Village Common Land (Shamilat Deh) Regulation Act 2016. Amjad was the first person to oppose the government’s move to allot land to the CPEC. He asked authorities to pay compensation for the land acquired.

“This bill will ensure compensation for locals if the government acquires their land,” said Amjad who drafted the bill. He plans to table it in the assembly through Imran Nadeem, PPP’s lone ranger in the 33-member house.

He said of total Shamilat or inclusion, 15% will be reserved for common purposes and 5% for the poorest villagers under the management of the union council. Once enacted into a law, the Nautor Rules 1980 and previous Nautor rules, which he said were against human rights, will stand repealed. Nautor laws deal with the utilisation of wastelands.

“We ask every lawmaker in the assembly to support us to get this bill passed,” the PPP regional president said. He added lawmakers’ disinterest in the matter would amount to disloyalty with their people.

Amjad claimed land worth billions of rupees in Diamer, Gilgit, Ghizer, Baltistan and Hunza-Nagar districts was being allocated to CPEC without paying compensation to the real owners.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1063519/keeping-it-local-ppp-to-table-bill-to-protect-indigenous-property/>

‘COMPUTERIZED LAND RECORD IN PUNJAB FULL OF MISTAKES’

Business Recorder, March 11. 2016

M RAFIQUE GORAYA

LAHORE: The recently-computerized land record in all 143 Tehsils of Punjab province is full of mistakes, wrong entries and confusion that would open anew pandora box of litigations among the share holders , land-grabbing etc, according to the land-holders representative bodies who shared their views with Business Recorder.

“Purpose of computerization of land record was good but due to mistakes and wrong entries, the new system has put the land-holders in great difficulties,” Secretary General Kissan Board Pakistan Haji Muhammad Ramzan told the Business Recorder.

He said it became very difficult and time-consuming for the farmers to get record of their land ownership from the computer centres at the Tehsil headquarters. One center at the Tehsil level cannot cope needs of a large section of rural population.

Convener Water Council Punjab and senior advocate Farooq Bajwa said that the new system opened a new Pandora box because privacy of the land-holders was compromised and now any person could get record of land-holdings of anybody and that could be used for land-grabbing.

Director Farmers Associations of Pakistan Hamid Malhi said it was a good effort on the part of the Punjab government to computerize the land record on the basis of the information provided by the concerned Patwari of that revenue unit. However, he said there was a lot of room for improvement with regard to accuracy, transparency and accountability of the system.

A land holder of District Gujrat, who wished not to be named told this scribe that he had inherited pieces of agricultural land in four villages, three in District Gujrat and one in District Rahim Yar Khan.

He tried to trace this land through the website www.punjab-zameen of the network. Of the four places, only one could be accessed, the rest three remained inaccessible. And the place which was accessible gave nearly 12 years old information.

While he could know how much land he had in this village, the record also showed ownership of other members of his family who had disposed of their shares many years back. There was no mention of who bought their shares.

“Ads of the network promise instant information, but that’s not true. You may like to test-verify my claim through your own sources,” said giving details of his three land-holdings in Gujrat district.

Punjab government completed the multi-billion computerization of land record project with the aim of ensuring transparency, accountability and efficiency to replace the centuries-old Patwari- based land ownership system.
<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/03/11/8-page/739898-news.html>

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

SIGNAL-FREE EXPRESSWAY: CIVIC AGENCY ALLOWS HOUSING SCHEMES TO BUILD UNDERPASSES
The Express Tribune, February 29th, 2016.

Danish Hussain

The Capital Development Authority (CDA) is pursuing public-private partnership for road infrastructure in the capital without considering the possible legal fallout of the move.

The civic authority has allowed housing societies along the Islamabad Expressway to undertake construction of underpasses at their entrances as part of the signal-free corridor from Zero Point to Rawat.

Currently, Gulberg Islamabad is undertaking construction of an underpass at its entrance at the Expressway.

While the CDA maintains that the move would be mutually beneficial for the civic agency and the housing schemes, doubts persist as there is no provision in the CDA Ordinance to allow this.

Previously, a similar arrangement with another property developer in Zone-IV landed CDA in trouble after the National Accountability Bureau launched investigation into the deal, saying there was no provision for it in the CDA Ordinance. The issue was also taken up by standing committees of the National Assembly and the Senate.

The permission of construction of interchanges and underpasses to housing societies is only limited to phase-III of the signal-free corridor, from Koral Chowk to Rawat.

“It will benefit both, the CDA and the housing schemes. The CDA will get an interchange or an underpass without spending a penny while housing societies will get hassle-free entry to their respective colonies from Expressway,” said a senior CDA official. He said the arrangement would also facilitate the traffic.

Contacted, CDA spokesperson Ramzan Sajid said the civic agency’s board had decided to grant permission to the societies. He said the CDA had also consulted legal experts on the issue.

He said housing societies had been bound get designs of their underpass vetted and approved by the CDA engineering wing and that the authority would also supervise the construction.

He said the housing societies would hand over the infrastructure to CDA after completion of the projects. The land belongs to the CDA, he said.

Sajid said housing societies would benefit from the signal-free corridor and there was no harm if they were contributing to it voluntarily.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1056130/signal-free-expressway-civic-agency-allows-housing-schemes-to-build-underpasses/>

NOT A SINGLE LANDLORD PAID FARM INCOME TAX DURING 2012-13, SINDH ASSEMBLY TOLD
Dawn, March 1st, 2016

Bhagwandas

KARACHI: Not a single landlord paid agriculture income tax (AIT) in Sukkur district during 2012-13, Sindh Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Nisar Ahmed Khuhro informed legislators on Monday.

He was responding to the queries made by the legislators during the question hour, which pertained to the revenue department, in the Sindh Assembly's Monday session that was chaired by Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani. Mr Khuhro was responding to the questions as Makhdoom Jameel-uz-Zaman, who holds the portfolio concerned, was not present in the assembly during the question hour.

In reply to a query by Mutahida Quami Movement (MQM) legislator Sumeta Syed regarding the AIT by Sukkur district landlords, the minister said that though there were 157 landlords who came under the farm tax net, none of them had paid it.

Similar was the case with the Ghotki district landlords where out of 141, who came under the AIT net, only four had paid the tax during 2012-13. In response to another of her question, he said that out of 7,366 landlords who came under the net all over the province, only 1,343 (roughly 18 per cent) had paid the AIT during the year.

In reply to another of her queries that what punitive steps had been taken against the defaulters, Mr Khuhro said the farm tax collection was the job of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) which came under the federal government and the Sindh government had no control over it.

He said the assistant commissioners also needed to be more vigilant to take steps against the defaulters.

MQM legislator Sardar Ahmed, a retired bureaucrat who had served the government in many capacities including the Sindh chief secretary, immediately got up and informed the minister as well as the legislators that it was not the responsibility of the FBR to collect the AIT. To which Mr Khuhro did not offer any response.

To a question by MQM legislator Heer Soho regarding steps taken to increase the AIT net and reason why the landlords did not pay the AIT, the minister said the landlords considered that they were being discriminated against.

Citing an example, he said that other sections of the society, including businessmen and salaried people, were exempted from paying the income tax if their income was up to Rs400,000 whereas exemption for landlords was up to Rs80,000. So if a landlord's income was Rs400,000, he would be paying Rs22,000 plus 15 per cent of income above Rs300,000 (which comes to Rs15,000). And if his income was Rs400,000, he would be paying Rs37,000 as total AIT.

He urged the need to look into the landlords' concerns and if these were found to be true, the tax laws should be reviewed so that their concern regarding the discrimination was addressed.

A written reply to a question asked by MQM legislator Mazahir Khan regarding district / domicile wise number of recruitment made in the Sindh Board of Revenue between Jan 1, 2012 and Oct 31, 2013, said that the recruitment after Dec 31, 2010 were under inquiry vide notification dated Oct 2, 2015 so the information could be submitted after completion of the inquiry.

A written reply to a question by Pakistan Muslim League (F) legislator Nand Kumar regarding AIT collected from the province from 2010 to 2013, said that during 2010–11, the AIT target was Rs8 million out of which Rs4.9 million were collected.

Similarly, the next year against a target of Rs 7.9 million, Rs 6.6 million was collected and in 2012–13 against a target of Rs 112 million, Rs 101 million was collected.

Pakistan Peoples Party legislator Bahadur Dahri pointed out that the pervious Mukhtiyarkar of Qazi Ahmed talkua charged between Rs200,000 and Rs 300,000 from landlords for the issuance of “Form 7” while the incumbent Mukhtiarakar was charging Rs200,000 for the same form. What the actual official fee of the “Form 7” was, he asked. Mr Khuhro said it was not a supplementary question.

Speaker Durrani also asked the legislator that if he had any compliant / information against the Mukhtiarakar, it should be passed on to the minister so that it could be looked into.

Answering a question by Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf leglslator Seema Zia regarding non-surveyed lands in different parts of the province, the minister said that in Tharparkar, the desert and sand dunes, in Kohistan the mountains and hills and the land between the embankments which was called the riverbed or the kutch areas, were not surveyed.

To a question by MQM legislator Poonjo Bheel, the minister said there were 155,908 survey numbers in Tharparkar district, that included 16,725 survey numbers in Mithi taluka, 23,014 in Diplo taluka, 51,311 in Chhachhro taluka, 47,133 in Nagarparkar and 17,725 survey numbers in Islamkot .

A written reply to a question by the same legislator regarding irrigated as well as cultivated land in Mithi and Diplo talukas, said that in Mithi taluka, over 2400 acres were barrage irrigated out of which over 600 acres were cultivated while in Diplo taluka out of over 48,000 acres of barrage irrigated land around 7,400 acres were cultivated.

MQM legislators Irum Farooqui, Kamran Akhtar, Mahmood Razzaque, Ashfaque Mangi and PTI legislator Samar Ali Khan, and others also participated in the question hour.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1242716>

SHO INJURED, 10 FALL UNCONSCIOUS IN POLICE-VILLAGERS CLASH IN BADIN

Dawn, March 2nd, 2016

BADIN: A station house officer (SHO) was injured and 10 protesters, most of them women, fell unconscious when a strong contingent of police tried to evict several families allegedly occupying around seven acres of land in Sain Bux Rind village, located within the Ward-5 of the city, on Tuesday.

Witnesses said that a police force riding eight vans and an armoured personnel carrier surrounded the village and ordered its inhabitants to vacate the land immediately. However, the villagers offered stiff resistance claiming that they had been living on these lands for more than four decades.

The police force moved into action and started demolishing the houses one after the other. The villagers, men and women, tried to physically stop the police from going ahead with the operation upon which they were baton-charged, which aggravated the situation. More people joined in the resistance and during the course of the clash, SHO of the Model police station Hakim Ali Jalbani, who was leading the operation, was attacked with a hatchet. Police lobbed teargas shells to disperse the protesters causing eight women and two children to fall unconscious.

The police officer was rushed to the Badin Civil Hospital where doctors referred him to the Hyderabad Civil Hospital due to his grave injuries.

According to villagers, two children jumped into the nearby canal when they could not bear the suffocation caused by teargas. They were unaccounted for till late in the evening, they added.

The villagers claimed that the land in question belonged to the Badin Industrial Zone and they had never been asked by any authority to vacate it until Deputy Commissioner Rafique Ahmed Qureshi recently leased out a portion of it to a friend of his, Tariq Ahmed. They alleged that the DC issued the eviction order to oblige the ‘buyer’ and asked the area police to use force against them [occupants of the land].

The DC, however, insisted that the villagers were illegally occupying the land and would have to vacate it.

Reports reaching here late in the evening said that a 600-strong police force sent to the scene surrounded the village with the help of 15 vans and an armoured personnel carrier. Four villagers were picked up on suspicion of their involvement in the attack on the SHO.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1242933/sho-injured-10-fall-unconscious-in-police-villagers-clash-in-badin>

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April 2016

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

GREED AND REAL ESTATE

Dawn, April 25th, 2016

Umair Javed

LAST week, this newspaper published an exceptionally detailed story on the allegedly coercive practices of one of Karachi’s main land developers. The details of how poor villagers are forced off their land to provide for the material aspirations of the privileged make for a harrowing read. Moreover, at every step, the apparently colluding Sindh government facilitates this process of naked primitive accumulation — the same government that is supposedly elected to protect the interests of the most vulnerable.

In the aftermath of the story’s publication, a few concerned voices have asked for greater accountability of the developer in question, and for an overhaul of government practices that make this sordid marriage of greed and graft a reality.

The land development regime in Pakistan is rife with loopholes, none less so than the colonial-era Land Acquisition Act, which allows the government to procure land under the pretence of claiming wider public interest. India next door inherited the same act, but finally pushed through for a revised version three years ago. The new legislation goes some

way in protecting the rights of landowners, adds provisions for the type of activities classified as public interest, and introduces collective bargaining provisions to determine land rates. Pakistan would do well to follow this lead.

At a more fundamental level, the rapid pace of suburban real estate development raises analytical questions about the land and housing market in Pakistan. For some observers, developers like Bahria Town, DHA, Eden, and hundreds of others, are catering to market demand. Investors and homebuyers are interested in upscale, well-designed projects, with wide roads and orderly streets.

They offer a safe investment with good (often great) returns, and thus prove to be an active avenue for savings. In turn, this demand feeds into more projects, which occupies more land, and thus perpetuates a particular sequence.

Two facts are clear from the demand-side picture of land development. First, there are enough investors, with cash equity and savings, to maintain a profitable cycle in land development. For the average middle- or upper-income family, the odds of getting good returns in any other saving instrument are probably lower. Plus the relatively high velocity of trade in plots makes it easy to cash in for large expenditures, such as weddings, medical treatment, and business shock.

The second fact is that these schemes also reflect the aesthetic preference of middle- and upper-income investors and homebuyers. They follow the suburban, gated community model, creating socio-economically homogenous neighbourhoods, with car-friendly roads, sanitised green spaces, and plot sizes that range from medium (125 square yards) to very large (1,000 square yards).

On the supply side, the situation is fairly straightforward. Given the presence of a growing upper-income market segment, with investable savings, developers see the obvious gains that can be made from initiating housing schemes. Even with development costs included, they offer good overall returns, with much less hassle compared to setting up a manufacturing and commercial enterprise. Little wonder that many agro-entrepreneurs in Lahore and other cities of Punjab, are converting arable land into real-estate ventures.

On our television screens and billboards, this happy marriage of demand and supply celebrates its glossy ventures through pictures of beaming (privileged) families strolling through golf courses and shopping malls. What is missing from view is the impact this suburban dream mongering has had on urban ecology and the housing market in general.

Each year, the housing unit shortage number grows by at least 600,000; 60pc of the urban population has access to only 1pc of the available land and housing stock. To give an illustrative example, the cost of a one-bed, 75 square yard house in a marginal locality in Lahore is approximately Rs2 million. That's 150 times the average household income of a working-class family in the city.

Each year, the water table in our urban centres drops a couple of feet. Industrial and commercial usage is part of the problem, but at least that's being siphoned off for productive consumption. What possible benefit does society obtain from well-manicured gardens cultivated behind the high walls of suburban houses?

We cannot expect people to change their aesthetic preferences or for developers to construct socially conscious real-estate projects. Their logics are private logics dictated by their personal preferences and profit motive. The only thing that can generate disruption in demand and supply is the state, which is sanctioned with the task of thinking about the benefit of society as a whole.

In Pakistan, unfortunately, the supply side aspect is made easier by the existing regulatory structure and policy regime. There is no penalty on holding vacant plots for investment, the government's own development agencies actively collaborate with private developers to create schemes catering to middle and upper income buyers, and existing land-use rules are often amended to cater to suburban sprawl. In short, both aesthetic preferences and the real-estate industry are actively encouraged in its current shape and form by a friendly policy regime, and a complicit state apparatus.

In an ideal world, a conscientious government would act to stem this economic and ecological rot. It would amend its policy regime to ensure equitable access to land, and to recast housing as an item of use rather than of exchange and investment. It would discourage sprawl by regenerating inner-city neighbourhoods, investing in public transport, and limiting car-friendly infrastructure.

It would protect the environment by creating sanctions for water wastage. Over time, this would have the desirable impact of changing people's preferences and attitudes towards the types of housing they would want.

Unfortunately, none of this is foreseeable in Pakistan. The tragedy of an elite-favouring land market is fortified by a callous and complicit state. Unless something changes dramatically, the country's headfirst plunge into unmitigated urban disaster will continue unabated.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1254228/greed-and-real-estate>

AMP LEADER'S ASSOCIATE DETAINED UNDER MPO

Dawn, April 25th, 2016

OKARA: A close associate of the detained Anjuman Mazareen Punjab (AMP) general secretary was also picked up and sent behind bars under Section 16 of the MPO.

Abdullah Tahir, a friend of detained AMP leader Meher Abdus Sattar, was nabbed by police after District Coordination Officer Sucrat Aman Rana issued a 30-day detention order under 16 MPO on Saturday night.

Tahir was being kept in the District Jail.

TENANTS: PML-N MNA Chaudhry Nadeem Abbas Rubera and Provincial Minister for Irrigation Yawar Zaman voiced their support for the district administration and police in the Okara Military Farms case.

In their separate statements, they said law enforcement institutions were acting against criminals and anti-social elements only in the villages of military farms and not against tenants. They alleged that the detained AMP leaders and their activists were using the cover of some tenants for their vested interests for a long time.

MNA Rubera said seven villages of Kulyana state fell under his constituency. He said during the previous tenure of Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif, he had succeeded to obtain allocation of 5,500 residential plots – 10-marla each — for each family of Kulyana state besides land for school and graveyard for every village.

He said he would ask the government and PML-N leadership to direct the district administration and police not to implicate any innocent person or tenant in any unlawful proceedings.

On the other hand, in a telephonic statement PPP district president and former MNA Chaudhry Sajjadul Hassan told the media his party stood with the cause of tenants.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1254249>

RESISTANCE TO DIGITISATION OF LAND RECORDS

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, April 25th, 2016

Ashfak Bokhari

THE computerisation of land records in Punjab and Sindh promises an end to infamous patwari culture — a drag on modernisation of farming — but not without a backlash from well-entrenched interest.

There was some resistance by patwaris while computerisation was in progress. The problem is that land records being fed into computers are provided by patwaris. According to deputy director of Punjab's Land Record Management Information System (LRMIS) more than 4.7m errors in land documentation were found during the computerisation process which was obviously the work of patwaris concerned.

A farmers' organisation complained that the computerised land record in all 143 tehsils of Punjab is full of errors and wrong entries that, if not rectified, may open up Pandora's box of litigations.

It took 8,000 patwaris to keep land records in Punjab. The job is now being done by 3,000 officials at service centres across the province. He said the LRMIS carried records of land owned by 20m people. An online monitoring dashboard system has been introduced to keep a check on officials handling these records.

A senior member of the Sindh Board of Revenue (BoR) during a presentation said that the 90pc land record entered into computer had serious flaws which were rectified by adopting a proper procedure. Giving examples, he said that 35pc flaws were found in the division of shares, 30pc had no survey numbers, 3pc had errors of calculation, 1pc lacked entries of sellers and buyers and 2pc entries were made without attestation.

The data shows that 78pc of total entries are those of small farmers who own less than four acres. Being illiterate, these farmers are not familiar with benefits of land record computerisation, and have mostly been depending on patwaris for any sale or purchase of land.

India's experience in states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka is a case in point. It shows computerisation has led to increased corruption and further lack of access to records to poor farmers and women due to problems like illiteracy, lack of awareness, and the need to travel to service centres located far away from their villages. The system of maintaining manual land records is no doubt outdated and distorted, but computerising them has yet to become the right solution to end corruption and irregularities.

An International Crisis Group report on Pakistan's civil service accuses the officials of provincial revenue departments of lacking the will to curtail powers of the patwari for they "themselves are corrupt to the core".

In fact, it was the patwari, the report says, who engineered the failure of Z.A. Bhutto's 1973 land reforms. In most cases, at the behest of big landlords, he never informed tenants about the reforms and a subsequent change in their status. And the peasants continued to work on their fields as before, without knowing they had become the owners of their farms.

The Sindh Board of Revenue has digitised the revenue record of 29 districts, while properties in 2,300 villages out of 2,500 in Punjab have been brought online under the LRMIS.

A ceremony was held in Karachi on April 12 to mark the completion of digitisation of the records. It was also attended by the Sindh chief minister who jokingly hoped the patwaris would not go on strike in protest against the new system for it takes away from them their invisible powers to tamper with the land records.

Pakistan has been much behind in adopting the digital technology in South Asia. It initiated the online transfer of land records in 2007 with a World Bank-aided project in Punjab where tampering with records was extremely high.

India began computerising its land records in 1988. On April 15, it achieved another feat by launching its first electronic trading portal to enable farmers to sell their goods across the country.

The portal named 'The National Agriculture Market' (exam) would allow farmers to monitor the cost of commodities, assess demand and gain easier access to markets in the country.

Instead of assuming that computerisation of land records will deliver positive benefits to the weaker sections, the policymakers need to ensure authenticity of existing land records, so that poor tenants and women were no longer cheated.

In fact, what is needed is using online records to tax large landholders and even undertake effective land redistribution. However, it seems they will remain the primary beneficiary of the new system as well as they were in the previous system.

The patwari culture has flourished because of effective support of local influential persons and lawmakers who use their powers to manage the posting of patwaris of their choice who then manipulate land records to their benefit. As such, the patwari culture is a part of the political system gradually losing its dominant position.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1254162>

OKARA TENANTS PLEAD THEIR CASE IN 'PUBLIC COURT'

Dawn, April 27th, 2016

LAHORE: Hundreds of tenants of the Okara military farms on Tuesday converged on Lahore to protest against what they said "state oppression".

Their camp outside the Lahore Press Club was an animated place. "We are peace-loving people struggling for land proprietary rights for the last 17 years. The state, however, is determined to prove us terrorists," was the crux of the message the protesters said they wanted to convey to both political and military leadership, and the man in the street.

"For the last many weeks, many people have disappeared," said Badarun Nisa, a leader of the association. "We have even moved court but to no avail. Our kids are not allowed to go to schools because the military and police have placed pickets around our villages. Women with broken arms and limbs cannot be taken to hospitals because we run the risk of being nabbed and jailed. Life has turned hellish on military farms which is reminiscent of early 2000s when the Rangers ruled the area," she decried.

The tenant said they were waging struggle for the just cause and would not back off. "The choice is with the state – if it wants to treat its peaceful and peace-loving citizens as terrorist, let it do so. These lands, which we have been tilling for generations, are a source of livelihood for us which the state is now determined to turn into a cause of death," she lamented.

"Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif came to our area seeking votes and he promised us land rights. Where is he now when his brother has unleashed state power on us," bemoaned Baba Khushi Muhammad, an octogenarian who heads the Punjab chapter of the Anjuman-i-Mazareen.

"We had to sneak through a curfew-like situation around our villages to reach Lahore. Is this how a political government should treat people struggling for their right. If they can come to us for votes, why they cannot visit the area and people for negotiations. Why a political government has to speak through the barrel of gun. Can any decent society book women struggling for land rights under anti-terror law. Why are women and kids having their limbs broken in the area," he said.

Another protester, Liaquat Ali, said just when Zarab-i-Ahan operation against the Chotoo gang of Rajanpur was going on, the Okara police started projecting tenants' villages as another "no-go area". The image was built with a purpose and soon army movement followed, generating worst fears among the tenants. The police later arrested their leaders Nadeem

Ashraf, Saleem Ghakkar, Hafiz Jabbar, Shabbir Sajid and Mehr Abdul Sattar. We have lost record of arrests and FIRs, all under 7ATA, by now. No one can really count the arrests and disappearances,” he claimed.

“Mehr Sattar, who is now jailed, has been elected nazim thrice, twice contested for the Punjab Assembly and once for the National Assembly. Is it fair treatment to him,” he asked.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1254724>

COMPUTERISATION OF LAND RECORD TO TAKE A YEAR, COURT TOLD

Dawn, April 28th, 2016

LAHORE: Lahore Development Authority former director general Ahad Khan Cheema on Wednesday told the Lahore High Court that computerisation of the land record was in progress and would be completed within a year. Mr Cheema stated this during his appearance before the court of Justice Farrukh Irfan Khan in connection with a contempt petition against him.

Earlier, a law officer said additional charge of the LDA DG had been withdrawn from Mr Cheema as desired by the court. He said Nabeel Javed had been appointed as a permanent DG.

Previously, the judge had taken notice of two offices held by Mr Cheema during hearing of a petition filed by a woman who complained that the LDA was not allotting her plot against acquisition of her land.

The court was told that Mr Cheema was originally chief executive of Quaid-i-Azam Thermal Power Project and given additional charge of the LDA DG.

The judge disposed of the petition after law officer said the petitioner-woman had been allotted the plot and her grievance stood addressed.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1254903>

GCU TEACHER DONATES LAND, LIFETIME SAVINGS

Dawn, April 28th, 2016

LAHORE: A Government College University teacher has announced donating his savings for his institution.

Dr Zaheer Ahmed Siddique, the 82-year-old eminent poet and distinguished professor of Persian language, pledged to donate his Rs140 million land and Rs5m lifetime savings to the GCU Endowment Fund Trust for the scholarships of financially challenged students.

Prof Siddique, the author of 52 books including Pakistan’s first Persian to Urdu dictionary, handed over the Rs5m cheque to Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Hasan Amir Shah here on Wednesday.

Prof Siddique’s son Naveed Siddique is the adviser to Bill Gates at Microsoft and her daughter is the professor of English literature at the FCC University, Lahore. His younger son works at an executive post with a multinational company in Pakistan.

Prof Siddique said he had initiated a legal process to transfer the land to the university.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice-Chancellor Prof Shah said the inspiring Dr Siddique, who has more than 50year meritorious services in research, administration, and teaching for GCU, had been donating all his salary to the GCU Endowment Trust since long for the fee of deserving students.

He said the nations world over had progressed by developing their universities and research institutes, but unfortunately in Pakistan the culture to support or donate the property to an education institution had yet not developed.

He said Prof Siddique had set a precedent which other would follow. “Prof Zaheer is not a rich person at all, and all he had, has been donated to the GCU Endowment Fund,” he added.

GCU Endowment Fund Trust secretary Dr Khalid Manzoor Butt said the GCU was the only public sector university in Pakistan to have an active endowment fund trust, which gives scholarships worth more than Rs20 million to deserving students every year.

He said the endowment fund never spent the principal amount but the profit earned from the principal amount was spent on financially challenged students.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1254890>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 18th TO APRIL 24th 2016
PEASANTS’ CONFERENCE DEMANDS HARI COURTS, LAND REFORMS
Business Recorder, April 18, 2016

Speakers at a peasants’ conference and a launch ceremony of a report on “State of Peasants Rights in Sindh 2015” demanded to establish Hari Courts in Sindh. On the International Day of Peasants 2016, they also called for amendment to Sindh Tenancy Act, land reforms to give agriculture land to landless peasants and education, health and residential facilities to all peasants.

The Sindh Hari Conference and report launch ceremony was organized by Hari Welfare Association Sindh (HWAS) in collaboration with International labour Organisation (ILO) and Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER) at Karachi Press Club on Sunday. After the conference, the peasants and representatives of civil society organisations also staged a demonstration in front of the KPC for rights of peasants.

Executive Director of PILER Karamat Ali presided over the conference, whereas the main speakers included senior peasants leader Saleh Bilal, a senior trade union leader and a trainer from Manchester Geoff Brown, President of HWAS Akram Ali Khaskheli, researcher Aijaz Ali Khawaja, Executive Director of The Change Organisation Ishak Soomro, Ashraf Ali from the UN’s FAO, Zulfiqar Shah, Joint Director of PILER and Zaheer Ahmed from the ILO.

Speaking on the occasion Karamat Ali said the conditions of peasants had not changed even after the independence.

“If you read the Masood Khaddarposh’s note of descent in Hari Report, you can find that the conditions of peasants have not improved,” he said adding that inequality and concentration of the landholding, political and social influence of landlords had increased.

He said we could see 80% elected people in the assemblies were the from the same landlords families, who had been elected from Sindh before the partition.

He said the British Empire introduced hereditary property system in India, which was different from the Mughal landholding system that had encouraged property rights of those people who could cultivate the lands. He said the

landholding system had to be changed at the time of independence but still remained the same despite having been aggravated.

“Current rulers of Sindh belong to the feudal families hence they don’t allow local government system to function because it provides some sort of representation to labour and Haris,” he said.

Karamat Ali pointed out that the GSP Plus facility by the European Union provided an opportunity to implement the ILO core labour standards and other international conventions concerning to human rights, environmental protection and good governance.

He said Sindh Industrial Relations Act (SIRA) had not provided any opportunity to agriculture workers because there was no method to register a union in it.

Geoff Brown, a senior trade unions leader and a trainer from Manchester said there was no peasantry in the UK and only corporate farming existed there, but this was an unsustainable method. He stressed on the need to protect the environment and for that all had to support peasants and their struggle anywhere in the world.

Akram Khaskheli, head of Hari Welfare Association said Sindh Tenancy Act was passed in 1950 and now that was needed to be amended to provide relief to the peasants. All the proposed amendments provided by labour organisations had not incorporated. He urged that measures be taken for proper implementation.

Saleh Biloo, a peasant leader said Sindh Tenancy Act provided some protection to peasants for achieving their rights. He said institutions such as Sindh Seed Corporation, Zarai Tarqiati Bank were established to provide support to the farmers, but they were serving to only landlords.

He said Sugar mills in Sindh were exploiting the growers because they were owned by rulers. He said the food department was infested with corruption. It was not providing Bardana (gunny bags) to the real farmers but providing support to big landlords.

“There are no education, health and residential facilities to the peasants in Sindh,” he said adding that forestry was providing employment to over 500,000 workers in Sindh, but almost all forests had been destroyed deliberately which had resulted in loss of revenue to the government and widespread unemployment.

Ishak Soomro, Executive Director of The Change Organisation demanded that land reforms which were introduced by former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto should be implemented now.

A social science researcher Aijaz Ali Khawaja said agricultural slavery still existed in Sindh’s society. In coastal areas, hundreds of thousands of acres had been destroyed due to sea intrusion. “Big landlords encroached upon Katcha area land where they have put barriers on the main flow of river which not only cause floods, but in dry days, it causes sea intrusion,” he said.

Ashraf Ali from UN FAO said the mistrust between peasants and landlords needed to be minimised by creating awareness among both peasants and landlords.

Zaheer Ahmed from ILO said that ILO had introduced alternative livelihood training programme in Sindh especially for those farmers who were affected by floods or drought.

Zulfiqar Shah, Joint Director of PILER appreciated the efforts of Hari Welfare Association for preparing the “State of Peasants Rights in Sindh 2015.”

“The official figure also indicates that there is an extreme poverty in Sindh. Over 70 percent of population in Sindh is living below poverty line. Majority of the poor in Sindh are peasants who are facing marginalization as majority of population is not part of political decision-making process,” he said adding that another major reason of deprivation was corruption as the worst affected sections of the society were peasants who didn’t receive education, healthcare facilities and other basic rights. Majority of patients of Hepatitis in Sindh were Haris, he said.

<http://www.brecorder.com/agriculture-a-allied/183/37181/>

DR MIRZA SEEKS PROBE INTO LAND-GRABBING ACROSS SINDH

Dawn, April 19th, 2016

BADIN: Estranged Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader and former home minister Dr Zulfikar Mirza on Monday called for a thorough investigation into the allotment of thousands of acres of lands across Sindh and also into the ill-gotten assets of all those running their property businesses.

Speaking to Dawn in Tando Bago during a protest by councillors of his group against alleged corruption in the municipal institutions of Badin district, Dr Mirza criticised Bahria Town projects in Sindh and said that the property tycoon, Malik Riaz, intended to turn the entire province into his colony. He said that PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari and his sister MNA Faryal Talpur should be stopped from usurping Sindh’s lands through such companies dealing in properties. He said Karachi was facing an acute water shortage due to certain Bahria Town projects.

Hundreds of people in Nawabshah had also been affected by the company’s ventures, he added.

He asked all such people to come forward and join in the protest against land-grabbers. He offered his services to the investigating institutions in this regard.

Meanwhile, councillors belonging to the Mirza group held a protest outside the office of the Badin municipal committee forcing officials to defer opening of tenders.

The councillors warned that if the tenders were opened they would besiege the office and said the officials concerned had no legal authority to carry on development works and embezzle the funds.

They said that they had moved court to attain their constitutional powers and they would not allow any corrupt bureaucrat to embezzle public money. What had forced the municipal authorities to issue tenders in such a hurry when the apex court had already ordered to hold elections for the offices of chairmen and vice chairmen within 60 days through secret ballot, they said.

Besides, they said, they had moved the Hyderabad circuit bench of the Sindh High Court which would hear the case against tenders on April 20. They would not bow to bureaucracy and continue the struggle to stop misuse of funds, they said.

They said that contracts for 109 schemes worth Rs130 million had been invited which were to be given to local PPP leaders to embezzle the funds. Since people had put their confidence in them they would resist such moves against the city, they said.

DC Rafique Ahmed Qureshi reiterated that the officials were not bound to take into confidence councillors-elect and rejected allegations of corruption or favouritism in awarding the contracts.

In the meantime, the municipal authorities announced the date of opening of tenders for various development schemes in the city had been postponed.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1252912>

GOVT COMES UP WITH STEPS TO CALM TENANTS

Dawn, April 20th, 2016

OKARA: After days of an intense showdown, the government seems to have adopted a carrot and stick approach with the tenants of military farms of Okara.

District and police officers and parliamentarians of Okara announced on Tuesday several measures to calm the tenants and also vowed to deal with the violators of law with an iron hand.

They announced that the government had waived off dues which the tenants of military farms owed to the government since 2001. Also, the tenants would be taken under tenancy instead of the lease system under the new arrangements. No tenant will be evicted from the village while cases involving the tenants will be decided on merit.

The meeting was attended by District Coordination Officer (DCO) Sucrat Aman Rana, District Police Officer (DPO) Faisal Rana, MNA Chaudhry Nadeem Abbas Rubera and Mian Hamyuan Dastigar. Later, they announced the decisions at a press conference at the committee room of the DCO office.

Anjuman-i-Mazareen Punjab (AMP) secretary general Mehr Abdus Sattar was detained in the Central Jail here for 30 days on Saturday, a day before the peasant convention he was scheduled to hold on April 17. The very next day, hundreds of peasants protested the arrest in a village of the farms, after which police registered cases against more than 4,000 people under several sections of the Pakistan Penal Code and terror laws.

The DCO and the DPO spoke on agitation by the tenants of the Okara military farms, Kulyana Estate, Renala Estate, Byle Gunj and Probinabad.

They said the public at large, especially the people of Okara and the motorists on GT Road, had often been held hostage by tenants' leaders in the name of tenants rights. The tenants, led by AMP leaders, would block GT Road to blackmail the government. A few months ago, they had blocked GT Road for 55 hours.

Once the National Action Plan was announced after the attack on an army school in Peshawar in 2014, it was decided to deal with the violators of law strictly. This time, AMP leaders violated Section 144 in the district. The law took its logical course and now miscreants and their facilitators were behind bars.

The cases pending against them for years were under investigation and their details would be made public shortly.

MNA Rubera supported the stance of the officials, saying everybody knew the nuisance created by AMP leaders on roads around the district headquarters, especially on GT Road. Dozens of tenants, including Rai Liaqat Kasmana, Dil Muhammad, Mian Nadeem Abbas, Muhammad Yaseen and Malik Jameel, also briefed about the situation of villages after the arrests of AMP General Secretary Mehr Abdul Sattar and his facilitators.

The DPO said that 18 months back, he was summoned by the Lahore High Court (LHC) in connection with a writ petition seeking the arrest of AMP leader Nadeem Ashraf, Saleem Jakhar and others in murder and other cases. He said they had been arrested following the orders of the LHC.

The DPO said that in the future there would be no no-go area in the farms, especially the Okara military farms. The law would adopt its way in the tenants villages without any discrimination.

The DCO, on behalf of the military farm administration, said no tenant would be fired from farms and the 5,500 residential plots announced by Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif would be handed over to the Kulyana Estate tenants under the supervision of Rubera.

Also, the DCO agreed to establish a special counter in his office to deal with the complaints of tenants. Similarly, the DPO vowed to deal with complaints about extortion and land grabbing by AMP leaders on a priority basis.

Former vice chairman of the Okara Cantonment Board Aslam Tahirul Qadri told Dawn the government and farms administration had taken right measures after 15 years to restore peace in tenants' villages .

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1253194/govt-comes-up-with-steps-to-calm-tenants>

DOUBLE PAYMENT? CDA SEEKS AMENDMENT IN LAND COMPENSATION LAW

The Express Tribune, April 21st, 2016.

Danish Hussain

ISLAMABAD: The city managers are deliberating over introducing an amendment to the CDA Ordinance 1960 aimed at compensating heirs of the locals affected by land acquisition for the development of sectors.

However, the amendment will only benefit those whose ancestral lands were acquired by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) before 1985 but had failed to acquire possession despite the payment of compensation.

“The families compensated back then have extended over time, and over the years, they have built up additional structures which were not present when the CDA announced the land acquisition from the late 1960s to 1985,” said a senior CDA official privy to the development.

In some cases, the CDA only announced acknowledgment of entitlement to compensation, but did not make any payment at the time.

Locals who were compensated earlier have since refuse to turn over possession of their land to the CDA, demanding additional benefits for the structures they have built up on the same land since then.

Currently, the CDA ordinance strictly prohibits award of additional benefits to locals who have already been compensated for their land.

The proposed amendment calls for insertion of a new subsection — 33-C — titled “Payment of resettlement and rehabilitation solatium upon securing possession of acquired land.”

“The authority [CDA] may, through an agreement, pay a solatium, upon securing possession of land already acquired by the CDA prior to 1985, in an amount or in the manner deemed reasonable for resettlement and rehabilitation of a landless affectee or dweller, not being a person who has been or was entitled to be paid compensation at the time of acquisition of land by the authority,” the proposed text of Section 33-C reads.

The section defines “landless affectee or dweller” as a person who is the owner of built-up property in the form of a house constructed after the CDA acquired the land.

The affected persons can also be adult successors of individual whose land had been acquired, and whose primary place of residence or property or source of livelihood is adversely affected due to the acquisition of land by the authority.

Provided the amendment gets through, the CDA will have to pay additional benefits to families already compensated.

“In the past, the CDA gave monetary benefits to locals against their land, but the CDA allowed them to continue their occupation on humanitarian grounds,” commented a senior official of the land and estate wing of the civic agency. He said that the situation worsened over the period of time and when in the recent past the CDA tried to get possession of the land it was denied by the locals.

“Several attempts to forcibly get the land vacated by the CDA faced immense resistance,” he said, adding that the management now feels it cannot regain possession until it paid more ‘compensation’ to the extended families of the original affected persons.

When contacted, the CDA spokesperson said, the proposal was under consideration.

He refused to comment any further.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1088899/double-payment-cda-seeks-amendment-in-land-compensation-law/>

TIBL AGREES TO RETURN RS699M TO PRIVATISATION COMMISSION

The Express Tribune, April 21st, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: The Trust Investment Bank Limited (TIBL) has agreed to return Rs698.9 million to Privatisation Commission (PC) as a result of a plea bargain with the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the commission announced on Wednesday.

It said that an amount of Rs294.4 million had already been recovered from the TIBL in July 2013 and Asif Kamal, chairman of TIBL, has now agreed to ‘voluntarily’ return the remaining Rs404.5 million. The Executive Board of NAB approved the voluntary return in its meeting held on Monday.

In 2010, the then chairman of Privatisation Commission, Senator Waqar Ahmad, invested Rs500 million in TIBL in two tranches despite TIBL’s low credit ratings and Asif Kamal, its chairman, being a member of the PC Board.

The money had been deposited at an annual rate of return of 12.85% for a period of one year, said the Commission. The investment of Rs500 million was made in violation of sections 14, 16, 18, 19 and 20, along with other enabling provisions and rules of the PC Ordinance 2000 and the Trust Act 1882, it added.

The PC came to know about the violation in February 2011 and it made a request to the TIBL to return the money. However, TIBL refused to return even after maturity, said the PC.

After liaising with the Finance Division, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), the PC and TIBL entered into a settlement agreement in November 2011. The TIBL deposited eight post-dated cheques for the repayment of principal outstanding amount of Rs500 million while agreeing to service mark up at 14% per annum on the outstanding amount.

However, all the cheques got dishonoured and the PC lodged an FIR with Federal Investigation Agency in November 2012 under Section 409 (criminal breach of trust) & 489F (dishonour of cheques) of the Pakistan Penal Code 1860.

After lodging the complaint, the then management of the PC did not pursue the matter with FIA. No substantial progress was made on the case, after July 2013 – the last time the party paid Rs294.7 million in lieu of principal as well as mark-up against Rs500 million deposit.

The present management convinced the FIA to add non-bailable offence clauses in the FIR, urging it to play a role in fast track prosecutions.

The Supreme Court also took a suo motto notice of the matter and directed FIA and NAB to investigate the matter along with the Finance Division and the Privatisation Commission to ensure that every effort is made for the recovery of the amount invested with TIBL along with the mark-up, said the Commission.

The accused had filed voluntary return application for returning only Rs210 million. They, however, refused to service the accrued mark-up. However, PC pursued the matter with NAB, and insisted on the recovery of Rs404.5 million.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1088945/tibl-agrees-to-return-rs699m-to-privatisation-commission/>

‘RETIRED GENERALS SOLD ETPB LAND ILLEGALLY’

Dawn, April 23rd, 2016

Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) Chairman Siddiqui Farooq says that board owns no commercial property in Balochistan, as its all land in the province had been sold by its two former heads, who also were retired military generals, during the Musharraf rule.

He told Dawn the two retired military generals had declared the land as “unmanageable” during their tenures.

“In Balochistan, the ETPB had the commercial property worth billions on Jinnah Road in Quetta which was sold during the regimes of two retired generals,” he said.

“Their act caused a huge financial loss to the ETPB.”

He said it was shocking to know that trust’s commercial property had been sold illegally by declaring it “unmanageable”.

“You know the rates of commercial property in Quetta: Rs250,000 per square feet.”

He said board members in a meeting had given a go-ahead to the administration to seek the help of chief ministers in Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) to get retrieved trust-owned 9,000 fertile acres from the land grabbers. He said approximately over 4,000 acres of the ETPB were under unlawful possession in Sindh, over 5,000 acres in Punjab and 200 to 300 acres in the KP.

“I don’t have the detail of commercial property occupied illegally in these three provinces. Also, I don’t have information about the detail of the commercial property sold out in Quetta,” he explained.

Earlier, after board’s 299th meeting, he told reporters the participants had passed a resolution, condemning land mafia occupying ETPB’s land.

He said he hoped during the operation against illegal occupants, they would have the support of the local administration in all provinces.

He said since ETPB’s laws on agriculture and urban properties were outdated, they were being amended so as to punish the land grabbers. He said trust’ barren land had been proposed to be leased for 10 years.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1253863>

MILITARY FARMS TENANTS SET UP PROTEST CAMP IN ISLAMABAD

Dawn, April 23rd, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Hameeda Bibi, who is in her late 60s, is among the scores of tenants from the Okara military farms who set up a protest camp outside the National Press Club on Friday.

Hameeda Bibi told Dawn that she came to the federal capital in hopes that her voice would reach the rulers and the Supreme Court of Pakistan. But she regretted that till the evening, not a single politician had visited the camp.

However, PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari called the representatives of the tenants to Zardari House and listened to their grievances.

“I was born in the village 15/4L and now even my grandchildren are earning their bread and butter from the land. But for the last 16 years, we have continuously been receiving threats from the army to vacate the land,” she added.

Mohammad Mukhtar, another resident of 15/4L, said there were 19 villages near Okara in which over 900,000 people lived. The total land is 18,000 acres out of which 4,000 acres are already in the possession of the army. Now the army is trying to also take over the remaining land.

“Most of the families pay Rs25,000 to Rs60,000 per acre annually to the army. A majority of the people have three to six acres of land. We are ready to pay the cost of the land but the army is trying to get the land vacated,” he said.

“Just two days ago, Mujahid Abbas, a schoolteacher, was arrested after he refused to vacate the land. During the last 16 years, 13 people have been killed and 25 arrested by the police and scores of others injured during protest demonstrations,” he said.

Mian Safdar, a resident of 12/4L, said his forefathers cultivated the land for over 100 years. “I have six acres and don’t have any other option but to live there.”

Fazal Hussain, 57, added that he had five acres and had to feed his three sons and two daughters.

“A brigadier visited the area and threatened the tenants. When I raised an objection, a case under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) was registered against me in the Okara Saddar police station,” he alleged.

The protesters said the market rate of the land was Rs800,000 per acre so instead of forcing the people to vacate the land the government should sell it to them.

Rights activist and leader of Awami Workers Party Farzana Bari said she knew that most of the political leaders would not visit the camp.

“However, we invited the tenants to the capital to show that at least the civil society understands their problem and shows solidarity with them,” she said.

President Anjuman-i-Mazareen Mian Khushi Mohammad added: “In Islamabad, at least the national and international media visited our camp and listened to our problems. I am sure that our issue will be highlighted at the national and international level.”

He said the PPP chairman assured them that he would play his role to address the issue. He said the PPP chief also promised that opposition leader Syed Khurshid Shah would take up the issue on the floor of the National Assembly. Moreover, services of Latif Ahmed Khosa advocate would be provided to the tenants to fight their case.

The Okara military farms were developed during the British rule in the 19th century to protect the subcontinent from any attack from the northwest. People were encouraged to settle there with an offer that the land would be transferred in their names. However, the offer was never materialised.

As the British army owned the land, after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, the land was automatically transferred to the Pakistan Army. The army used to get share from the production but during the tenure of Pervez Musharraf a contract system was introduced and the farmers were directed to pay the rent in cash. Moreover, it was decided that the military can vacate the land anytime.

As a result, the farmers established Anjuman-i-Mazareen to protect their rights. But the military has been asking the tenants to vacate the land.

Meanwhile, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in a statement hailed the struggle of the tenants.

He said he was shocked to learn about the injustices with the tenants.

Spokesperson Senator Farhatullah Babar said the PPP chairman condemned the registration of terrorism cases against the tenants for refusing to give up their proprietary rights and demanded withdrawal of the cases.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1253898>

OKARA FARMLANDS: BILAWAL CONDEMNS REGISTRATION OF TERRORISM CASES AGAINST TENANTS
Business Recorder, April 23, 2016

Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has condemned registration of terrorism cases against the tenants on the farmlands in Okara for refusing to give up their proprietary rights and demanded withdrawal of the cases. Bilawal hailed the heroic struggle waged by the tenants on the farmlands in Okara and said that the party will fully support them.

He said this during a meeting with a delegation of Anjuman Mazareen Punjab who called on him at Zardari house Islamabad on Friday. The delegation included Chairman Okara tenants Chaudhry Liaqat Ali, President Okara tenants Mian Khushi Mohammad, Vice President Okara tenants Haji Ghulam Hussain, Shahzad Shafi and Iftikhar Shakir. Former MNA from Okara Sajjadul Hasan and political secretary to Chairman PPP Jamil Soomro was also present on the occasion.

Spokesperson Senator Farhatullah Babar said that the chairman PPP condemned the registration of terrorism cases against the tenants and said the National Action Plan (NAP) and anti-terror laws are meant to crush militants and are not for grabbing land that belongs to the tenants who have been tilling for ages and has never belonged to security forces.

He said that the property rights of tenants was an old issue and recalled that over a decade ago the PPP took up the issue in the Human Rights Committee of the Senate which called for an end to the victimisation of tenants. It also said that since the land belonged to Punjab it was the responsibility of the provincial government to step in forcefully and effectively in resolving the land ownership dispute and protecting the rights of tenants.

The Senate report had also lamented the massive Human Rights violations of the tenants and the filing of false cases against them and recommended that the investigations into cases should be entrusted to agencies outside Okara.

But within days of the Senate body's recommendations another offensive was launched against the tenants, he said. He said that he will ask the PPP parliamentarians to raise the issue of implementation of the Parliament's recommendations regarding Okara farmlands as well as the issue of propriety rights to the tenants.

The chairman PPP demanded a bipartisan parliamentary probe into the barbaric incidents of torture of tenants. He said that he was shocked beyond measure that the security forces continued with atrocities against farmers in the Punjab with impunity because they refused to sign contracts to cede their land rights against the law. Earlier, PPP Information Secretary Qamar Zaman Kaira said that the affected people of Okara farmlands are struggling for their rights and their forefathers are living and cultivate on the lands. He said that protest is democratic right of these people.

He said that Punjab government has arrested 17 people including women of Okara farmlands and they demand of the government to release them immediately. He said Bilawal asked Latif Khosa to provide legal assistance to the people. He said that the PPP stands with these people and would raise their voice in and out of the Parliament.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/39168/>

VIOLENCE IN OKARA

Dawn, April 24th, 2016

MUCH as the powers that be may wish it was not so, sometimes the exploited classes will stand their ground. So it is with the Okara Military Farms, a saga that refuses to go away ever since it surfaced in the media about 15 years ago. The controversy centres on 17,000 acres in Punjab's 'canal colonies', and involves issues of patronage politics, state coercion and land rights that can be traced back to pre-Partition days when the British Indian Army — that acquired the area on lease in 1913 — refused to give ownership rights as promised to farmers working on the land.

The Pakistan Army inherited this holdover from the British and continued along the earlier pattern, ie a 50-50 sharecropping arrangement with the farmers, without too much by way of defiance from the latter. However, in 2000, during Gen Musharraf's time — military governments are an ever-reliable catalyst for expansion of the khakis' economic interests — the authorities in Okara introduced a new system whereby tenant farmers had to pay rent in cash rather than in kind.

This would, in effect, turn the sharecroppers, who had tilled the land for generations, into contract labour who could be evicted from the farms on short notice. That laid the foundations of a resistance movement led by a farmers' union called Anjuman-i-Mazareen-i-Punjab, which has repeatedly been countered by the state through brute force.

The state's actions this time around make it clear that it will spare no weapon at its disposal to crush the 'rebellion', even cynically using the pretext of the National Action Plan to justify preventing an AMP demonstration. Subsequently, 4,000 tenant farmers were booked on various charges, including under the Anti-Terrorism Act, for allegedly blocking GT Road and causing injuries to policemen through aerial firing.

There have also been dark murmurings by local authorities of 'no-go' areas in the vicinity. One would imagine that some recalcitrant farmers who refuse to give up their customary right to the land — and whose claim to that land by some accounts is stronger than that of the military, notwithstanding the latter's sense of entitlement — are a threat to the country's peace.

It is all very well to counter militancy in its naked, violent manifestations, but it is equally important to address the socioeconomic distortions that have laid the groundwork for extremist tendencies in the first place. This is not the way to win the larger war.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1253993>

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

JAMALI ACCUSES SINDH OF RUINING BALOCHISTAN LANDS

The Express Tribune, April 11th, 2016.

Mohammad Zafar

QUETTA: The Sindh government has deliberately blocked the flow of the Right Bank Outfall Drain (RBOD) by closing the siphon at its border, intensifying water-logging and salinity in the Kirthar Canal Command Area in Balochistan, former chief minister Mir Jan Mohammad Jamali said on Sunday.

Jamali, a sitting MPA who also served as a former speaker of the provincial assembly, was talking to newsmen in the border town of Gandhaka in Nasseerabad division.

He said he had discussed the issue with people who suffered floods after recent rains and also with people who were hit by artificial floods created by influential people.

He said that Sindh's Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah had inked an agreement with the government of Balochistan, promising to keep the siphon open and allowing an unobstructed flow of the outfall drain towards the sea.

The Sindh chief minister, Jamali said, had violated accords reached with Balochistan on three separate occasions and now tens of thousands of fertile land was being threatened by salinity and water logging.

He estimated that more than 40,000 acres of highly fertile land had been destroyed because of the hostile attitude of Sindh.

Jamali recalled that the RBOD had been planned and built after a consensus among all the provinces and it was designed by prestigious international firms to combat the twin menace of water logging and salinity in the Naseerabad division in Balochistan and Jacobabad district of Sindh.

The outfall drain benefits both Sindh and Balochistan and is meant to reclaim land lost to salinity and waterlogging, Jamali told newsmen.

According to him, tens of thousands of people had been rendered jobless after their fertile lands became barren in the wake of Sindh's obstruction of the normal flow of the drain.

Incidentally, massive seepage occurred in canal water in the upper reaches of Shahpur desert because of a structural fault in the construction of Pat Feeder. Experts estimated that nearly 300 cusecs of precious irrigation water was going down the drain, causing water logging and salinity in Sohbatpur district of Naseerabad division alone.

Balochistan's irrigation department said that more than 200,000 acres of land had already been destroyed because of the Pat Feeder seepage.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1082445/outfall-drain-blocked-jamali-accuses-sindh-of-ruining-balochistan-lands>

LAND RECORD MADE TAMPER-PROOF TO END PATWARI CULTURE, SAYS QAIM

Dawn, April 13th, 2016

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah has said that with the computerisation of land record, the record of rights had been protected from it being tampered with and with it the harassment by Patwaris had come to an end.

The chief minister, who was addressing the computerised land record launching ceremony here in one of the revenue service centres in Clifton on Tuesday, said that some people used to forge land record but now after the computerisation, it could not be tampered with as the record of rights had been protected.

“This is the beginning of a new era of transparency, corruption-free environment and improved public service delivery, which is very close to the heart of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, whose vision has now been transferred into a reality,” he added.

Pointing towards the director general of the National Accountability Bureau sitting with him on the stage, Syed Qaim Ali Shah said that NAB was running revenue officers from pillar to post for one or other illegality, but now the computerisation of land record had not only reduced the work of NAB, but had given relief to revenue officers.

During the visit to the service centre, the chief minister entered his name in the computer system and got a certified copy of his five-acre land located in Khairpur.

Members of the Board of Revenue Rizwan Memon and Zulfikar Shah took the chief minister around the office and showed him their entire establishment and servers.

The chief minister was informed that it was a centralised system and now Khatedars (account holders) could get computerised certified copies of their land record from any service centre.

Rizwan Memon said that the project had been conceived by former president Asif Ali Zardari during his tenure and it was completed at a cost of Rs4.59 billion. It took 4.5 years to computerise 4.5 million entries of Form 7-A, 7-B, Form-2 and other documents.

Zulfikar Shah, briefing the chief minister, said that 90 per cent of total land record had been computerised while remaining record which was burnt during riots broke out on the death of Benazir Bhutto was also being reconstructed and would be computerised soon.

He said Sindh was the first province in the country which had introduced the search of land record on mobile phones also.

He said starting from Karachi the BoR was replacing outdated microfilming technology for saving registration deeds with modern digital scanning unit. This meant that registration documents would now be delivered back to the people within three days instead of six months, he added.

Mr Shah said that this facility would be extended to the rest of the province by the end 2016. Besides, he said on the instruction of the chief minister the task of automation of all sub-registrar offices had been assigned to National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra), which would be completed by June 2017 while the task of introducing Electronic Stamps had also been given to Nadra, which would be completed by June 2016.

Mr Shah said that the Sindh government being first in Pakistan was also linking maps with land record and 60 per cent of the work had been completed while the remaining work would be done by december 2016.

Responding to the questions of journalists, the chief minister said there must be a thorough inquiry into Panama Papers leaks but the decision to lay a siege to the house of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was against political norms and ethics.

He said the scandal was being debated in the National Assembly and it would be a wrong tradition to besiege the house of the prime minister as political issues must be handled politically, not personally.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1251771/land-record-made-tamper-proof-to-end-patwari-culture-says-qaim>

GOING DIGITAL: CM INAUGURATES LAND RECORD COMPUTER CENTRE

The Express Tribune, April 13th, 2016.

KARACHI: This is the new era of transparency and corruption-free environment, said Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah.

He was addressing the media after the inauguration ceremony of computerised land records at Revenue Office Clifton.

People used to forge land records. Now, the records cannot be tampered with, he said. With the computerised system the harassment by patwaris (land revenue officials) will come to an end. "I hope they [patwaris] would not go on strike as the new system has stopped their business of minting illegal money," he said on a lighter note.

During the visit of the service centre, the CM punched his name in the computer system and got a certified copy of his five-acre land in Khairpur.

The system is centralised, people can get computerised certified copies of their land from any service centre, said Board of Revenue (BoR) member Rizwan Memon.

The project was started by former president Asif Ali Zardari and has been completed at the cost of Rs4.6 billion. It took four and half years to computerise almost five million records, he claimed. Ninety per cent of the records have been computerised, he added.

The task of automation of all sub-registrars' offices has also been assigned to National Database and Registration Authority. This project will be completed by June 2017, said BoR member Zulfikar Shah. Sindh government is also linking maps with land records, 60% of which has been completed. The project would be completed by December 2016.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1083552/going-digital-cm-inaugurates-land-record-computer-centre/>

LAND RECORDS

Dawn, April 14th, 2016

PAKISTAN is a country where land provides not just a source of livelihood in an agricultural economy but is also considered a family's most solid asset. Yet for decades, the records of possession and establishing ownership have been governed by archaic and inconvenient colonial-era systems, hinged at the most basic level on the office of the patwari, or the keeper of (manual) records.

As a group, patwaris are as notorious for the latha on which they record land details as they are for their tendency to indulge in corruption and extortion. This background is key to understanding the significance of the step taken over recent years in computerising land records province by province. Once the process is complete, the number of people that the exercise will benefit will be very high.

An advertising campaign currently being run by the Sindh Board of Revenue, for example, concerns the launching of a computerised land record facility. It refers to 4.5 million entries of land records, seven million landowners, and 27 service centres in each district headquarters.

It boasts of being able to issue for a small fee the required record on paper that has security features, through a database integrated with that of Nadra, the national database authority. A similar project was initiated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as far back as 2013, and the initial entries have more or less been completed.

Punjab too recently completed the first steps of the process, and the Land Records Management Information System has been up and running for a while. Only in Balochistan, it seems, has little progress been made on this front.

People using these facilities have reported some glitches, such as inconsistencies over demarcations, overlaps in titles etc. These, however, were only to be expected and, in fact, throw into starker focus the very need for the project of computerisation in the first place.

he first step to controlling chaos is to put records down in a manner that can be cross-referenced; over time, as people report errors and inconsistencies, the record will eventually be straightened out and the process simplified — much as the functioning of Nadra has been smoothed over the years.

provincial governments that have undertaken the effort deserve commendation, holding out the hope as they are of a time when the patwari becomes a relic of the past and when obtaining land records is no longer a prohibitively difficult process.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1251943/land-records>

ORANGE LINE: ONE-THIRD OF LAND YET TO BE PROCURED

The Express Tribune, April 15th, 2016.

Imran Adnan

LAHORE: Nearly one-third of land needed in connection with the Orange Line Metro Train (OLMT) project is yet to be procured, The Express Tribune learnt on Thursday.

Adviser to chief minister Khwaja Ahmad Hassaan said the government had already disbursed Rs9 billion to claimants on account of relocation compensation out of the Rs13 billion earmarked for land acquisition. He said compensation claims worth around Rs2 billion were being processed.

Hassaan said compensation would be awarded as soon as claimants provided complete documentation.

He said the Lahore Development Authority (LDA), the Revenue Department and other agencies were processing cases related to the project on priority and no OLMT compensation claim was pending with public departments. Hassaan said the land acquisition drive had hit a roadblock due to intra-family disputes, inheritance claims and litigation.

However, the settlement of cases being processed would soon clear a major chunk of land, he said.

The government had kick started the land acquisition drive on February 1. Initially, it was announced that the government would complete the land acquisition drive in a week.

Speaking about the release of first tranche of the project's loan, Hassaan said, all formalities had been completed and bills had been submitted to the Chinese.

China was fulfilling domestic requirements and devising standard operating procedures (SOPs) for streamlining the payment process, he said. Hassaan said Pakistan would soon receive the first loan tranche of around Rs12 billion soon.

OLMT contractors have indicated that the delay in acquiring land would have a negative impact on the project's timeline keeping in view the failure of work to commence on 30 percent of its track.

This includes the construction of two underground stations near The Mall. The portion is said to be the most time-consuming and technically-challenging portion of the project.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1084804/orange-line-one-third-of-land-yet-to-be-procured/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 4th TO APRIL 10th 2016
LAND RECORD COMPUTERISATION: AN IMPETUS FOR AGRIBUSINESSES
Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, April 4th, 2016

Ahmad Fraz Khan

THE Land Record Management Information System has recently computerised Punjab's entire record of 55m-acre, while making the database current. The system will significantly improve the security of ownership and reduce land litigation.

By making land conveyance convenient, the LRMIS will also facilitate banks in extending credit to farmers.

No doubt, the land computerisation should improve the social condition in Punjab's 134 tehsils, where power is traditionally embedded in the land, and, as a result, so is litigation and many social ills.

After the computerisation, the powers of dreaded patwari — the lower rung revenue officer, known for manipulation of land record for money and their influence — have been clipped. With land going online, those powers should stand substantially reduced, especially if the new system is made to work efficiently.

So far, Conceding the teething problems, the managers term both of them initial system hiccups, which would be removed with the the farmers are cautious; the record put online does not fully serve them for two reasons: the system is still being run by humans who have the same ambitions as the patwaris, and the record has certain loopholes which are exploitable by those managing it.

Conceding the teething problems, LRMIS managers term them as initial system hiccups which will be removed with the passage of time. One only hopes that these problems wither away early.

The initial problems need to be resolved quickly for accurate basis of land taxation, improved land surveys, passing on the official benefits to farmers, which would actually multiply the benefits of this land digitisation.

The new system could bring in two immediate benefits: bank credit lines and agricultural planning. The entire land record has been a suspect with the banking collateral being open to manipulation at any stage, deterring many banks and other formal lenders from agricultural financing. With this computer-based documentation, banks should find lending much easier, backed by a solid collateral.

The new system would also open a new vista in marketing and investment on land, the entire land's location and its ownership being only a click away. The government subsidies, if any, could be directly transferred to farmers and their produce sale, especially the one landing in official stocks, could directly be transferred to the farmer concerned.

If the same system is linked to satellite systems, it would not be difficult for the provincial government to read crop position of not only the province, but of individual farmers as well. This data could then easily form basis for more credible national and provincial planning by various tiers.

One could caution some major risks in the system itself. The Indian experience at Karnataka only exposed the ills it could introduce in the system: illiterate farmers unable to utilise it properly, which accentuated their problems; hackers finding one point entry to manipulate the entire data; and a new breed of patwaris in the form of system operators fleecing the hapless farmers.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1249743>

PR GETS 3,500 ACRES OF ENCROACHED LAND VACATED

Business Recorder April 4, 2016

Showing zero tolerance against illegal state land grabbers across the country, the Pakistan Railways has so far got vacated over 3,500 acres of its land from encroachers during the last four years.

“A total of 3,500 acres of Railways land has been retrieved and regularised till last year after a detailed survey and subsequent campaign launched against encroachers on directives of the Supreme Court,” official sources in the Ministry of Railways told APP. The anti-encroachment drive, they said, was being monitored by the divisional superintendents, railway headquarters and at the level of ministry.

Besides a comprehensive policy was in place to prevent further encroachments, making railway officers and police responsible ‘in case of any new encroachment.’

During the current campaign, they said around 800 persons were arrested in the anti-encroachment operations and were being trailed in the courts after retrieving the land from their unauthorised occupation.

To a question, the sources said the issue regarding illegal occupation and possession of Railway land by government departments and institutions had also been taken up with concerned departments. “It is an ongoing exercise, which will continue till the elimination of encroachments.”

The present government had initiated a project for computerisation of Railway land record and the work had been entrusted to M/s Urban Unit for harmonising the land record with data of the provincial revenue department, they added.

Accordingly, they said, a Project Management Unit (PMU) had been set up in the Railway Headquarters Office, Lahore and preliminary surveys were in progress. The project would be helpful in identifying the encroached land, safeguarding the railway property and facilitating transparent commercial utilisation of the surplus sites to their optimum business potential, Sources added.

They said that the government had shown zero tolerance against encroachments of all kinds and had taken across the board transparent anti-encroachment measures in all the provinces, as a result of which there has been no fresh unlawful occupation on Railway land.

To another question, the sources said that the most important achievement of the present government was optimal commercial use of vacated lands through short term leasing, from which it generated around Rs4,194 million incomes during last four years.

“Another important milestone of our government is the initiative to computerise the land record, which will provide a transparent database of encroachments, computerised monitoring system besides help facilitate the anti-encroachment measures,” they remarked.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/32412/>

15M PAGES OF 29 DISTRICTS REVENUE RECORD COMPUTERISED, CM TOLD

Dawn, April 6th, 2016

Habib Khan Ghori

KARACHI: The Sindh Board of Revenue (BoR), taking a lead in computerising revenue record in the country, has covered all the 29 districts of the province with over 15 million pages in its data.

Through this system, which will become functional formally on Monday when Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah will inaugurate it at Hyderabad, people will be rid of the Patwari system.

The computerisation of revenue record has revealed that in the province 78 per cent are small farmers, who own less than four acres, 16 per cent possess four to 16 acres and six per cent with 16 to 100 acres while the biggest land owners possessing over 100 acres are 0.34 per cent.

This was stated by Senior Member of Board of Revenue Rizwan Memon while giving a presentation to the chief minister on computerisation of the revenue record here at CM House on Tuesday.

The presentation was attended by chief secretary Siddique Memon, secretary to CM Iqbal Durrani, BoR member Zulfikar Shah and others revenue officers concerned.

Highlighting details of the record, the senior member said the revenue record of 29 districts comprising over 15 million pages had 90 per cent been completed by nine data entry firms by scanning documents and making their index.

The inherent flaws with the revenue record were also rectified by adopting a proper procedure, Zulfikar Shah said.

Giving examples of the flaws, he said that 35 per cent flaws were found in the division of shares; 30 per cent record had missing survey numbers; three per cent errors of calculation; one per cent record lacked entries of sellers and buyers and two per cent entries were made without attestation.

The chief minister recalled that the record of about 850 dehs was burnt just after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

“What have you done to retrieve that record,” The CM asked the senior member Rizwan Memon who replied that a large portion of that record had been traced out from microfilming units.

“We have retrieved and computerised the record of 400 dehs and still working on tracing the record of the remaining 450 dehs,” he said.

BoR member Zulfikar Shah said that major forms which had been computerised were village Form-1 meant for registered lands; Village Form-II meant for register of land used/granted or assigned for non-agricultural purposes, Village Form VII Part-A, which is record of rights of agricultural lands; Village Form VII Part-B meant for mutation register and Property Register (it is maintained in Karachi showing details of land separately held from government and municipality and Property Card which is maintained in all city survey areas except Karachi in place of property register).

He said that with computerisation of revenue record a very interesting data had been collected that showed that 78 per cent were small farmers who owned less than four acres.

Replying to a question of the chief minister, the BoR member said that 76 per cent of land was owned by males and nine per cent was owned by females while 15 per cent land was owned by members of the family jointly.

He said that for the first time in Pakistan mobile application ‘Sindh Zameen’ had been launched through which land record could be accessed. More than 80,000 people had utilised this facility, he added.

Mr Shah said that they had established 27 service centres, of them 25 had been functionalised in the district headquarters and the remaining four would be made operational by the end of this month (April, 2016).

Talking about the facilities available at the services centre, Zulfikar Shah said that the copy of land record could be obtained from any service centre through modern central database.

“A specialised security based paper with multiple security features and QR code has been used to prevent forgery.”

Talking about a data centre at Karachi, he said that it had been established storing largest Sindhi language database in the world with seven Tera Bytes (TB) data comprising more than 15 million pages of land record. “We have 108 qualified IT staff for all 27 service centres,” he said.

He said that conversion of microfilmed data of 75 million pages into digital data was under way which would be available online by the end of 2016.

The BoR member said that digital maps of 93 dehs of Karachi division and maps of remaining districts of the province had been linked with the land record database.

The chief minister directed the Board of Revenue to make their call centre functional to address errors, if any. “You must have a feedback system to rectify errors and mistakes, if any,” he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1250186>

LAND GRABBING: POLICE GIVEN 25 DAYS TO RID ALIGARH HOUSING SOCIETY OF ENCROACHERS

The Express Tribune, April 7th, 2016

KARACHI: Karachi police have been given 25 days to get rid of the encroachers who have illegally occupied parts of Aligarh Muslim University Old Boys’ Cooperative Housing Society.

On Wednesday, the Sindh High Court (SHC) gave Karachi AIG Mushtaq Mahar and Malir SSP Rao Anwar 25 days to clear the land from encroachments. Headed by SHC chief justice Sajjad Ali Shah, the division bench also directed both the police officers to submit compliance report by the next hearing.

The bench was hearing an appeal filed by the owners of residential and commercial plots in the housing society. Since 2010, the appellants have been litigating in order to get their plots retrieved from the clutches of the land grabbers.

The appellants, including Raza Muhammad, said that the Aligarh Muslim University Old Boys’ Cooperative Housing Society is one of the oldest housing projects in the city that spreads over six blocks measuring 233 acres. The society has 1,530 members.

The society was registered in 1968 and the encroachment began in 2005, said the petitioners. It took the authorities two years to get two blocks – 9A1 and 9A2 – vacated from the clutches of the encroachers on court’s orders but the remaining four – 5A, 5B, 7A and 7B – have yet to be vacated, said their petition.

The appellants recalled that the court had ordered the provincial and local authorities and the law enforcers, including the Rangers, to get the remaining blocks vacated on February 13, 2014. However, the authorities failed to comply with these directives. Then on December 23, 2014, the court granted five more weeks as a last chance to retrieve the land.

Later, the appellants moved a contempt application against the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation's anti-encroachment cell director, the land utilisation department and other authorities for their alleged failure to implement the court's order. On March 11, the bench directed the alleged contemnors to comply with its previous order otherwise contempt proceedings shall be initiated against them.

During Wednesday's proceedings, the officials told the court that a meeting of Malir district deputy commissioner, the Mukhtiarkar and the police authorities was convened to resolve the matter. It was decided to carry out an operation against encroachments on April 5 but the plan was not executed due to lack of back-up support from the Rangers, they added.

This visibly irked the bench members, who came down hard on the police authorities. Justice Shah observed that if the police were showing an inability to carry out minor tasks then why not hand over the whole city to the Rangers.

The court ordered the AIG Mahar and SSP Anwar to get the encroachments removed within 25 days. The officers will file a progress report by May 4, when the matter will be taken up again.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1080171/land-grabbing-police-given-25-days-to-rid-aligarh-housing-society-of-encroachers/>

ACQUIRED LAND TO BE PROVIDED FOR MOSQUE RELOCATION

The Express Tribune, April 8th, 2016.

Rana Tanveer

LAHORE: The government will provide land for a mosque at Nicholson Road it wants to demolish to make way for the Orange Line Metro Train Project.

The administration of Masjidul Munawwar has the support of Jammatud Dawa which is facilitating negotiations with the government in this regard.

The three-storey mosque was originally built on four marlas. Later, the second storey was expanded by including over the rooftop of Hanumaan Temple. Khawaja Ahmed Hassaan, incharge of land acquisition for the project, told The Express Tribune making alternative arrangements for places of worship in the way of public welfare projects was standard practice.

He said Masjidul Munawwar would be constructed on Empress Road near Hujjaj Centre. He said land for this purpose had been acquired.

Haji Karamat, president of the administration committee of the mosque, told The Express Tribune that they would not surrender possession of the mosque till the government made available the alternative place.

He said Hassaan had promised them an alternative place but nothing substantial had materialised in this regard so far.

He said a meeting for this had been scheduled for Thursday but it had been postponed. He said that the mosque was originally constructed on four marlas but the first floor took eight marlas after the inclusion of the temple roof. He said the

first floor housed Tanveerul Quranul Hakeem seminary. He said on Fridays, the space was used for women to offer prayers.

He said the seminary building had been registered in 1985. He said the Evacuee Trust Property Board had not objected to the expansion.

Yahya Mujahid, a spokesperson for the JD, told The Express Tribune that the government had promised to provide land and build a mosque to make up for the mosque's demolition.

Fauzia Sheikh, owner of the land acquired for the new mosque, told The Express Tribune that the government had acquired the land for a public welfare project.

"They cannot hand it over to another party to build a mosque," she said.

She said the government had acquired her 20 marla land and was now giving six out of it for the mosque.

She said the government had acquired the land for Rs2.6 million per marla while the market price of the land was Rs6 million. She said she was willing to return payment for the land to the government to keep the portion of the land not required for the train project. She said she had also filed a petition in Lahore High Court against the move.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1080684/development-imperative-acquired-land-to-be-provided-for-mosque-relocation/>

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May 2016

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

MAN KILLED, SIX INJURED IN CLASH OVER LAND

Dawn, May 23rd, 2016

BADIN: A man was killed and six others suffered injuries when two groups of the Mallah community armed with axes clashed over a disputed piece of land in Mola Dino Mallah village late on Saturday night.

Abdul Majeed, 26, died on the spot while the injured victims, identified as Dodo, Haji, Haji Ahmed, Allah Jurio, Zulfiqar Ali and Arab, were taken to Golarchi taluka hospital from where they were shifted to Hyderabad Civil Hospital in critical condition.

SHO Burhan Dal said the groups belonging to Badin and Sujawal districts clashed over the disputed piece of land. FIRs against both the groups had not been registered yet but police had made some arrests.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1259998>

SC GIVES NAB TWO MONTHS TO COMPLETE PROBE INTO STATE LAND ALLOTMENT TO BAHRIA TOWN

Dawn, May 26th, 2016

Tahir Siddiqui

KARACHI: Expressing dissatisfaction over an interim inquiry report of the National Accountability Bureau on the allotment of land to the Bahria Town management by the Malir Development Authority, the Supreme Court on

Wednesday directed the National Accountability Bureau to complete its investigation on the matter within two months and file it in court.

A three-member bench of the SC, headed by Justice Amir Hani Muslim, gave the direction while hearing a set of applications against illegal allotment of state land and adjustment of land of 43 Dehs by the MDA.

NAB prosecutor general Waqas Qadeer Dar and investigation officer Qamar Abbas Abbasi filed an interim report submitting that the bureau had not yet been able to complete the inquiry.

After going through the report the court observed that whatever the probe so far made was “not sufficient to address the issues raised by this Court with regard to allotment of land by Government of Sindh to MDA and its subsequent disposal by MDA”.

The court, however, on a request of the NAB chief law officer extended the deadline for completing the inquiry for two months.

The court in its order said that the inquiry must contain answers to whether the Sindh government allotted the state land to the MDA under any legal instrument; whether the possession of allotted land was handed over to the MDA in terms of Section 10 (4) of the Colonization and Disposal of Government Lands (Sindh) Act, 1912;

Whether the issuance of the notification declaring 43 Dehs as controlled area of the MDA created any title in its favour; whether MDA prepared and issued its master plan after declaring the impugned land to be its controlled area; whether MDA was authorised to exchange private land within its controlled area with the state land; whether MDA handed over possession of 11,000 acres of state land to private land developers and builder which was neither leased out nor handed over by the Sindh government to MDA; whether exchange of about 11,000 acres of the valuable state land located on the Superhighway by MDA with the land of the private persons on the periphery under the garb of exchange and or consolidation scheme was in the interest of the state;

Whether Baria Town operators owned and possessed land within the limits of district Malir on the date of inviting applications for allotment from public at large for the housing schemes through the media; whether before inviting applications for allotments from public at large, Bahria Town and other private persons got their housing schemes approved from the MDA through the Malir deputy commissioner; and whether Bahria Town or any other land developers were in physical possession of the land in excess of the land given to them by the MDA.

The bench ordered NAB to proceed with the inquiry “in an independent manner without being influenced from any quarter”.

The order said: “The inquiry in addition to other factors shall probe into the questions formulated hereinabove. For such purpose it shall examine entire record, including the revenue record, which shall be provided by the relevant authority (Senior Member Board of Revenue) to the officers of the NAB who are entrusted with the inquiry in the matter.”

The application against the MDA was filed by a civil rights campaigner who stated that the authority was making illegal adjustment of the land to favour the Bahria Town management by purchasing the land at lower prices and transferring it to prime locations of the city.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1260725>

PAC WANTS ENCROACHED LAND RETRIEVED FROM BAHRIA ENCLAVE
Dawn, May 27th, 2016

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on Thursday asked the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to demarcate and retrieve land worth Rs2.3 billion in Kurri village, which has been 'encroached' by Bahria Enclave.

An audit report on the CDA account for the year 2013-14 pointed out that Bahria Enclave had encroached on the 1,542 kanal state land.

The auditors added that the civic agency on November 7, 2012, issued a final notice to Bahria Enclave, asking it to vacate the land or face the consequence but later turned a blind eye to the encroachment

Maqbool Gondal, the director general audit, told the PAC meeting that under section 49-C (1&2) of the CDA Ordinance 1960, the deputy commissioner CDA could retrieve the encroached land as the section also empowered him to demolish properties built on any encroached land.

He said the tehsildar CDA in November 2012 had issued a final notice to Bahria Town asking it to vacate the land within seven days but the authority could not retrieve the land even after three-and-a-half years.

The report claimed that Bahria Enclave had also constructed a road on the encroached land.

The committee directed the CDA to demarcate the land and then retrieve it from the private housing scheme and submit a report.

The CDA informed the PAC meeting that a plot had been allotted to the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) of former Jamaat-i-Islami leader Professor Khursheed Ahmed at the rate of Re1 annual rent.

The plot (No 19 at F-7 Markaz) was allotted to the JI leader in 1981 for the construction of a building for the institute.

Later, as a special case, the CDA board allowed the IPS to construct a shopping mall on the ground floor.

In January 2008, the board decided that the commercialisation of the building would be subject to the demolition and recreation of the building and after payment of the commercialisation charges.

The audit report said the CDA did not charge the commercialisation fee from the allottee who in August 2012 transferred the plot to a private party, resulting in a Rs462 million loss to the national exchequer.

The CDA informed the PAC that a private company constructed 122 flats on the land and then sold it to different people. The authority informed the PAC that the IPS transferred the land to the private party on its own and without bringing the matter into the notice of the civic agency.

According to the CDA, the decision to commercialise the plot was illegal and the authority had issued a charge-sheet to the officials concerned.

The CDA official told the committee that the plot was transferred to the private construction company in accordance with a routine procedure through the one-window operation.

The PAC chairman, Syed Khursheed Ahmed Shah, expressed annoyance over the matter and said how a plot meant for the institute could be sold for the construction of flats. He directed the CDA to submit a report within a fortnight.

As per the audit report, due to the non-receipt of the capital value tax, delayed surcharges and late payment from the owner of Safa Gold Mall, the national exchequer faced a loss of Rs943 million.

The CDA on December 31, 2009, auctioned a plot in F-7 Markaz at the rate of Rs321,000 per square yard. The total cost of the plot was Rs1.2 billion. But the allottee did not deposit the premium of the plot, capital value tax, advance income tax and delayed charges.

The PAC chairman referred the matter to a committee constituted to examine the CDA audit objections which would take up the matter at its forthcoming meeting next month.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1260909>

SENATE BODY WANTS CHECK ON 'LAND MAFIA' DESTROYING MANGROVES

Dawn, May 27th, 2016

Imran Ayub

KARACHI: The Senate Committee on Climate Change on Thursday expressed its serious concern over mangroves depletion in Sindh's coastal areas observing that 'land mafia' was destroying the province's natural resources.

The committee urged the Sindh government to "weed out" the mafia that was fast converting mangroves forests into housing societies.

The committee shared its findings with the media at Qasr-i-Naz after its members visited Karachi's coastal areas in the last phase of their visit to the metropolis. Describing the situation of the coastal belt as "depressing", they also pointed towards the deteriorating state of the marine environment.

"Continuous unlawful land-grabbing within the mangroves forest areas in the coastal belt of Sindh has exacerbated the climate-vulnerability of the country's largest city, which has exposed the people and their livelihoods to the risks of storm surges, cyclones and sea intrusion," the Senate committee's chairman, Mir Muhammad Yousaf Badini, told reporters.

He said the committee's members had visited the coastal areas to take stock of the current state of pollution, deforestation and level of degradation of coastal and marine ecosystems, adding that they were shocked to note that 500 million gallons of untreated water was released into the sea every day.

"These mangroves forests provide a strong natural defence against the exacerbating climate change-induced disasters in the shape of sea storms, cyclones, sea intrusion and erosion in coastal areas.

Besides, they provide nutrient-rich habitats for marine fisheries," Mr Badini said.

"The provincial forest, Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) and other relevant government authorities must wake up to the grim state of coastal areas and ecology and play their part to protect and conserve natural resources," he urged.

Mr Badini also vowed to work with the governments of Sindh and Balochistan to devise a mechanism and initiate policy measures for protecting coastal and marine ecosystems and further boost the mangroves forest cover to mitigate the vulnerability of coastal communities and their livelihoods to climate change risks.

A committee member, Nuzhat Sadiq, called for setting up treatment plants in industrial zones and on sewage drains from where industrial effluents and domestic sewage made their way into the sea.

“Complacency on this score by the relevant Sindh government authorities is no option and the provincial government should realise its role in this regard to show political leadership and interest in protecting the marine and coastal ecology from further devastation,” she said. Other senators and members of the committee who visited the coastal areas included Ahmed Hassan, Nighat Mirza, Gul Bushra, Saleem Zia, Sitara Ayaz and Samina Abid.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1260830>

INFRASTRUCTURE: ‘RURAL ROADS PROJECT CONTINUING SUCCESSFULLY’

The Express Tribune, May 29th, 2016

LAHORE: Khadim-i-Punjab Rural Roads Programme, the biggest project of its kind, is making rapid progress, Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif said on Saturday.

He was talking to a delegation of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) lawmakers.

“Thousands of kilometres of roads have been repaired so far. Rs150 billion will be spent on the project. Such a huge programme of repair and rehabilitation of rural roads is unprecedented in the history of the country. Pakkian Sarkan-Saukhay Painday will bring a revolution in rural life,” he said.

The chief minister said modern means of communication played an important role in accelerating trade and economic activities. “The government is spending billions of rupees on infrastructure development. Khadim-i-Punjab Rural Roads Programme is of vital importance for the stability and development of rural economy and is a game-changer in this regard,” the CM said.

He said that repair and rehabilitation of rural roads was promoting economic and trade activities in rural areas. “The programme will directly benefit farmers and the people living in rural areas. New job opportunities have been created in villages after the implementation of the programme. Thousands of people have benefited from these,” he said.

Shahbaz Sharif said that maintenance and protection of the roads constructed under the programme was a national responsibility. “There is a need for adopting effective measures for this purpose. Progress and prosperity of the people living in villages is the objective of the PML-N government,” he said. The CM said that development projects were being completed transparently.

He said that billions of rupees had been saved in the completion of development projects. “The government is working sincerely for the welfare of the people. Those criticising public welfare projects are not sincere to the people,” he said.

The CM said that a journey of progress and prosperity had started under the leadership of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. “The people of the country will not be hoodwinked. They will not allow anyone to hamper the process of progress and development,” he said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1112199/infrastructure-rural-roads-project-continuing-successful>

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

CHILAS JIRGA REACHES KOHISTAN TO SETTLE BOUNDARY DISPUTE

Dawn, May 16th, 2016

Nisar Ahmad Khan

MANSEHRA: The residents of Kohistan ended their sit-in on Karakoram Highway temporarily after elders of Thor village of Chilas reached Harban area of the district along with cattle and women to settle the boundary dispute between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan according to local traditions.

“It is a great breakthrough that people of Thor reached Harban along with women and cattle to settle the dispute as both tribes, Thor and Harban, are claiming ownership of the disputed eight kilometres land at the boundary between KP and GB,” Fazl-i-Khaliq, the deputy commissioner Kohistan, told journalists on Sunday.

Earlier in the day, ulema, elders and tribal people including 20 women reached Harban from Thor along with cattle and met with the local elders, asking them to settle the issue according to local customs.

The tribesmen of Thor were led by Dilbar Jan, who had lost his son in clashes with Harban tribe over the dispute.

The elders and ulema of Harban accepted the arrival of Thor tribe and extended hospitality as a gesture of goodwill and didn't stage sit-in on Karakoram Highway.

Assadullah Qureshi, the chairman of action committee, announced that a jirga of their tribes would be held on Monday (Today) to settle the land dispute and other related issues.

He said that as long as their guests (tribesmen of Thor) were present in their area, they would not stage sit-in. A joint strategy would be evolved to force the federal government to make public the report of one-man commission on ownership of disputed land between KP and GB.

The deputy commissioner said that a five-member jirga of both sides had been active for the last many days to settle the issue. Finally the people of Thor reached Harban for settlement for the issue once for all, he added.

Kohistanis have threatened last week that they would block Karakoram Highway on May 15 permanently if the federal government didn't make public the one-man boundary commissions report.

Attaullah, a local resident, told journalists that the arrival of Harban elders manifested the success of talks. “Our people honour women. The bringing of cattle means that they are ready to pay Diyat (blood money) of those three people, who were killed in the clashes some three years ago,” he said.

Attaullah said that four tribesmen, three from Harban and one from Thor, were killed in the clashes. “Now Diyat of two people can be paid in accordance with local customs and traditions,” he added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1258683>

SUSPECTED LAND GRABBERS BEHIND MANDI BHAUDDIN UNREST, CLAIMS LOCAL LANDLORD

Dawn , May 17 , 2016

Imran Gabol

LAHORE: A group of suspected land grabbers has been behind the Mandi Bahauddin village unrest, claimed a local landlord, Amanullah.

“Some five to seven men are spreading baseless rumours against the Christian community, which has been living here for around a century. There has been complete harmony among the local Muslims and Christians till recently,” Amanullah told Dawn by phone on Monday.

The landlord elaborated that the ‘miscreants’ first tried to acquire land inhabited by the Christian community at throwaway prices, failing that, they launched a hate campaign to acquire the prime location.

Tension reportedly surfaced in Chak-44 of Mandi Bahauddin when some individuals started spreading rumours around a month ago that a sweeper employed with a health facility in the town had committed blasphemy.

In April, Imran Masih, a sweeper employed at a rural health centre in Mandi Bahauddin was reported to have played a YouTube video of a Christian leader criticising Muslims in his speech.

Masih’s colleagues also reported the incident to the village prayer leader, Maulvi Imran, who started instigating locals attending his sermons. The situation forced Masih to flee the village.

“Some miscreants were also members of the local mosque committee, and wanted to grab the land from the minority community,” added the landlord.

The matter was reported to the District Police Officer (DPO) Raja Basharat. The DPO constituted a six member committee consisting of three leaders each from Muslim and Christian communities to resolve the issue through dialogue, added Amanullah.

“The terms of reference drafted by the DPO were agreed by both sites.”

After the committee’s formation, some of its members started inciting the public over the issue, said the landlord.

“As the situation deteriorated, around 15 families left the village and moved to an undisclosed location. Later, 10 families came back to the village on the assurances of the police.”

The landlord added that between 60 and 70 policemen were also deployed in the village to prevent any untoward incident.

Punjab Inspector General of Police (IGP) Mushtaq Sukhera took notice of the unrest in the village and sought a report.

The DPO in his report available with Dawn stated that supervisor of Bosal rural health center, computer operator Mohsin Ali and dispenser Bilal Ahmed claimed to have watched a video on Masih’s phone which contained some blasphemous material.

The matter was eventually brought to the knowledge of elders of Chak-44 during Friday prayers, the elders started discussing the issue suggested that it should be reported to police or Muslim Ulema.

During the discussion at the mosque, a local man, who was a Christian convert to Islam asked for reasoning behind inciting hate against the local Christian community. He was asked to leave the premises.

The local man than approached the Christian community and started propagating that Muslims were gathering to attack them over the issue. The individual was arrested by the Police, and later sought forgiveness and apologised for his act.

“The situation in the area is under control and some people were involved in inciting public over the issue on social media,” said DPO Basharat.

He said the peace committee ensured the police and district administration that no one would take law into their hands.

Answering a query about the land grabbers he said that some people were involved in levelling baseless allegations.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1258901>

PRETENDING TO BE OWNER, MAN SELLS PART OF GOVT LAND

Dawn, May 17th, 2016

Shakeel Ahmed

MULTAN: Keeping the government in the dark, a man most likely through a fake deed has sold a portion of the 50-marla official residence of a deputy director of the Punjab Housing and Town Planning Agency (Phata).

Shafiqur Rehman sold two five-marla plots to brothers Makhan Shah and Dilawar Shah from the land of residence of Phata deputy director and office of the housing district secretary located in New Multan, a residential scheme launched by Phata in 1975. The pieces of land were registered in the name of the brothers on May 7.

According to the registration documents, Rehman and Riaz Ahmed had purchased a 45-marla piece in 1993 from the owners of the land from whom Phata had purchased the land in 1975 when the scheme was launched.

A residence was constructed for Phata officials and since then had been used for residential and official purposes; currently Assistant Director Rizwan Ahmed, who retired on April 30, was residing in the building.

Phata Deputy Director Rana Tariq Javed said he was told that registration document of a five-marla plot from the piece of land where the 50-marla residence was located was available in the market for sale.

He said he managed to get a copy of the registration document and contacted the land registration branch to verify it where it was revealed that the land was sold out by Shafiqur Rehman, who carried a 'registration document' from 1993 according to which he had purchased 45 marlas of the land along with Riaz Ahmed allegedly from its owners.

He said he immediately informed Shah Rukn-i-Alam police about the incident and simultaneously filed a suit in the civil court requesting the court to grant a stay. He said the department also pasted a public notice on the wall of the residence announcing the land could not be purchased as it belonged to the department.

Civil Judge Mansab Ali Joiya issued a stay order and summoned the respondents for further proceeding in the case.

To avert any attempt at possession from private individuals, the department's staff had been deployed at the site while police were also paying visits there particularly at night.

Shah Rukn-i-Alam Police Station Duty Officer Shahid Nawaz feigned ignorance about the incident.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1258840>

PROJECTS LIKE BAHRIA TOWN 'ARE ATOM BOMBS FOR THE POOR'

Dawn, May 17th, 2016

Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: Towns such as Bahria coming up in the rural areas around the city will change the demographics of Karachi. They are a big game being played in the name of development; they bulldoze the rights of the indigenous people and are like atom bombs to wipe off the poor population of this country.

These were some of the views expressed by writers, historians, researchers and experts at a seminar, 'Bahria Town: Development or Destruction', organised by Save Sindh Committee at PMA House here on Monday.

“Malik Riaz did not own even an inch of land when announcing the Bahria Town project and yet he collected billions through bookings. The land came later thanks to some big bribes for politicians,” said historian and chronicler Gul Hasan Kalmati.

“Today, work is under way on 23,300 acres though the target is grabbing 43,000 acres of land for this project because already we can see activities beyond the boundaries where there are some eight to nine Goths, or villages. Actually, their activities affect 45 such villages as their animals can no longer graze inside the boundary, etc,” he explained the repercussions that, according to the expert, were only just the ‘tip of the iceberg’.

“It is obvious why the PPP and PML-N have turned a blind eye towards Bahria Town but why are the sardars quiet?” said Kalmati. “That is because they have also been bought. Ten per cent from Bahria Town goes directly into their pockets,” he answered his own question. “The sardars are so powerful that had they wanted, there would have been no Bahria Town.”

“There are some 30 projects around the Superhighway that have been on hold for years due to the issue of utilities such as water and power reaching there. But for Bahria Town everything has been arranged, like getting power by laying a cable from Gadap and water lines and boring water that was meant for agriculture, and for which even a company as big as Nestle was not allowed to operate from there, is now diverted towards the town,” Kalmati said.

Architect, development expert and town planner Arif Hasan said that the rural areas around Karachi were reserved for agriculture in the first plan of Karachi in 1953, something that was repeated in the 1958 plan and the 1989 plan for 2000. “Some work on this started, too, but then it stopped due to pressure from land-grabbers,” he said.

About all this land being developed for townships for the elite, Arif Hasan shared that 350,000 plots lay vacant in Karachi. “This is how the rich invest, by holding land. Phase eight in the DHA was started some 28 years ago and most of it still remains bare. Now we are told that two million people will live in DHA City and 3.5 million will live in Bahria Town. Will they all come and live there like they do in Phase eight of the DHA? Live there or not, they will own land there, of course,” the development expert explained.

“Malik Riaz was able to acquire the most land here. He also has projects in Lahore and Islamabad but some transparency still exists there to stop him from having his way,” he said.

Arif Hasan had a few suggestions that can stop such high profile land-grabbers from having their way such as not allowing anyone to own more than 500 yards, not giving loan for constructing a house to anyone twice and heavy fee or tax on non-utilisation of land. “But will our assemblies pass such laws?” he said.

Finally, Baloch leader and president of the Awami Workers Party Yousuf Masti Khan said that Sindh’s weakness lay in its feudals willing to do anything to remain powerful. “But we the middle class and the poor must struggle against such elements. Your land is your ‘mother’. Do not let go of it so easily. Guard it with your life,” he said.

“Make no mistake about it. This is investment, not development. Had it been development, we would have seen the building of schools and hospitals for the indigenous people of these areas. Instead they are being driven away. Bahria Town and others like it are atom bombs for wiping out the poor,” he said.

Writer and columnist Abdul Khaliq Junejo and researcher and journalist Fahim Zaman also spoke.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1258793/projects-like-bahria-town-are-atom-bombs-for-the-poor>

SECTION 4 IMPOSED TO ACQUIRE LAND FOR MANSEHRA AIRPORT

Dawn, May 18th, 2016

MANSEHRA: The district administration here on Tuesday imposed Section 4 of Land Acquisition Act, 1894 to acquire 6,302-kanal in Tanawal area of Mansehra for the establishment of an airport.

A notification was also issued, asking Civil Aviation Authority to complete survey of the airport and other formalities in that regard.

“The land is likely to be required by government at public expense for public purpose namely for the construction/establishment of airport at Mansehra,” said the notification issued by district administration. The land of eight villages including Lissan Nawaz, Dhairy, Palsala, Bandi Koragwal, Kund, Sawan Mera, Jisgran Bala and Jisgran Pain is being acquired for the establishment of airport.

The copies of said notification are also dispatched to Senior Member Board of Revenue Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Hazara Commissioner, director commercial and estate HQCAA Karachi, senior joint director (estate) of CAA, BBIAP, Islamabad, the manager of Government Printing Press Peshawar for publication of government gazette and teshisldar of Mansehra.

Sources said that survey was started last year after MNA Mohammad Safdar, the son-i-law of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, announced the airport project.

“If the airport is established here, it would provide air travelling services to people of entire Hazara as Mansehra is situated at the centre of the division and people from Kohistan, Torghar, Battagram and Abbottabad can easily reach there,” said an official.

Meanwhile, the landowners and residents of Tanawal have expressed pleasure over the planned establishment of airport in the area and asked the government to fix reasonable price of their land being acquired of the project.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1259106>

POLICE SEEK DETENTION ORDERS FOR 188 ‘LAND GRABBERS’

Dawn, May 19th, 2016

Asif Chaudhry

LAHORE: The Lahore police have shortlisted 188 ‘land grabbers’ and sought from the district government their detention orders in order to bring about peace to the provincial capital.

“They have become a potential danger to law and order,” the Lahore DIG stated while sharing a list of the ‘criminals’ with the district coordination officer.

The DIG also dispatched with the list the crime record of the offenders. He said police had already sent 30 grabbers to jails.

They had created a nuisance and unrest in the city, he said adding that despite having a number of FIRs ‘to their credit’, the criminals were depriving citizens of their valuable properties.

The step was being taken after the criminal cases against the land grabbers brought no relief to the victims.

The crime of land grabbing had assumed alarming proportions since the real estate business touched its peak, particularly in the surroundings of Lahore where a number of housing societies were being developed, a senior police officer told Dawn.

In addition, he said, the same business also flourished in posh localities including Johar Town, Defence Road, Township, Green Town, Defence, Iqbal Town, Thokar Niaz Beg, Raiwind Road, etc.

He said the data collected by the Lahore police about the notorious land grabbers showed that the Cantonment division was at the top of the list.

The Cantt division is housing 83 land grabbers followed by City division (36), Model Town division (24) and Saddar division (20).

“And Green Town is highly notorious for the crime from where a number of land grabbers had been arrested but they got bails and again started doing the illegal practice,” he said.

Of them Mansha alias Bumb, Zulfiqar Ali, Shafi Joya and Rafiq Numberdar were arrested, the police official said.

Police got their detention orders from the city district government and sent them to jails.

Talking about Saddar division, he said many land grabbers had connections with the PML-N parliamentarians.

He said many of them were so influential that the victims didn't lodge cases against them.

Litigation had also increased manifold as the ‘criminals’ used to prepare forged documents to bring the actual landlord to the table for negotiations.

According to the list, he said, 18 land grabbers belonged to Iqbal Town division and seven to the Civil Lines division, the lowest number compared to other areas.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1259317>

BOR TOLD TO EXPEDITE SURVEY OF ILLEGALLY OCCUPIED LAND

Dawn, May 20th, 2016

Habib Khan Ghori

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah on Thursday directed the Board of Revenue to expedite the survey of over 66,000 acres of illegally occupied government land in the city so that action could be initiated to retrieve the land from its occupants.

“I will not allow anybody to illegally occupy even a single inch of the Sindh government [land],” said Mr Shah.

The chief minister issued this directive while presiding over a meeting held at CM House to review the progress made by the BoR in connection with the computerisation of land record as per directive of the Supreme Court.

The meeting was informed that the Karachi division had over 900,212 acres, of which 60,000 acres of government land had been illegally occupied by some provincial and federal organisations and housing authorities while 6,000 acres had been encroached up by private people.

Referring to the directives of the apex court, the chief minister asked the BoR about progress made so far and directed it to carry out instructions of the apex court for the completion of the computerisation of land record at the earliest.

BoR member Zulfikar Shah said the court directed the government that the land record of different dehs, which had been burnt after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, be verified at the taluka level.

“We have started verification of record in three talukas-Jamshoro, Matiari and Tando Allahyar,” he said, claiming that the record of 4,000 dehs out of 6,000 dehs across Sindh had been computerised so far.

“Just after the assassination of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, the record of 870 dehs was burnt. So far, the BoR was able to retrieve and computerise the record of 520 dehs while work on the remaining 350 dehs was in progress,” the BoR member added.

In response to a query by the chief minister, Mr Zulfiqar said that Karachi division had over 900,221 acres of land, of which 681,000 acres was categorised as ‘Na-class’ or un-surveyed land, while 219,221-acre land was surveyed. “Illegal occupation always appear on the un-surveyed lands. This is why 60,000 acres of the Sindh government are under the illegal occupation of different provincial and federal housing and development authorities including the Malir Development Authority, Karachi Port Trust and some housing authorities,” he said.

The BoR member added that 6,000 acres of government land had been illegally occupied by private people.

He said the computerised record had been verified by Tapedar, Mukhtiarkar and then by the assistant commissioner concerned, as this was the most reliable way of verification and computerisation.

Responding to the query about the Supreme Court observations regarding some fictitious entries in the record, Mr Zulfikar said the Khatedar had received over 6,000 certified copies of their record of rights from the 27 service centres of the Board of Revenue. However, no complaint had been received so far about any fictitious record, he said.

“We are custodian of the record of rights and are making sincere efforts to make the record genuine and perfect,” he said and assured the chief minister that not a single fictitious entry would be allowed in the record. However, he said, there might be some mistakes and teething problems in the system which could be rectified, if pointed out at any stage.

“We have also computerised thousands of Deh maps which reflect survey numbers along with a detailed map of the land, area and ownership. “We are going to launch them very soon, because this process has taken some time as most of the maps were damaged,” he said

The BoR member also showed different applications of the computerisation system to the chief minister on his laptop. The chief minister located on the digital map Faiz Mahal in Tapa Khairpur, the tomb of Dooleh Darya Khan, a commander of Kalhora rulers in Gajanpur Deh of Larkana and some other places. He expressed his satisfaction over the computerization work done by the BoR.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1259434>

‘60,000 ACRES OF GOVERNMENT LAND IN KARACHI IS ILLEGALLY OCCUPIED’

The Express Tribune, May 20th, 2016.

KARACHI: Around 60,000 acres of government land has been illegally occupied in Karachi division by various provincial and federal organisations, and housing authorities.

Karachi has over 900,212 acres of government land, of which 681,000 acres have not been surveyed, informed Board of Revenue (BoR) member Syed Zulfikar Shah. “The illegal occupation always appears on the lands which have not been surveyed,” he added, briefing a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah at CM House on Thursday.

The CM directed the BoR to expedite the survey work so that illegally occupied land belonging to the government can be retrieved. "I will not allow anybody to illegally occupy even a single inch of Sindh government [land]," he said.

Speaking about the computerisation of land records in the province, CM asked Zulfikar to update him regarding the progress. Supreme Court of Pakistan had directed that the burnt land records of different dehs must be verified at taluka level, said Zulfikar. "We have started verification work in three talukas Jamshoro, Matiari and Tando Allahyar."

There are 6,000 dehs all over Sindh, out of which record of 4,000 dehs has been computerised, claimed Zulfikar. After the assassination of Benazir Bhutto record of 870 dehs was burnt in riots and so far the BoR has retrieved and computerised the record of 720 dehs. The work on remaining 350 dehs is still in progress, he informed.

The computerised records have been verified by tapedar, mukhtiarkar and then by the assistant commissioner. This is the safest way of verifying and computerising the records, said Zulfikar.

Replying to complaints regarding fictitious records, he said that the khatidars have received over 6,000 certified copies of their record of rights from 27 services centres across Sindh but not a single complaint has been registered yet.

Thousands of deh maps, which reflect survey numbers along with a detailed map of the land, have also been computerised, informed Zulfikar. "We are going to launch them very soon because this process took time as most of the maps were damaged," he said

Zulfikar showed different applications of the computerisation system to the CM on his laptop in which he located landmarks including Faiz Mahal in Khairpur and the tomb of Dooleh Darya Khan, a commander of Kalhora rulers, in Gajanpur Deh of Larkana among others.

CM directed the BoR to follow the directions of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and computerise their records.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1106594/encroached-land-60000-acres-government-land-karachi-illegally-occupied/>

SIGNS BLAME ETPB FOR NANKANA VIOLENCE

Dawn, May 21st, 2016

Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: The standoff between ETPB and the occupants of land in Kot Santram village has thrown up many ugly scenes. Akbar Ali adds a sinister element to it all by claiming that he was hit by a bullet during the operation there on May 14. He alleges he was fired upon by none other than the ETPB chairman and well-known PML-N politician Siddiqui Farooq – who denies the charge.

There was a scuffle when the ETPB officials led by Farooq arrived at Karmanwala Chowk, Kot Santram, to carry out a cleanup operation that day. A violent protest in the Nankana city followed. The protesters set the local ETPB office, precious land record and other valuables on fire, forcing the ETPB team to halt action.

"The ETPB men and the police entered our house forcibly," Akbar, who introduces himself as a legal tenant, said talking to Dawn in his village on Wednesday. "They thrashed us and our sons and daughters. They asked us to leave or face the state's wrath."

"As they unleashed the blows on us, I rushed outside to plead with Siddiqui Farooq to stop it," he said. "Just as I was approaching him with my request, he shot at me. Luckily the bullet grazed my head."

He says he has cell-phone footage and eyewitnesses to prove his allegation.

A police official quotes a Special Branch report that says Farooq had pointed a pistol at Akbar. “The report didn’t confirm Farooq had fired on Akbar,” the official told Dawn while requesting anonymity.

The ETPB chairman rejects Akbar’s allegations. “I was there, but I didn’t fire at him,” Siddiqui Farooq said. “Akbar and his family members put up resistance after two lady police constables entered their house, at which the police baton charged them.”

“I did not point a pistol at Akbar nor did I shoot at him,” Farooq told Dawn.

“When the officials entered our home about 8am (on May 14), I was really frightened,” says Akbar’s niece, Rubina Kausar. “They started beating me, ordering me to take the cattle and other valuables out of the building. Later they took all of us to the police station.”

The dispute is decades deep. ETPB owns as many as 19,000 acres of agriculture and commercial land in Nankana Sahib district. Officials in the department say there are issues related to some 16,391 of these total 19,000 acres: Tenants are not ready to pay annual lease (up to over Rs6,700 per acre) fixed according to the status or the quality of land.

“There are 3,350 illegal occupants or so-called khatadaran (title-holders). These titles include 1,005 cases of extension of lease and another 2,345 concerning annual auctions since 1974,” said Muhammad Ishaq, ETPB’s deputy administrator in Nankana. “Whosoever gets trust land on lease etc starts considering him to be the owner of the property and not a tenant.”

Ishaq says for many years, the tenants used to give rent money to ETPB equalling the value of 40kgs of wheat. Also, before 1989, the tenants would pay Rs50 or 100 annual rent for each acre to ETPB. “In 2005, the court announced a decision in our favour, empowering ETPB to charge the tenants as per the status (or value) of the land. We devised a new policy under which the maximum annual rent was fixed at Rs6,700.

Though we implemented it for some years, in 2009, the then ETPB chairman announced the return of the previous policy where an amount equalling 40kgs of wheat per acre was received from the tenants. This was a surprise and caused a huge loss to the department,” Ishaq explained.

The department may be the legal owner of vast acreage of land in various villages of Nankana and called as Janamasthan Patti (the land of Baba Guru Nanak’s birth).

On the other hand, the tenants, a majority of whom got the land in Nankana after migrating here at the time of the Partition in 1947, feel they have been cheated on the issue of ownership.

Rana Muhammad Sharif says his family got 26 acre in Nankana against the 100 acre they had left behind in Jalandhar in 1947. “Our grandfather told us that the government officials at that time had transferred the land in his name in lieu of the land he had held in India. But the grandfather died worrying about this issue of ownership.”

All these decades later, Sharif says, “the government must allot us a piece of land equal to what we had left behind or let us occupy the land we have been cultivating since 1947.” Or else,” he continues angrily, “send us back to India.”

“The government must consider our sacrifices and charge us annual rent (per acre) equal to the amount of 40kgs of wheat. And the government should also know that the land it had given us in 1947 is now divided into many heirs. Each family head now holds no more than two to three acre,” he added.

Akbar has a similar story to tell and he says he plans to file a civil suit.

Syed Intezar Mehdi, a lawyer familiar with the ETPB cases, says the trust land cannot be transferred or sold to anyone under the law. "The tenants occupying the trust land under auction or lease policy will remain tenants, as there is no legal way to give them ownership rights. However, the federal government is empowered to give tenancy/lease rights to all of legally admitted tenants for a period of 99 years," he said.

As the standoff following the May 14 operation raised questions about the conduct of ETPB, it also strained Siddiqui Farooq's relations with his party colleagues, especially MPA Malik Zulqernain Dogar.

The ETPB chairman holds Dogar responsible for triggering violent protests. Dogar, under various names, holds possession of the trust's land worth over Rs3 billion. One of his companions occupies ETPB land worth over Rs1 billion," Farooq had said at a recent press conference.

Dogar rejects these allegations, but says he wouldn't speak 'against' Farooq till completion of the inquiry report as ordered by Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif. "Since the inquiry is under progress, we should wait for its report. However, I reject all the allegations Mr Farooq has levelled against me," Dogar told Dawn earlier this week.

The Nankana DCO implies rashness on the part of ETPB when he says he was not taken on board before the operation against occupants.

"No one had discussed it with me in writing or orally. We came to know about it when the situation went out of control, leading to a charged mob burning down the ETPB office, record and other valuables," DCO Dr Muhammad Usman said. According to him the violence could have been avoided had ETPB taken the district administration into confidence before the action.

An ETPB official in Nankana adds another twist to the saga by inserting his own details in the story here. "He (the DCO) had been informed by our head office. If he had not been taken on board as he says was the case, why and how did the police end up sending such a large contingent to accompany us as we set off to evict those who had been issued notices," ETPB zonal administrator (Nankana) Wahab Gul said.

On his turn, Nankana DPO Rana Ayaz Saleem questions the ETPB officials' claim of taking police or the district administration prior to the forceful action on board. "On May 5, we received a routine letter from the local ETPB office about launching of the anti-encroachment operation on May 14. As they requested provision of a couple of police reserves with lady constables, we arranged this. But it was so surprising for me when Mr Farooq called me directly (a few days later), stating that he would lead the operation," Saleem explained.

He says he requested Mr Farooq to not lead an activity which is usually assigned to junior officers normally. "On May 14, I was already on leave. But I immediately rushed to Nankana as soon as I learnt the situation had gone out of control. As I arrived on the spot, I was told that the ETPB guards had thrashed women at Karmanwala Chowk when they offered resistance," he said.

The DPO says a rumour fast spread in the village that some people had died during the operation. "Consequently, thousands of people came out on the streets making up four mobs at four different places," he said. "These mobs ransacked ETPB offices, blocked main roads. Had ETPB taken senior administrative officials on board, the incident could have been averted."

DCO Dr Muhammad Usman is of the opinion that ETPB must stop this operation for a couple of weeks. "The villagers are too annoyed."

Siddiqui Farooq is firm in his position. He tells the occupants to either become legal tenants after paying rent to ETPB as per market rate or hand back the land to the state.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1259758/signs-blame-etpb-for-nankana-violence>

KUWAIT'S EMIR IN LEGAL BATTLE FOR OWNERSHIP OF LAND

Dawn, May 21st, 2016

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: A 'fake' letter of attorney has put a multi-million rupees plot owned by the emir of Kuwait at stake in the federal capital.

There are at least two claimants to the 20,000 kanal plot in the Diplomatic Enclave, one of the secured locations in Islamabad. The plot belonged to the emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Al-Ahmad Al-Jabar Al-Sabah.

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday reserved its judgment on an application moved by Sadruddin Hashwani seeking to implead him as a party in the matter.

Mr Al-Sabah purchased the plot in 1980 from the government of Pakistan when he was the deputy prime minister of Kuwait.

Mian Javed Zia and Mr Hashwani, the owner of a chain of five-star hotels, approached a civil court to get possession of the plot in 2007 and 2013, respectively.

The stance of Mr Zia was that the agreement to sell the land was materialised in 1990 for Rs30 million.

Mr Hashwani claimed that in 2005 he paid \$2 million for the same land to Qasim Omar Al Yaqoot, the then ambassador of Kuwait.

Mr Hashwani filed an application with a civil judge of Islamabad in 2013 for becoming a party in the dispute which was pending in the court since 2007.

The civil judge on Oct 11, 2014, dismissed Mr Hashwani's application.

The hotel chain owner then filed an appeal with the IHC for getting the same relief. After hearing the parties, Justice Athar Minallah of the IHC on Friday reserved the judgment.

As per detail of the matter, Mr Zia, a businessman, produced an agreement signed between him and Qasim Omar Al Yaqoot, the former ambassador of Kuwait, regarding the transfer of the plot to the former. Mr Zia was a partner of Masco Construction, a firm which claimed 50pc ownership of the plot.

The construction firm claimed to have paid Rs15 million to Mr Zia for 10,000 square yards of the land.

Mr Zia through his lawyer Ali Raza Kabir contended that the then ambassador of Kuwait had shown him the attorney letter signed by the emir of Kuwait which authorised him (the ambassador) to sell the plot. The deal was materialised and he handed Rs30 million to Yaqoot as the amount agreed between them for the land.

However, at a later stage, the embassy of Kuwait wrote a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs alleging that the attorney letter was fake and that the emir never authorised any person for the sale or purchase of the plot.

Yaqoot, the man behind the controversy, died before the litigation was initiated in the civil court of Islamabad. According to a lawyer associated with the case, had Yaqoot been alive the controversy would have been settled within days. Since there was a factual controversy involved in the matter, the parties preferred to settle the issue through the court of law.

While the matter was pending for adjudication before the civil judge, Mr Hashwani moved an application to become a party in the 'dispute' as he also claimed the ownership of the plot. However, after dismissal of the application, he approached the IHC.

Before the IHC, his application stated that "the applicant had valuable vested rights in the property" and may be impleaded as a necessary party.

The embassy of Kuwait through its counsel Sanaullah Zahid in an application maintained that the emir of Kuwait never appointed any attorney for dealing with his land-related matters and that the emir never authorised any government or private official to dispose of the land. If there is any letter of attorney, it would be fake, the counsel insisted.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1259711>

ORANGE LINE LEAVES TRAIL OF DISPLACEMENT

Dawn, May 22nd, 2016

LAHORE: The issues pertaining to displacement and compensation stemming from the Orange Line Metro Train never refuses to go away.

"I want a house for my house snatched for the metro train project," Nighat Ara, a disabled woman, at a press conference pleaded to the chief minister on Saturday. She said she was evicted from her house in Parachute Colony.

She criticised the Rs1 million compensation for each unit acquired in Parachute Colony.

Maqsood Husain, a shopkeeper on Multan Road, said he had lost the money which he had given to the shop owner as security.

"You people (the government) paid well to property owners. You should know about our problems too," he said.

Mian Muhammad Ismael, another shopkeeper of the Thokar area, criticised the government for not taking care of health issues caused by the construction work.

Shakeel Ahmad, of Parachute Colony, accused the government of saving the house and businesses of provincial minister Mian Mujtaba Shujaur Rehman from the metro train route.

Saleem Sylvester was concerned about the protection of four churches, whose land was being acquired temporarily or permanently for the project. Churches on Nabha Road and The Mall and Naulakha an Boharwala chowks have been affected by the project.

He said even though the government denied acquiring the churches land, would it ensure the security and sanctity of the churches on Naulkha and Boharwala chowks where the track would be elevated.

Dr Ajaz Anwar, conservationist, criticised the police for harassing him for, what he said, raising his voice against the project.

Nighat Saeed asked the government to launch development projects for the development of the public at large and not for a certain class of people.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1259912>

GOVT TO PROVIDE FREE LAND FOR LOW COST HOUSING : GOVERNOR

Business Recorder, 22 May 2016

KARACHI: Sindh Governor Dr. Ishart-ul-Ebad Khan emphasized on launching maximum low-cost houses to stop increasing slums in the city as these were becoming hubs of criminal activities.

He asked the Association of Builders and Developers of Pakistan (ABAD) to come up with comprehensive proposals to build low-cost houses in the slum areas and Sindh Government would provide free of cost land for such housing schemes.

He was addressing the launching ceremony of ABAD international Expo-2016 at the Governor House.

The 3-day expo is scheduled to begin on August 12 at Karachi Expo Centre, said statement on Saturday.

He congratulated the ABAD for holding exhibition saying that this event would enhance economic activities in the country.

He, on this occasion, also appreciated the working of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) under the able leadership of a leading businessman S.M. Muneer, who is Chief Executive Officer of the authority.

He said that combined efforts were need of the hour to enforce national spirit.

Chairman ABAD Hanif Gohar disclosed that a fix tax would be imposed on builders in next federal budget so that builders could work peacefully without any kind of harassment from the tax collecting authorities.

Elaborating the fix tax, he said that the fix tax would be from Rs 20 to Rs 210 per square foot.

He requested the Sindh Governor to intervene and stop raids of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) officials on offices of builders as these acts were creating unrest among builders.

He paid glowing tribute to Army Chief General Raheel Sharif, Sindh Governor Dr. Ishratul Ebad Khan, Director General Rangers (Sindh) Major General Bilal Akbar, and Sindh Inspector General of Police A.D. Khwaja for restoring peace especially in Karachi.

Appreciating the business-friendly role of Dr. Ishart-ul-Ebad Khan, he said that the issues of moratorium/ban on gas connections to high rise residential project and water connections had been solved with intervention of the Governor.

He told that whole builder community was grateful to the Governor for becoming the Patron-in-Chief of ABAD's International Expo-2016.

Patron-in-Chief of ABAD Mohsin Sheikhani said that the backlog of houses in the country had increased to 8.8 million units and this backlog was increasing every year. If timely action was not taken, he added, the situation would be out of the control.

He informed that 12 countries had confirmed their participation in this international event. CEO, TDAP, S.M. Muneer said that corruption from TDAP has been wiped out after he had taken over the charge of the authority.

He said that TDAP would participate in 146 exhibitions this year and the ABAD Expo-2016 would become a unique event.

<http://www.brecorder.com/pakistan/general-news/297537-govt-to-provide-free-land-for-low-cost-housinggovernor.html>

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

BOUNDARY DISPUTE BETWEEN GB, KP TRIBES INTENSIFIES

Dawn, May 9th, 2016

Jamil Nagri

GILGIT: The boundary dispute at the site of Diamer-Bhasha dam between the residents of Diamer district of Gilgit-Baltistan and Kohistan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has deepened with tribes on both sides refusing to budge from their positions.

The Harban tribe of Kohistan and the Thor tribe of Diamer claim ownership of a piece of land spanning eight kilometres in Gandlo Nala area. People from both sides gathered on the road on Sunday, warning the authorities concerned of dire consequences if a settlement of the dispute could not be worked out soon.

Elders of the Thor tribe held a sit-in outside the deputy commissioner's office in Chilas against the Harban tribe, accusing it of harassing the GB residents to keep pressure on the government to decide the matter in its favour.

Over 20 elders of Thor and representatives of the Thor Youth Organisation took part in the protest.

Haji Dilbar Khan, Saeedullah Khan, Fida Khan, Fazalul Haq and others said that Harban tribesmen had been harassing the GB people for the past one week.

They regretted that in the presence of Kohistan police, Harban tribesmen had been blocking the Karakoram Highway (KKH) daily for three hours, stopping GB people from passing through it.

“Armed people are checking GB passengers' identity cards and hurling life threats at them,” the Thor tribesmen alleged.

The protesters said that travel for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan on the KKH through Kohistan had become risky, accusing the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa administration of not acting against the law-breakers.

They cautioned that the situation had worsened and clashes might erupt if the government did not take timely action. They said personnel of GB Scouts and police had failed to stop criminal activities.

“Historically, the ownership of the disputed area lies with the Thor tribe. We have evidences, but people of Kohistan are trying to deprive us of our land,” said the Thor protesters, adding, “we would not allow that to happen.”

They said, “We would fight for our rights, and cannot compromise on principles.”

The protesters announced that they would not accept the boundary commission's decision if it did not come in their favour. “We too would start holding protests on KKH if the KP government fails to control the Kohistan people harassing the GB people.”

The boundary commission constituted by the federal government has so far remained unsuccessful in settling the dispute.

Five people lost their lives and several others suffered injuries in armed clashes between the two tribes in February 2014. Personnel of the Frontier Constabulary have been deployed on the disputed territory and authorities have announced a ceasefire.

Umar Farooqi, a resident of Diamer, said the situation in the area was becoming tense by the day.

On the other hand, the Harban tribe has set May 15 for the government to meet its demands. It has threatened to block KKH at various points if their demands were not met.

A local jirga of the Thor tribe has decided to hold demonstrations at KKH if Harban people did not call off their protest.

Four jirgas comprising elders from Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa formed to solve the matter have also failed to find a solution.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1257229/boundary-dispute-between-gb-kp-tribes-intensifies>

PPP WANTS SENATE TO DISCUSS USE OF 'BRUTE STATE FORCE' IN OKARA

Dawn, May 10th, 2016

Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) submitted an adjournment motion in the Senate on Monday to discuss "implications of the brute state force employed last month on villagers in Okara Military Farms", forcing peasants to give up their demand for ownership rights.

The adjournment motion, moved by Farhatullah Babar, said that peasants had planned to highlight their grievances by observing an International Peasants' Day on April 17 in an orderly and peaceful manner under the law and the Constitution, but the state, afraid of the move exposing its atrocities, retaliated by using brute force against these villagers.

The unarmed villagers were beaten and dozens arrested by state agencies by misusing legal instruments meant exclusively for fighting terrorism, including anti-terror laws and provisions of the National Action Plan (NAP), the motion said.

"The deafening silence and failure of relevant institutions to protect rights of peasants against the mighty has lent a great urgency for the house of the federation to take notice of the situation," he said.

The motion expressed apprehensions that villagers might also be tried in military courts.

"After all if the ATA and NAP as anti-terror instruments can be employed against villagers what is there to stop the use of the third instrument namely the military courts against them," the motion added.

An unprecedented situation was in the making with grave implications for the state and society, the motion said.

The PPP senator said that there were reports that the General Secretary of Anjuman Mazareen Punjab (AMP), who was arrested during the protest, had now been shifted from a Sahiwal jail to a military cantonment.

The incident has brought into focus larger issues such as land and the military and the frightening disability of the state to distinguish between protesting farmers and terrorist enemies, thereby gravely undermining the fight against terror itself.

"At the root of the problem lies the persistent refusal of the state to give farmers their rights because of its (the state's) unquenchable thirst for land," the motion said.

Mr Babar said that during former president Gen Musharraf's rule atrocities against peasants had attracted a widespread criticism.

He said that Human Rights Watch had also criticised the torture and arrest of farmers in these words: "Pakistan's military and paramilitary forces are brutalising their own people in Punjab instead of protecting them."

The HRW report also said: "It's a dangerous moment in Pakistan when the military turns on its own core constituency."

Mr Babar said that the matter needed to be discussed and debated to examine the possibility of a peaceful settlement of the issue to save state institutions from adverse international attention and to protect legitimate rights of the dispossessed and disempowered peasants.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1257447>

KOHISTANIS TO HOLD TALKS WITH PM OVER LAND DISPUTE BETWEEN GB, KP

Dawn, May 10th, 2016

MANSEHRA: The people of Kohistan have constituted a 16-member committee led by MPA Abdul Sattar Khan for holding talks with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Pervez Khattak to amicably settle a boundary dispute between Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in accordance with the report of a one-man commission.

The commission was constituted following bloody clashes over the boundary dispute in 2014. Its report is yet to be made public by the federal government.

Members of the committee reached here on Monday on their way to Islamabad.

"The committee constituted by the affected Kohistanis to settle the boundary issue with the GB is expected to meet the prime minister and KP chief minister in a day or two," Sattar Khan, a PML-N's MPA from Kohistan, told reporters here.

He said he had held talks with GB Chief Minister Hafizur Rehman over the issue last week and now the committee would discuss the commission's report with the prime minister and KP chief minister in Islamabad.

The GB chief minister had agreed to accept whatever were findings of the commission about the ownership of the 8km disputed land at the boundary of the KP and GB, he said, adding that same was the point of view of Kohistanis. Sattar Khan said: "Because of the land dispute, work on 4200MW Diamer-Bhasha dam is suspended since 2014."

The affected Kohistanis have been staging one-hour daily sit-in on the Karakoram Highway in Harban and Shityal areas for nine consecutive days, blocking all sort of traffic. Holding banners and placards, they demand of the federal government to make public the commission's report.

Sattar Khan said the committee included local elders — Haji Sher Gazi, Haji Satber Shah, Haji Abdul Wakeel, Yaqoob Khan, Abdul Aziz, Mir Zaman and Hashim Khan. He said they would also meet the minister for Kashmir affairs.

According to him, the federal government should make public findings of the commission regarding ownership of the disputed land.

He rejected a notion that it was a dispute between two tribes of Kohistan and Chelas. It was a boundary dispute between the KP and GB, he said, adding that after the 2014 bloody clashes their governments had agreed to accept the findings of the commission regarding ownership of the land.

He said he had taken up the boundary dispute issue in the KP Assembly many times from 2009 to 2015. All parties in the assembly were unanimous that the dispute should be settled once for the all, he added.

Sher Gazi, a member of the committee, told reporters that the protesters remained peaceful during the sit-ins.

“The federal government is biased with Kohistanis as it paid compensation to people of Chelas for land acquired for the Diamer-Basha dam, but people at our side of the boundary are still deprived of money,” he said.

Personnel of Frontier Constabulary have been guarding the disputed territory since the bloody clashes in 2014 which had left three people dead and many others injured.

Meanwhile, members of the action committee which is organising the sit-ins on the Karakoram Highway told a press conference in Kohistan on Monday that their protests were peaceful.

Chairman of the committee Assad Qurashi said that they were recording their protest in a peaceful manner. He rejected allegations of violence by the protesters, saying that some people with vested interests were trying to portray a negative picture of the protests. The protesters had never harassed any passenger coming from Gilgit-Baltistan, he added.

Mr Qurashi said Thor Nullah had become a dump of arms and ammunition and terrorists hiding there were involved in hatching conspiracies against the federation and its two units, GB and KP.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1257444>

DIAMER RESIDENTS THREATEN TO HALT DAM CONSTRUCTION

The Express Tribune, May 11th, 2016.

Shabbir Mir

GILGIT: Residents of Diamer have threatened to stop construction work on Diamer-Bhasha Dam if the long-standing conflict between Gilgit-Baltistan’s Diamer and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa’s Harban areas over a strip of land is not settled.

“We will not allow work on the dam unless the boundary issue is settled,” Lambardar Bashir said during a press conference in Gilgit on Tuesday. “The demarcation should be done under the supervision of the army.”

The elders of Thore Valley accused Kohistan MPA Abdul Sattar of taking money from the Indian intelligence agency, RAW, for sabotaging the dam and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

The notables with Bashir said the strip of land belonged to the forefathers of people who are settled in Thore since long.

They added commute on the Karakoram Highway has become a nightmare due to the dispute. Therefore, they demanded police take action against those disrupting law and order.

“If the situation is not settled amicably, there are chances it will be settled after bloodshed.”

The elders also refused to accept the report of a commission which was formed to settle the dispute.

The nearly 10-kilometre stretch of land on both sides of the Basari check post, which separates Kohistan from G-B, has long been a bone of contention between people of Thore Valley in Diamer and Harban Nala in Kohistan. The disputed land is among the areas being demarcated for acquisition for the much-awaited dam.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1101296/disputed-diamer-residents-threaten-to-halt-dam-construction/>

NANKANA ENCROACHMENTS: OPERATION AGAINST ENCROACHERS ABANDONED

The Express Tribune, May 15th, 2016.

Muhammad Shahzad

LAHORE: Six police officials, including an inspector, a sub-inspector and an assistant sub-inspector, and two guards of the Evacuee Trust Property Board were injured in a clash over an attempt to recover trust land from illegal occupants in Kot Sanat Ram, Nankana Sahib.

ETPB Chairman Siddiqui Farooq said that the illegal occupants were being backed by Provincial Assembly Member (MPA) Zulqarnain Dogar. He said the ETPB and the police team were attacked by people associated with the squatters. He said some of them had thrown bricks and stones at the ETPB-police team and others had charged the officials with batons.

Later, he said, some of the attackers had shot at the officials. He said he had dodged a bullet shot at him. His car was damaged.

Farooq said the ETPB had recovered 400 kanals of trust land from illegal occupants last year. He said a total of 19,000 acres of land managed by the ETPB had been illegally occupied across the province. "I'm in charge of the trust. I won't let anyone illegally occupy the land. The land belongs to the country's minority communities," he said.

Farooq said the operation was abandoned because the raiding team, consisted of 100 male and 10 female guards from the ETPB and 100 male and 15 female police officials, had been outnumbered by the assailants.

Farooq said a request had been sent to the chief minister to provide the ETPB with a bigger police party. He said the operation would be resumed as soon as the required number of police officials was available.

MPA Zulqarnain Dogar denied that he was patronising the occupants. He said ETPB officials had allowed encroachments on the land apparently in return for kickbacks.

Dogar said violence had erupted when the ETPB guards opened fire at a group protesting against the operation. He said the protesters and their supporters had then resorted to violence.

A resident of Kot Sanat Ram area where the operation was carried out told The Tribune that his family was paying a Rs6,000 per marla rent to the ETPB. He said they had been living in the area for decades. "Why did they [the ETPB] let us move to the area in the first place?" he asked. He said that the operation was launched to force the residents to surrender to the ETPB's demand for raising rents.

Witnesses said that men from amongst the protesters had raided a nearby office of the ETPB. They broke furniture and windowpanes and set ablaze official record kept at the facility. They also set on fire some motorcycles of the ETPB staff parked in front of the office.

City SHO Muhammad Yaqoob said they were investigating the matter and would soon register an FIR.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1103597/nankana-encroachments-operation-against-encroachers-abandoned/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 2nd TO MAY 8th 2016

LANDLESS, RURAL POVERTY AND PUBLIC POLICY

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, May 2nd, 2016

Mahmood Hasan Khan

PERSISTENTLY high level of poverty in the rural areas afflicts the households of most small landowners (family farmers) and the landless, including small livestock herders, tenants, and wage workers engaged mainly in the agriculture sector.

In many of these households, women tend to suffer more than men because of the culture-based discrimination. The feeble growth of farming sector is only one reason for rural poverty. Perhaps a more important reason is that the rural poor do not own or control income-generating assets, good quality land being the main asset.

In fact, landlessness has two effects. First, it makes the landless dependent on others' demand for tenants and wage workers. The demand for tenants by landowners to cultivate land has been on the decline, being replaced by machinery and wage workers for efficiency and profit.

Second, the landless are unable to access finance (credit) and build human capital. Access to finance itself depends on collateral that the landless do not have. Human capital depends on exposure to education, which in turn depends on its direct and indirect costs to the poor households.

There are two basic reasons for landlessness. The first is the highly unequal distribution of landownership. We do not have direct evidence on who owns how much land because the provincial land commissions do not publish or allow the public to see the data on individual ownership of land.

The decennial agriculture census data tend to show that landownership is highly concentrated and the inequality has increased over time in spite of the land reforms of the Ayub and Bhutto era.

The second reason is that the access to land through tenancy for the poor households has been falling as the landowners are shifting to machinery and wage labour.

This is particularly true of the sharecropping mode of tenancy throughout Pakistan: capitalist agriculture is far more profitable to the large landowners. The displaced tenants must offer their labour and compete for wage income either in the rural or urban area.

The land rights of tenants, though well-defined and laid out in the provincial revenue acts, are in practice quite easy for large landowners to circumvent or violate with impunity.

On the issue of land redistribution, the Federal Shariat Court in 1990 decided unanimously that the Islamic law sets no limit to the amount of land a person can own. The plea for social justice carried no weight in the Court's judgement.

The appeals against this judgement are still pending with the Supreme Court. Governments do not have any option but wait, even if they are willing to consider land redistribution.

Land reform does not seem to be on the government's agenda. The much-publicised distribution of state land is a public relations gimmick. Most of that land is of low fertility, bad location and difficult access to water and requires much investment and effort. The new owners do not have a public support system to make a living on these lands. In fact, most land redistribution schemes have been ineffective or failed because of the lack of a good support system for the new small landowners.

In the meantime, the potential beneficiaries of land redistribution are losing their claim on land as they are being forced into wage labour outside agriculture. Tenants are no longer in much demand and small landowners (farmers) are being squeezed out as well in the competition for land.

There are at least two ways in which the poor can escape their precarious existence. One is to get a reasonable parcel of land in size and quality that they can cultivate and use to access financial capital (credit) and markets for inputs and outputs.

That is not on the horizon any time soon, if ever. The other is to move either a part or all of the household to an urban-industrial area and offer their labour for wage income.

It's a risky business, but often desperately necessary to get out of the vicious cycle of poverty. Public policy plays an important role by giving signals to the rural poor for making their decisions.

For the landless, whose number is rising, a major source of survival is wage labour. The problem is that the income from wage labour, especially in the rural areas, depends on the demand for labour in farming and the wage rate.

The demand for labour in agriculture is seasonal (highly variable) and apparently not rising. In some parts, close to the urban-industrial area, employment avenues tend to be better, but there is greater competition for low-skilled jobs.

What is more important is that the nominal wage rate does not keep up with the inflation rate. In other words, the purchasing power of whatever the wage workers earn is falling and not rising.

This is particularly true for food items, of which prices are rising faster than of other goods and services. Food security of the wage workers depends entirely on the market for labour (job and wage) and the price of food.

It seems obvious that public policy has done little if anything for the landless (rural) poor. The mix of indirect taxes and price subsidies in the agriculture sector have been a major source of its lacklustre performance reflected by the low annual growth rate and stagnant if not falling productivity.

Governments have under-invested in agriculture research and technology dissemination and in building the physical and social infrastructure for rural areas.

In any case, agricultural growth is necessary but not sufficient to alleviate rural poverty. Food and income security for the landless poor should be well targeted and administered locally.

In many countries, seasonal employment for these groups (men and women equally) for building the rural infrastructure and conditional cash transfer to the poor households have been two effective ways to secure food and income security and to build human capital through schooling and health care for children.

The twin policies provide support in the short run as they also help secure a far better future. The important point is that the food and income security programme—funded largely by revenue from a fair and progressive tax on agriculture income and wealth—in its design and delivery should involve the prospective beneficiaries, local representatives and local administration as active participants.

The problem is that the ‘democratically’ elected federal and provincial governments do not seem to like the local participation and decentralised administration.

This has been a major source of bad assessment of the needs and much waste and inefficiency in delivering public goods and services. There is substantial evidence of this all around the country.

How long will (or should) this state of waste and inefficiency last and at what cost to the rural poor and society? Should the landless poor continue to depend on their own devices and charity in various forms for their survival?

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1255613/landless-rural-poverty-and-public-policy>

PROTEST AGAINST DAMAGE TO CHURCHES

Dawn, May 4th, 2016

LAHORE: Members of the Christian community on Tuesday staged a protest demonstration at the GPO Chowk against damage to four churches for construction of the Orange Line train.

The protesters chanted slogans against the Punjab government and demanded it to stop bulldozing churches.

Christians’ leader Sajid Ishaq said the government was razing Cathedral Church, Naulakha Church, St Andrew’s Church and Church of Pakistan for the train project.

He alleged the government had planned to demolish churches to save the property of provincial minister Mian Shujaur Rehman.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1256159/protest-against-damage-to-churches>

HRW CONCERNED OVER USE OF ‘EXCESSIVE’ FORCE AGAINST FARMERS IN OKARA

Dawn, May 5th, 2016

Anees Hanif

KARACHI: The Human Rights Watch (HRW) has expressed concern over the use of ‘excessive’ force by Pakistani authorities against tenant farmers protesting for land rights.

In a statement released on Wednesday, the watchdog urged the government to ensure that security forces followed the basic principles enunciated by the United Nations on the use of force and firearms.

The statement made a reference to a decision by the Okara administration last month to stop the Anjuman-i-Mazaraeen Punjab, a body which represents tenants, from holding a meeting.

The police arrested Mehr Abdul Sattar, the AMP’s secretary general, and the district administration imposed section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code before the gathering slated for April 17.

Eyewitnesses recall that police beat up and arrested a number of farmers after they protested Mr Sattar’s detention.

According to the HRW, police registered more than 4,000 cases under the penal code and the anti-terrorism law.

“In some cases, including that of Mehr Abdul Sattar, police are refusing to provide information about the whereabouts of those arrested,” said the Human Rights Watch. It amounted “to an enforced disappearance which was in violation of international law”, the HRW added.

“Individuals forcibly disappeared are at a grave risk of being tortured or otherwise ill-treated. Blocking a peaceful meeting, arresting organisers, and then using excessive force against demonstrators show a complete disregard for basic rights in a democratic society,” said HRW’s Asia Director Brad Adams.

He called upon the government to release those “wrongfully held”, provide information about the “disappeared” and call to account the soldiers and police who used excessive force.

Mr Sattar’s brother recounted the lead-up to the peasant leader’s arrest. “On April 16, I heard footsteps and loud noise coming from the front gate of our house,” said Mehr Abdul Jabbar, adding that he ran towards the gate and saw that around 40 to 50 police officers had broken into their house.

According to Abdul Jabbar, the men dragged him and his brother out of the house. As many as 12 police vehicles lined the street. After some time, they took him (Mehr Sattar) away.

Abdul Jabbar claims that the police have refused to tell him the reason behind the arrest of his brother. However, officials of the district government told him that the arrest had been made under the Maintenance of Public Order.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1256359>

COUNTRYWIDE CRACKDOWN DIRECTED AGAINST ENCROACHERS ON PR LANDS

Business Recorder, May 6, 2016

A parliamentary panel on Thursday directed for a crackdown against the encroachers on 4246.9 acres of Pakistan Railways lands across the country. The Sub-Committee of the National Assembly Standing committee on Railways met with Ramesh Lal in the chair where it was decided to visit all provinces and sites to expedite the process of vacating PR land from the encroachers.

The committee expressed annoyance over not vacating of 82 kanals of Railways land from a former Patwari in Rawalpindi and summoned DCO in the next meeting. The committee also directed to present the report about 100 shops and kiosks built on plots, temporary allotted to widows and children of PR employees, which were sold in many places. Next meeting of the committee would be held in Peshawar where the report would be discussed.

Additional General Manager Infrastructure Humayun Rasheed, Director Land and Property Arshad Salam Khattak, Director General Technical Syed Munawar Shah and DS Railways Rawalpindi Abdul Malik briefed the committee members. Convenor of the committee Ramesh Lal directed the PR officers for taking practical measures with the support of its police to vacate Railways land from the encroachers. Nobody is powerful or above the law, he added.

The committee while appreciating cleanliness at Railways stations, improving food quality at restaurants and punctuality of trains, directed for further improvement in its services. The committee was informed that Railways land worth Rs 9.9 billion was vacated from encroachers during last three years. It was further informed that Rs 132 million were earned from eight acres land vacated during last 10 months in Rawalpindi division, while record of 62 acres land in Rawalpindi was not available.

It was further informed that Railways land is being computerised which may help increase Railways lands. The committee was informed that police and administration was not co-operating in Sindh to vacate lands from the encroachers. Director

Land and Property informed that land occupied by the government and defence institutions are not being considered as encroached; however, the Railways is not getting any revenue from such lands.

It was further informed that due to narrow gauge track in some parts of KP, trains are not operational. However land on both sides of track was utilised for expansion of roads. Ramesh Lal directed for launching operation against encroachers from Larkana to vacate precious Railways land.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/43429/>

ALLOTMENT OF LAND TO HUBCO CHALLENGED IN COURT

Dawn, May 6th, 2016

QUETTA: A division bench of the Balochistan High Court has issued notices to Hubco Power Company, Board of Revenue and other stakeholders after hearing a petition filed by former speaker of Balochistan Assembly Mohammad Aslam Bhootani in which he sought orders for cancellation of the allotment of a piece of land to Hubco for establishing a coal-run power plant in Gadani.

The bench was headed by Chief Justice Mohammad Noor Meskanzai and Justice Mohammad Hashim Kakar was its member.

Mr Bhootani said in its petition that in 1990 the provincial government had allotted 714 acres of land to Hubco Power Company at very cheap price ignoring the interests of the province.

He said the land was allotted against Rs3.5 million, whereas its commercial value was much higher. He added that it was a joke with the people of Balochistan.

The petitioner was represented by senior lawyer Amanullah Kanrani.

Mr Bhootani claimed that the Hubco Power Company received billions of rupees from the federal government against the sale of electricity to Wapda, but it was not giving to Balochistan its due share in the profit. In the past 25 years, he added, Hubco had paid only Rs27.5 million to the Balochistan government, he added.

The petitioner accused the Board of Revenue, Balochistan, of having failed to protect the interests of the people of the province while giving permission to the Hubco Company for establishing the coal-based power plant in Gadani.

Referring to the case of Reko Diq project, he alleged that interests of Balochistan were ignored while giving its contract to a foreign company. He said that was the reason that the Supreme Court had cancelled the agreement for the contract of Reko Diq project.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1256586>

KOHISTAN ADMINISTRATION TAKES UP DISPUTED LAND ISSUE WITH KP GOVT

Dawn, May 7th, 2016

Nisar Ahmad Khan

MANSEHRA: The district administration of Kohistan has taken up the issue of ownership of disputed land with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government as one-hour daily sit-in by the people of Harban and Shityal — boundary areas between KP and Gilgit-Baltistan — on the Karakoram Highway entered the seventh consecutive day on Friday.

“I have written a letter to the KP government through the Hazara commissioner, asking it to make public a one-man commission report on ownership of the 8km disputed land on the boundaries between KP and GB to ease tension between two tribes of both sides,” Fazl-i-Khaliq, Kohistan Deputy Commissioner, told reporters on Friday.

The protesters were holding banners and placards inscribed with slogans in support of their demand.

“We want nothing from the federal government, but making public of the commission’s report which will determine who is the legal owner of the disputed territory between KP and GB,” Abdul Aziz, a local resident, said, adding: “Our protest will continue till the government makes the report public.”

He said the people of Harban and Shityal would never give up their legal and moral right of ownership of the land because their forefathers used to cultivate it and earn livelihood for their families.

Three people had lost their lives and several others suffered injuries when the tribes from GB and Kohistan exchanged fire about two years ago. Both tribes claim they are owners of the disputed land.

Personnel of the Frontier Constabulary have been deployed in the disputed territory after the bloody clash.

Fazl-i-Khaliq said the Kohistan administration was trying to resolve the issue and called upon the KP government to take up the matter with the federal government.

“We want the federal government to make the commission’s report public because if the dispute is not resolved amicably, the tension between the tribes from two sides would continue,” he said.

He said that while the GB’s tribesmen had been paid compensation money for their land near Diamer-Bhasha dam, the tribesmen on the other side of the boundary were yet to be compensated and because of this they had been taking to streets daily for the past seven days.

Mr Khaliq said the tribesmen of Kohistan agreed to accept the decision of the boundary commission.

“I have taken up the matter with the KP government also in the past, but so far there is no response from it,” he regretted.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1256870>

RANGERS TO HELP ACQUIRE LAND FOR DIAMER-BHASHA DAM

Dawn, May 8th, 2016

Jamil Nagri

GILGIT: The federal government has decided to deploy Rangers in Diamer district as a security measure to acquire land for the Diamer-Bhasha Dam project as local residents are reportedly reluctant to leave the area.

The decision was taken by the ministerial committee on the project at its meeting held in Islamabad on Friday.

The meeting decided to deploy a wing of Rangers.

Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Birjees Tahir presided over the meeting attended by Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Inter-provincial Coordination Riaz Hussain Pirzada, Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Pir Sadaruddin Shah Rashdi, Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Hafiz Hafeezur Rehman, Wapda chairman Zafar Mehmood and GB Chief Secretary Tahir Hussain.

The committee reviewed the progress made so far on the project. It was informed that 90 per cent land has been acquired for the purpose.

The meeting was informed that residents of Thak area and other adjoining areas are not ready to vacate their land despite being paid compensation. “The local police are unable to deal with the situation,” the meeting was told.

The government has paid about Rs45bn as compensation, while Rs8bn would be distributed soon.

The minister for Kashmir affairs ordered the GB government to settle issues with people affected by the land acquisition through introduction of projects under confidence-building measures. He also directed the GB government to speed up the land acquisition process to ensure early ground-breaking of the much delayed project.

GB Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman claimed that his government has saved Rs10 billion by introducing transparency and fair practices in the land acquisition process.

The federal government has decided to construct half of the power projects in GB region. According to official sources, the issue of royalty to be paid to KP and GB had been resolved.

Now Diamer Bhasha Dam power plants will be installed in KP and GB.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1257044>

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June 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 27TH TO JULY 2 ND 2016

PLAN MAY ALLOW SALE OF PUBLIC PROPERTY TO FAVOURITES

Dawn, June 29th, 2016

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: The Punjab government is considering to allow under its control the sale of the local government property with the first right of refusal to its existing users (offering them to purchase).

Sources in the Punjab government on Tuesday doubted the motives of the plan. They said the manner in which it was being carried out reflected that the government was going to dole out local government immovable property.

Sources in the local government department said that the right to sell the local government property through public auction and in a prescribed manner was being introduced through an amendment to the Local Government Act 2013.

The law at present disallows local governments to sell or permanently alienate any of their immovable property which it says shall be used only for public purposes.

It allows them to lease out their immovable property through competitive bidding by public auction.

However, the law says that the government may constitute a committee headed by the chief officer of the local government to identify the “encroached or redundant properties” of a local government that may be sold in the prescribed manner with the approval of the government and the funds generated from the sale of such properties shall be kept in a separate account and be used only for purposes of development.

The movable property of a local government which is required to be disposed of shall be sold through competitive bidding by public auction, the law says.

Sources said under the new scheme of things, the government intended to allow the present occupants of local government property to buy it at a rate to be determined through a public auction, but there was no mention of which type of property it would be. The law in its present form at least clarified that this should be encroached or redundant property.

They said the government also intended to limit the lease period. It intends to make it mandatory for the local governments to grant lease of their immovable property initially for 15 years, and afterwards to a maximum 10 years.

A senior local government official admitted that the proposed amendment did not mention which type of property could be sold out, and initially it appeared that it included all property.

He clarified that the purpose of the amendment was to solely rid of the local government property which was encroached upon in any manner or facing unending litigation. Therefore this should be mentioned to remove any doubts.

“Yes there is also a need to change a provision in the law that the local government properties can only be used for public purpose when we are going to sell them to private people,” he agreed.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1267914>

‘CASES AGAINST OKARA FARM TENANTS SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN’

Dawn, June 29th, 2016

Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights has expressed concerns regarding the plight of the Okara farms tenants, and recommended that cases against them should be withdrawn.

The Okara Military Farms were developed during British colonial rule, in the latter half of the 19th century, in order to protect the subcontinent from an attack from the northwest. People were encouraged to settle in the area and told that land would be transferred to their names – an offer that never materialised.

The land, which was owned by the British army, was automatically transferred to the Pakistan Army after partition. The army, which used to receive a share of the produce, introduced a contract system during the government of Gen Pervez Musharraf, and farmers were directed to pay rent in cash. It was also decided that the military could vacate the land at any time.

From time to time, the military demands the land, leading to resistance from tenants. Cases of terrorism, extortion and robbery are registered against those who allegedly refused to vacate the land.

National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR) member Chaudhry Mohammad Shafique told the Senate standing committee on Tuesday that over the last two months, eight cases were registered under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA). Some of the suspects were elected nazims, and had contested elections for the provincial and national assemblies. “There is a human rights issue because of the excessive use of authority. As many as 60 women were arrested in a day, which is not acceptable,” he said, adding that the image of the army was also being damaged at the national and international level.

He said 348 cases have been registered against farm tenants over the last 15 years.

“Allegations in a number of cases have been rejected by the courts, but no compensation has been given to suspects who faced cases and spent time in jail. Who will accept the responsibility, because the state was the complainant in those cases? The state should be very careful while filing such cases against people,” he said.

Pakistan Peoples Party Senator Farhatullah Babar said it had been claimed that action was taken against the tenants because an amount was recoverable from them.

He added that the auditor general had said that he found nine cases of financial irregularities in Okara Farms, but the army was not ready to respond to this. Mr Babar said the terrorism cases should be withdrawn.

Senator Sitara Ayaz added the trend of registering terrorism cases against average citizens needed to end lest it keep the goals of the National Action Plan from being achieved.

However, a representative of the Punjab government contended that the cases were genuine and there was evidence against the tenants, and the anti-terrorism courts were hearing cases.

“Courts have given physical remand of the suspects, which means the allegation and proof against them carry weight. It is the discretion of the court to approve their bail or not,” he said.

The Okara deputy commissioner said that most people were ready to make an agreement with the administration, and there were only a few people creating law and order problems.

Maj Gen Abid Nazir claimed that the army had not done anything, because of clear instructions from the chief of army staff not to take action against civilians. “Out of 1,276 tenants, as many as 201 have started paying the dues. In the Renala farms, 207 out of 230 have reached an agreement,” he said.

The committee chairperson, Nasreen Jalil, said the committee recommends withdrawing the cases against tenants, and addressing the matter through dialogue.

An elected representative from Okara Cantt, Mohammad Shahzad Shafi, who attended the meeting, told Dawn that eight cases were registered against him.

“I decided not to seek bail, because the day I will get bail, the administration will register another eight cases against me. Our women were arrested and many of them remained in lockup for over a month,” he said.

Zafar Iqbal, who also attended the meeting and belongs to the Christian community, said the army and the administration were trying to divide people on the basis of religion, and fomenting division between Christians and Muslims.

“It is unfortunate, and it will become a huge problem for the country, because one day riots will held between Muslims and Christians,” he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1267953/cases-against-okara-farm-tenants-should-be-withdrawn>

KARACHI, LAHORE PROPERTIES STILL HOT, STEAL LIMELIGHT

The Express Tribune, June 29th, 2016.

LAHORE: The real estate market in Lahore and Karachi appears in no mood to dial down its growth despite sobering speculations of adverse impact of federal taxes. These taxes were expected to heavily tax property transactions, thereby forcing investors to think twice before entering the real estate market.

Statistics from Zameen.com reveal a robust growth in the prices of real estate in Karachi and Lahore in the month of May. However, Islamabad has been proven to be a major laggard, marking a sub-impressive growth for May.

Karachi's profitability remained untamed with investors ending the month with long grins as the property prices experienced a sharp incline.

Property values in Karachi's Defence Housing Authority (DHA) have been on a consistent upward trajectory for the last few months. In May, the locality experienced a controlled rise of 1.07% in the value of 500-yard plots. It still has potential for further growth in the future, said Zameen.com. Bahria Town Karachi also remained in the race with enthusiastic investment activity and 2.86% rise in the prices of 500-yard plots in May.

Gulshan-e-Iqbal could not perform equally well. Being a fully developed society, it did not experience impressive investment activity and ended the month with a mere 0.24% rise in the value of 500-yard plots.

Investors appear to have been magnetised to Phase VII to IX in DHA Lahore, as the prices of 1-kanal plots in these phases increased 4.90%.

However, the first six phases of DHA Lahore were not able to keep up with aforementioned sectors, but their performance was not disappointing either.

Stability was the order of the day in Bahria Town (proper), however, Bahria Orchard impressed investors with a sharp ascent of 6.39% in the prices of 1-kanal plots, the data said.

Just like other localities situated on Raiwind Road, LDA Avenue I performed well during the month and the prices of 10-marla plots in the locality saw an increase of 7.57%. Wapda Town, on the other hand, clung on to mere stability. This trend is not surprising, as Wapda Town is fully developed and does not attract sizeable investment activity.

Islamabad's market troubled investors in May. DHA Islamabad, which has been showing continuous growth for the last few months, ended on a stable note registering only 0.67% increase in prices of 1-kanal plots.

Bahria Town also performed sluggishly as prices dropped by 1.82% in the 1-kanal category. Investors are perhaps more interested in other Bahria Town projects across the country and are probably testing the waters in case of Bahria Town Islamabad/ Rawalpindi.

Sectors E-11 and F-11 were no different and prices in the localities increased 0.16% and 0.96% respectively during the month. This can be attributed to the fact that these sectors largely cater to genuine buyers and sellers with only a few plots remaining, the data suggests.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1132452/karachi-lahore-properties-still-hot-steal-limelight/>

SHOWDOWN AVERTED AFTER EX-PPP LAWMAKER'S ATTEMPT TO EVICT CATTLE TRADERS FROM HIS LAND

Dawn, June 30th, 2016

Waseem Shamsi

SUKKUR: A showdown between police and a private force led by former Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) MNA Mir Babul Khan Jakhrani was averted on Wednesday by saner elements within the Jacobabad district administration over alleged encroachment of a part of his land near the local cattle market.

The ex-lawmaker along with his men drove up to the market and raised objection to the presence of many animals as well as parking of vehicles by some cattle traders on a portion of his land next to the market.

The private force in a threatening posture asked the “encroachers” to remove their vehicles and vehicles and leave at once or face the consequences. They also grabbed and dragged some of them and also deflated tyres of several vehicles to execute their order creating a law and order situation. The traders reacted to the use of force and called out the police who swiftly moved into action.

However, First Additional Deputy Commissioner Mr Nauman, rushed to the site and restrained the police from taking coercive action against the private force. He held negotiations with Mr Jakhrani but he refused to withdraw until all encroachments from his land were removed.

The episode continued for a couple of hours during which Deputy Commissioner Agha Shahnawaz Pathan and SSP Sajid Hussain Jakhrani were informed of the volatile situation. They also arrived at the scene and took stock of the situation.

Mr Jakhrani is at odds with his son, MNA Aijaz Jakhrani, over several matters, including his assets and sources of income. The row has cost him his affiliation with the PPP and forced him to defect to the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf a few years ago. Recently, Babul Jakhrani, his another son, Khalid Jakhrani, and several relatives and associates were booked in various cases.

A few days ago the deputy commissioner decided to hand over the control of the cattle market to the local municipal committee, a move Babul Jakhrani believes was another strike on his sources of income” resorted to at the behest of Aijaz Jakhrani. At one stage of the negotiations between him and the ADC-I, Babul Jakhrani retreated into a compromise mood, saying that he would stop objecting to the encroachment of his land by cattle traders if the contract of the cattle market was awarded to him.

The ADC-I said the contract would be awarded through open tender to be invited by the town committee. He, however, persuaded the former lawmaker to allow a few days’ time to sort out the issue.

Mr Jakhrani and his force agreed to leave for the time being, saying that the district administration would have to take a decision acceptable to them. They warned that if the contract was awarded to any other party, the administration would have to shift the cattle market to some other place as it encroached upon his land.

He repeated the allegation that the administration was victimising him on political grounds in collusion with the PPP and intimidating him, his family and associates by implicating them in fake cases.

Although, Mr Jakhrani and his force put off the matter to some other day, tension gripped the entire Jacobabad city in view of more than 50 killings that had occurred in the past over tribal feuds involving the local Jakhranis.

Considering a possibility of a major showdown, police officers and personnel from across the district have been called out and deployed around the cattle market.

SSP Khokhar told the media that physical possession of cattle market had been taken over from “political figures” and handed over to the Jacobabad Municipal Committee.

Action was not taken against Mir Babul Jakhrani considering his old age, he said, adding that the police did not want the matter to take a violent turn.

He also pledge due protection to cattle traders at the market.

Later, an FIR (106/2016) was registered against Babul Jakhrani's associates at the Saddar police station on a complaint of head-constable Nawab Ali Aarbani for harassing people and making attempts to create a law and order situation.

The SSP said Babul Jakhrani's name would also be included in the FIR. He placed SHO Ayaz Pathan of the Saddar police station and 10 of his subordinates under suspension.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1268047>

HINDUS ACCUSE ETPB OF 'OCCUPYING' TEMPLE LAND

Dawn, July 1st, 2016

Aamir Yasin

RAWALPINDI: The ownership of a sealed temple in Gawalmandi has become the subject of a dispute between the Hindu community and the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB), following alleged attempts to convert the place of worship into a commercial plaza.

The Swami Narayan Temple, located in Gawalmandi's main square, is a single-storey building spread over more than 10 marlas, with three open sides. It is located in front of the local Jamia mosque, near the area's Eidgah.

According to the Hindu community, the temple is a religious site and was used as place of worship two decades ago, before its caretakers converted to Islam.

However, ETPB has declared the site to be a residential building, allocated to the couple who converted to Islam.

According to Jag Mohan Arora, president of the All Pakistan Hindu and Sikh Welfare Council: "The couple, Babu Lal and Shakuntala Devi, were residing in the temple as its sewa dar with the permission of the Hindu community. But after converted to Islam... they moved the court for the possession of the temple, and only withdrew the case last month."

"ETPB North Zone is changing the status of this place of worship. They will award tenancy to Shakila Bibi [Shakuntala Devi's Muslim name] while she plans to transfer the land to someone else, who will demolish the building and convert it into a commercial plaza," he said.

"Under the law, the status of a place of worship cannot be changed. Swami Narayan Mandir, property number 4316, Gawalmandi, was under the control of the Hindu community of Rawalpindi. It was granted to the Hindu community in 1949 by the local administration. All Hindu religious festivals had also been celebrated at this mandir for the last several years.

"In 1992, the couple who were assigned to take care of the premises converted to Islam and adopted the names Abdul Hameed and Shakila Bibi. Since they converted, they also lost their moral right to reside inside Swami Mandir. However, they have refused to give up possession, and may take over the property with help from some of their Muslim neighbours," Mr Arora claimed.

He said the ETPB was being very unfair to the local Hindu community. "The temple was sealed [in 1992] and not handed over to the Hindu community, despite clear directions from the federal ombudsman on Sep 9, 1996.

After the caretakers converted, the local Hindu community sent a delegation to meet then-prime minister Benazir Bhutto and asked her to have the temple released to the Hindu community.

Ms Bhutto is said to have referred the matter to the Federal Ombudsman, who ordered the ETPB to hand over the temple to the Hindu community for its management and protection.

He said the Hindu community had twice written to ETPB chairman Siddiqui Farooq, but received no response.

ETPB Rawalpindi Region Administrator Tanveer Ahmed denied the allegations levelled by Mr Arora and the Hindu community, saying the board had no plans to convert the site into a commercial plaza.

However, he said, according to documents available with ETPB, the site was not a temple. "It was a residential area, and different religious functions were held in the past in a private house," he said.

"There is no plan to change the purpose. The Hindu community has a place of worship in Saddar known as Krishna Temple," Mr Ahmed told Dawn when asked about the alleged conversion of the land.

He said the old lessees would be awarded the new contract, as per the law. "In the past, some people wanted to convert the area into a temple as the Hindu residents converted to Islam. We have informed the ETPB head office about the status of the site," he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1268328>

NOTICES ISSUED ON PLEA AGAINST PEOPLE'S EVICTION FOR DAM CONSTRUCTION

Dawn, July 1st, 2016

HYDERABAD: A division bench of Sindh High Court Hyderabad circuit on Thursday issued notices to the Sindh chief secretary, secretary planning and development, Coal Energy Board, Thar Coal Authority, Mirpurkhas commissioner, Tharparkar deputy commissioner and others on a constitutional petition for July 4.

The plea is filed by 11 residents of Mithi, who are represented by Ayatullah Khowaja, challenging their eviction from ancestral lands on account of construction of a dam for storing hazardous water. Petitioners are small growers.

They said respondents — including Coal Energy Board, Thar Coal Authority and Engro Company — were building a dam on their lands in Islamkot taluka near the village of Gorano and other villages on 2,700 acres to store hazardous water of coal mines. Such construction of the dam would destroy the land, they said.

They said there were around 15 villages, including Gorano, Shivee Jo Tar, Lale Jee Dhani, Hjam, Kolhi Dhani, Ahsan Shah Jo Tarr, Motu Jo Tarr, Khokhar Jo Tar, Veri Bhaghat, Wahoro and Katan with 15,000 population whose livelihood was dependent on livestock and agriculture that would be affected by the dam.

They said Thar desert faces water scarcity where 200,000 trees, 100 per cent cultivating agriculture land, 20,000 wells of sweet water, 10 natural ponds were considered precious. They said 50 per cent of the said farmland was categorised as Qabuli land of people and there were temples and five old graveyards.

They said that since June's first week, they were restrained from cultivating land by the respondents. They were threatened to vacate lands and cattle pens, otherwise the same would be bulldozed. They said they requested respondents' representatives, but in vain.

They said they approached the high-ups to inform them about facts and figures, mentioning that since it was a hazardous project, it would affect them. Construction of the dam for wastewater on the land would have serious effect on soil in the vicinity due to salinity which would damage cultivable land, increasing drought, causing deaths and environmental

pollution. They said that in case of seepage, population would face serious consequences unless the site for construction of dam was changed.

They said the proposed dam would cause disaster, serious loss not only of land, but of lives of 15,000 people.

The petitioner said the respondents violated rules and regulation as objections were not invited from the residents of the said villages and no feasibility report was prepared in view of environment laws. There was violation of Land Acquisition Act 1894 and Environmental Protection Act 2012.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1268283/notices-issued-on-plea-against-peoples-eviction-for-dam-construction>

ILLEGAL OCCUPATION: SC CALLS COMMENTS ON ENCROACHMENT ON 10,000 ACRES OF FOREST LAND
The Express Tribune, July 2nd, 2016.

KARACHI: The Supreme Court (SC) issued on Thursday notices to the provincial secretary of the forest department and others on a petition regarding encroachments on forest land along the Indus River.

A full bench, headed by Justice Gulzar Ahmed, directed the authorities concerned to file their comments by the next hearing.

The bench was hearing a petition seeking direction for the provincial Rangers authorities to help the forest department retrieve more than 10,000 acres of the forest land encroached by influential persons along the Indus River in Larkana and Shikarpur districts.

The petitioner, Muhammad Umar Abro, informed the judges that a petition was filed with the Sindh High Court at its Larkana Circuit Bench against the encroachments over the forest departments.

The encroachers had carried out residential constructions on the land belonging to the forest department in violations of the land laws, where various houses were built.

The judges were informed that the forest department authorities admitted before the high court that their lands had been encroached upon in the two districts along the banks of the river.

They expressed, however, their inability to get those lands retrieved from the encroachers on the pretext that anti-encroachment operation cannot be conducted in these areas without help from the Rangers.

The petitioner pleaded the apex court issue directions to the Sindh Rangers authorities to help the local authorities in two districts get encroached land back and restore them as forests.

After the initial hearing, the SC bench issued notices to the provincial forest secretary and others to file their comments by the next hearing.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1134279/illegal-occupation-sc-calls-comments-encroachment-10000-acres-forest-land/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 20TH TO JUNE 26TH 2016

LDA CITY PROJECT: PUNJAB GOVT OFFERS 65 ACRES TO US CONSULATE FOR NEW BUILDING

Dawn, June 20th, 2016

Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: The Punjab government has offered 65 acre (520 kanal) to the United States Consulate to shift its offices outside the city and negotiations being held between the officials of the both sides for the last couple of months have entered into a final round.

Sources in the Lahore Development Authority (LDA) say the decision to offer this chunk of land was taken after both the sides agreed that shifting the consulate to a place far from the city area was the need of the hour from the security point of view.

“The US Consulate officials had requested the Punjab government to allocate land a bit away from the main city that could be secured. Therefore, we offered 65 acre land in the proposed diplomatic enclave in the LDA City,” an LDA official told Dawn on Sunday.

The land of seven villages— Kahna, Kacha, Thay Panju, Sidhar, Halloki, Rakh Jhedu and Toor Warraich —is being acquired for this mega housing project. The scheme has 2,000 kanals land for a diplomatic enclave and the 520 kanal of it has been offered to the US Consulate for its building.

“The land allocated for the new US Consulate exists exactly in Sidhar where the LDA has completed 80pc acquisition of the land. The total land being acquired in this village is about 4,000 kanal. We have so far acquired 3,500 kanal. The rest of 500 kanal will be acquired soon,” the official explained.

He said that besides the US, the officials of others countries, including Saudi Arabia and China, were also interested in establishing their consulates/diplomatic missions at the proposed diplomatic enclave. Sometime back, the Chinese ambassador visited the area and sought space for the Chinese consulate there.

Near the diplomatic enclave, an educational city has also been proposed where leading private education groups and individuals had shown their interest in establishing schools and colleges, the official claimed.

He said the enclave area was in the scheme’s phase-1, comprising about 24,000 kanal.

“We are planning to start development work in the phase-1 soon after acquiring the remaining land.”

It may be mentioned that both the government and US officials had agreed to shift the existing US Consulate near Shimal Hill to a new place due to the security situation caused by demonstrations.

In September 2012, a clash had erupted between the police and workers of the Majlis-i-Wahdat-i-Muslimeen when they, during a protest against a profane film, had tried to march on the consulate. The protesters had forced their way through many pickets before being stopped by police less than 50 metre away from the consulate.

As the police baton-charged the marchers, some protesters managed to sneak through the last barrier in a bid to forcibly enter the building and the place turned into a battlefield. Additional force had to be called to control the situation. Some protesters, who had succeeded in climbing up concrete barriers, set the US flag on fire and hoisted their flag on the roof of the building.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1265964>

ORANGE TRAIN: CHURCH LAND WILL NOT BE ACQUIRED, LHC TOLD

The Express Tribune, June 21st, 2016.

LAHORE: The Punjab government on Monday gave an undertaking before Lahore High Court (LHC) that it will not acquire any land from the Cathedral Church of Resurrection, The Mall.

The court then disposed of a petition filed by the church administration.

Earlier, the government had issued a notice to the church administration for acquiring three kanals of land to build a pumping station for the Orange Line Metro Train project. The church administration had moved the court against the notice. The management of the OLMT assured the court that it had changed its plan and would shift the pumping station to another site.

Lahore Commissioner Abdullah Khan Sumbal submitted a written undertaking before the LHC stating: “Neither the land nor the boundary wall or any other structure [of the church] is being affected by Orange Line Metro Train Project. In the initial plan, about three kanals of open land was required for a disposal station. However, in the revised plan, no land acquisition is involved as it has been decided to shift the disposal station to some other location.”

The church compound comprises 84 kanals. The building was completed in 1887.

When the petition was filed, the LHC had issued an interim stay order and stopped the project management from acquiring land. Shahid P Mehraj, dean of the church, told The Express Tribune that in a meeting with him and pastors of other churches, including St Andrew’s Church on Nabha Road, Naulakha Church on Nicholson Road, and St Paul’s Presbyterian Church, Khawaja Ahmad Hassaan had assured them that the structures of the cathedral and Naulakha churches would not be affected.

“They are also trying to save the structure of the St Paul’s Church’s where they had earlier planned to set up a staircase for the elevated station of the train. Hassaan had assured us that they would restore the 1.4 kanals open land of the church after constructing an underground track of the train at this site,” he said. The administration of St Andrew’s Church had conveyed its reservations to the OLMT project manager through a written letter.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1126679/orange-train-church-land-will-not-acquired-lhc-told/>

ASAMAI TEMPLES’ DESTRUCTION SHOWS SHEER LACK OF RESPECT

The Express Tribune, June 22nd, 2016

PESHAWAR: Respecting history, architecture and more importantly the religion of others, clearly holds little value for land mafia which has started demolishing Asamai Gate temples. These structures are important for the city’s religious minorities such as Sikhs and Hindus and also attract foreign tourists.

When Kashmiris residing in the area sold their property to Shinwaris and subsequent demolition of historic sites commenced, lawyers and activists started highlighting the issue.

“These mandirs are of historical importance and we will not allow them to be erased,” K-P Archaeology and Museums Director Dr Abdul Samad told The Express Tribune on Tuesday. “With the help of the district administration, we have stopped it [the destruction] and a guard has also been deployed there.” He added the district administration has also been quick to take action against the culprits.

Although the demolition has been halted at present, the sites are still in a crumbling state due to the damage. The structures are in close proximity with Masjid Mahabbat Khan, showing religious harmony was the order of the day in the past.

Three ancient Hindu temples and a small gurdwara complex are located near the Asamai Gate. According to tradition, the temples were named after the wife of Shiv Mahraj.

“These temples have been cast aside and their past grandeur has been forgotten for all intents and purposes,” Humayun Akhund, a local heritage enthusiast told The Express Tribune on Tuesday. “Among other places of Brahmanical conception in the city, the Asamai mandir and Laldwara hold an important place for Hindus.”

He added there are hundreds of Laldwara (small temples) in the city that have been completely erased from history. “Someone by the name of Raj Kapoor was their custodian and the land on which these temples were built in Gulozai village on Dalazak Road was used for agricultural purposes,” Akhund said.

After partition, when Hindus and Sikhs left the city, people inhabited the area. As a result, it was called Kashmir Colony.

Time has been cruel to these structures and only the shikara or minarets of the temples remain intact. Even those are being used by people as living spaces, resulting in the destruction of the shape and paintings inside.

New plans of turning the ground into a shopping plaza now threaten their existence.

According to Sikhs and Hindus, the land has allegedly been sold to a “tribesman from Khyber Agency in connivance with a nazim and an official of the Evacuee Trust Property Board”. The latter wants to build a shopping plaza on the site, but the Auqaf department has denied any such move. Advocate Moazam Butt also filed a writ petition in the high court, requesting declaration of all such plans as illegal and protection of the historical site.

Babaji Gurpal Singh, a Sikh elder, said these areas belonged to Hindus and Sikhs. “Even though they are now occupied by Kashmiri people, they cannot destroy them,” he said. Gurpal Singh confirmed three small Hindu temples and a Sikh gurdwara still stood at the site, albeit in a worn-out condition.

He added Peshawar’s centuries-old monuments must be protected from further destruction at the hands of greedy market forces who want nothing more than short-term gains. He added Asamai temples of Peshawar are documented in ancient records. The exact date of construction is not confirmed as small temples and gurdwaras were constructed at almost every corner of the city in those days.

In 1927, some repair and reconstruction was also carried out on the temples and a plaque was placed on the gateway to Asamai compound. It also had names of different mahants such as senior religious gurus who contributed towards the construction of the building.

“The city’s Hindu and Sikh-era remains should be protected at all costs as it is the cultural heritage of people. It represents a tolerant and multicultural society,” Akhund added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1127610/placing-little-importance-asamai-temples-destruction-shows-sheer-lack-respect/>

REAL-ESTATE PROJECT: KDA TO INTRODUCE NEW HOUSING SCHEME

The Express Tribune, June 22nd, 2016.

KARACHI: After the revival of the defunct Karachi Development Authority (KDA), its director-general Syed Nasir Abbas announced on Monday plans to introduce a new low-cost housing scheme.

According to the press statement, Abbas issued directions to prepare paperwork for the new scheme of the KDA, called ‘Scheme 46’. He also issued orders to compile the list of all KDA’s property and to take those properties of the KDA back that are currently under other departments.

Talking to The Express Tribune, Abbas said that for now this is just an idea to introduce a new scheme, for which they will have to acquire land from the revenue department. He added that even the area of the Scheme 46 has not been finalised yet, however, they were eyeing the land beyond Toll Plaza and Bahria Town. The new scheme, he said, will include commercial and residential plots, with five per cent quota for armed forces.

However, former Karachi Metropolitan Corporation administrator Fahim Zaman claimed that the land beyond Toll Plaza has already been acquired by Malir Development Authority (MDA) and it is not possible for the KDA to develop any new scheme on MDA's land.

What's ironic is that the KDA, which is unable to consolidate its old schemes, is now hoping to start a new one. A long-serving officer of the Karachi Development Authority (KDA), on condition of anonymity, told The Express Tribune that the statement issued by the KDA does not hold any ground. He claimed that it wasn't practically possible for the KDA to develop a new scheme on the MDA's land. "The KDA should consolidate its existing schemes," the official said. KDA's last schemes of Hawke's Bay and Taiser Town, which were later transferred to Lyari Development Authority (LDA) and the MDA respectively in the late 1980s, failed.

He added that the KDA, LDA and MDA will definitely have to meet the standards of development done by the Bahria Town and the DHA.

Meanwhile, MDA DG Imran Ata Soomro said that they have not gone through any such statement of KDA and added that they were not sure where the KDA will initiate the Scheme 46. Soomro further said that no other authority can develop any scheme on MDA's land.

Usually when the KDA starts a new scheme, they have to acquire land from Board of Revenue. Next they begin the physical planning in which the residential commercial and amenity plots are demarcated, according to the town planning's rules.

KDA's official explained that balloting is done for plots up to 400 yards, while auction takes place for plots above 400 yard and for commercial plots. After this, KDA has to ensure infrastructural development and provide utility lines in the area. For the low cost housing, the official said that around 80 yard plots are carved, which are way cheaper than the larger ones.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1127487/real-estate-project-kda-introduce-new-housing-scheme/>

BANGLADESH RIVER EATS UP LAND AND HOMES, TRAPPING POOR VILLAGERS

Dawn, June 23rd, 2016

Rafiqul Islam

Kurigram: Piyara Begum once had a happy life in Garuhara village by the Brahmaputra river in northern Bangladesh, but worsening erosion of the river banks has displaced her family seven times.

Now Piyara, 30, has taken shelter in Panchgachi village, eight kilometres away in the same sub-district of Kurigram Sadar.

"I am always concerned about where Piyara and her three children are living, and how she manages her family expenses, as she has lost everything due to erosion," said her uncle, Abdul Majid, who still lives in Garuhara village.

The loss of Piyara's home is taking a toll on her mental and physical health, he added.

Riverbank erosion is a common problem along the mighty Brahmaputra during the monsoon, but scientists say climate change is making the phenomenon worse by contributing to higher levels of flooding and siltation.

According to villagers in Garuhara, about 200 families have been displaced by erosion there in the last two years.

Majid fears that if the trend continues, the whole of the village will go underwater, rendering about 1,000 families homeless.

But some of those who want to escape that prospect cannot — because they are unable to turn their assets into the cash they need to pay for their move.

Abdul Malek, 45, a farmer in Garuhara, had 0.4 acres of agricultural land on the bank of the Brahmaputra, but the river washed away half his plot during the monsoon last year.

“My family had no problem in the past as we cultivated crops on the land to meet our food demand. But now we are facing trouble,” he said.

Malek and his family are planning to migrate to another part of the country after selling their homestead, but they cannot find a buyer because the property is at high risk of erosion.

Other families in Garuhara village who also want to sell up and leave are trapped there for the same reason.

The Brahmaputra is a transboundary river, originating in southwestern Tibet, flowing through the Himalayas, India’s Assam state and Bangladesh, and out into the Bay of Bengal.

Climate change has contributed to rapid siltation of the river in recent years, which is intensifying bank erosion during the monsoon, Bangladesh Water Resources Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud said.

A 2014 study from the International Union for Conservation of Nature showed that the flow of the Brahmaputra is influenced strongly by the melting of snow and ice upstream, mainly in the eastern Himalaya mountains.

This century, as temperatures rise, the river is likely to see an overall increase in flows throughout the year, driven by more rainfall, higher snow melt rates and expanded run-off areas, the study said.

Every year, the river carries silt from the Himalayas and deposits it downstream in Bangladesh, creating myriad islands known as chars.

When floods occur upstream on the Brahmaputra, amid more intense bursts of heavy rainfall linked to climate change, the silted-up river has less capacity to carry the huge volume of water, accelerating bank erosion.

Maminul Haque Sarker of the Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS), a Dhaka-based think tank, said the erosion rate has increased at some points of the river in Kurigram, Gaibandha, Jamalpur and Sirajganj districts.

A 2015 CEGIS study put the annual rate of erosion along the Brahmaputra at around 4,942 acres in recent years.

Bangladesh’s major rivers combined consume several thousand hectares of floodplain annually, destroying homes and infrastructure and leaving people landless and homeless.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1266576>

NAB SET TO FILE MULTI-BILLION REFERENCE AGAINST EX-GENERALS, PR OFFICIALS IN LAND SCAM

Dawn, June 25th, 2016

Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) is all set to file a multi-billion reference against three retired generals and former top officials of Pakistan Railways (PR) for their alleged involvement in illegal allotment of 141 acres of railway land to a private Royal Palm Country Club (RPCC) in Lahore in 2001.

The case is being investigated by NAB's Rawalpindi region and it has sought approval of the NAB headquarters for filing reference before the Accountability Court Islamabad.

The NAB's Rawalpindi region wrote to the bureau's headquarters in May this year that the case was ripe for becoming a reference. The RPCC is being run by its management for over a decade. An insider told Dawn that the reference was mature and it could be sent any time to the NAB Executive Board for its filing in the court. The investigation of the case that started in 2010 has been completed.

After the National Logistic Cell (NLC) scandal in which three retired generals were penalised for being involved in corruption, the case of RPCC will be the second major corruption scam in which former army generals will be tried.

The RPCC reference carries the names of retired Lt Gen Javed Ashraf Qazi who served as former secretary and chairman PR, retired Lt Gen Saeeduz Zafar who had also served as former secretary and chairman Railway board, retired Maj Gen Hamid Hassan Butt who worked as General Manager PR and a retired Brig Akhtar Ali Baig who served as a director PR.

PR officials involved in the scam included former general manager Iqbal Samad Khan, former member finance Khurshed Ahmed Khan, former divisional superintendent Abdul Ghaffar, deputy director marketing Waseem Aslam, former director marketing Khalid Naqi and a person Pervaiz Qureshi.

It is worth mentioning here that the case of NLC was taken by military authorities at a stage when NAB and Public Accounts Committee of the National Assembly had completed their investigations. Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, who was serving as PAC chairman in the previous PPP government, had told media before the case was taken up by the military authority in September 2012, that the PAC had completed its investigation into the RPCC scam.

Military authorities decided the case in August last year under which retired Maj Gen Khalid Zahir was 'dismissed from service', retired Lt Gen Afzal Muzaffar was awarded 'severe displeasure' and retired Lt-Gen Khalid Munir Khan was not found involved in any financial irregularity or misconduct and, therefore, was absolved from all charges.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1267131/nab-set-to-file-multi-billion-reference-against-ex-generals-pr-officials-in-land-scam>

LAND RECORDS IN FATA: PROPERTY RIGHTS TO BE RECORDED WITHIN 4 YEARS

The Express Tribune, June 25th, 2016.

Iftikhar Firdous

PESHAWAR: In most cases, the only land records in the tribal belt are verbal agreements between tribes and this has been the situation since the sixteenth century. However, things are now set to change. The FATA Secretariat has completed mapping the tribal areas with the help of the Geographic Information System (GIS) and will record property rights over the next four years.

The project is part of the reforms agenda to mainstream the tribal areas and will cost \$3.5 billion, shows a PC-1 available with The Express Tribune. Since land revenue and records are an integral part of economic development, it is extremely important to settle the issue as the displaced population of the area will be returning home, an official said. He added the project started its initial planning in March 2015.

“While the GIS mapping of all the tribal areas has been completed, the next phase is digitisation of the record” said the official. “By 2021, we shall have covered almost 70% of the land of Fata to digitise its record. He added 30% of the land was dotted with mountains.

The earliest of land records from Fata are dated back to the mid-sixteenth century when land was distributed on the basis of whether it was captured by a certain tribe. Most of these dealings were conducted verbally on the basis of the clan or khel, the sub-clan or tapa and theplareena or hereditary land.

The division is further made on the basis that the landowner or davetarleased out lands for services to working forces of tribes which includeddkasabgars, the clerics or serai and others. The shamilat are the collective lands of the tribes and sub-tribes and income is shared.

There are only areas where land records exist are Kurram Agency where the properties were recorded by the British once in 1905 and then a second time in 1943. In North Waziristan, the process was initiated by the British Raj in 1898. However, the rest of the tribal belt relied on verbal tradition and the jirga to settle land disputes.

Under Rewaj, the local tradition of land settlement has been given priority and the jirgas will be used to settle all disputes, explained a senior official involved in the initiative. “Almost all lands in Fata are recognisable by their owners” the official said. “Even the shamilat will be accordingly distributed. However, disputed land will not be included under the current initiative.”

He said the project will start from Kurram and North Waziristan agencies where formal settlements had taken place in the past, followed by the newly-established municipalities, command areas of significant dams, arable lands in Fata and then the rest.

The FATA Reforms Committee has proposed broad-based recommendations to bring the tribal areas at par with the rest of Pakistan.

The committee is finalising its recommendations to the federal government and will address issues related to the rule of law through Nizam-e-Adl.

Once the legal framework is extended to Fata, the official said rights of tribespeople will be brought to the level of the rest of the country.

He pointed out that property rights would be just as important as any others. Even documentation of the project clearly outlines the initiative as an effort to resolve property disputes in tribal areas to ensure lasting peace.

However; experts believe the process will not be an easy one as there are several disputed territories throughout Fata.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1129601/land-records-fata-property-rights-recorded-within-4-years/>

HINDUS SEEK POSSESSION OF WORSHIP PLACES

Dawn, June 26th, 2016

Ali Hazrat Bacha

PESHAWAR: Members of the All Pakistan Hindu Rights Movement on Saturday demanded that the government hand over all places of worship and attached properties to the members of Hindu community and ensure their protection. The demand was made during a demonstration organised by the APHRM at the Kashmiri Camp No987 here.

The participants held banners and placards inscribed with call for the immediate end to the occupation of their properties.

Speaking on the occasion, APHRM chairman Haroon Sarbdiyal said there were three temples and one gurdwara at Kashmir Camp but they were held by the Auqaf department.

He said the attached properties were meant for the caretakers and not for sale or construction of shopping plazas.

“We are opposed to the sale of the attached properties because the worship places are extremely vulnerable and it is duty of Auqaf and archaeology departments to share details of properties and worship places with Hindus and Sikhs and hand over the properties to the minority groups,” he said.

Mr. Haroon demanded that the National Accountability Bureau intervene and take action against all those government officials and property dealers for bargaining over the properties under the custody of Evacuee Trust Property Board.

He said the federal government had formed a 22-member committee to protect the rights of minorities but ironically, minorities had no representation in it.

The APHRM chairman said Hindus and Sikhs had no proper school and community centre and that their land was on sale in different cities of the country. He claimed the Auqaf department was not giving details about the minorities’ properties occupied by influential people in Peshawar, Dera Ismail Khan and other cities.

He warned the sale of attached properties was not acceptable to Hindus.

“Hindus have no objection to the shifting of Kashmiri families anywhere or giving them any lucrative place but the sale of entire attached properties should be stopped immediately,” he said.

Also in the day, auqaf department assistant administrator Asif Khan told reporters at the Peshawar Press Club that four worship places of Hindus were fully protected and his department was responsible for its protection.

“On our request, the district administration has sealed up three temples and one gurdwara located on the premises of Kashmir Camp. No one had ever tried to demolish them,” he said, adding that the Kashmiri families had protected minorities since their arrival in 1947.

The temples, he said were non-functional and could not be handed over to minorities without permission of the federal government because the tombs were built on small pieces of land where security would be major issue for the people.

Muazzam Butt advocate said he had filed a petition in the Peshawar High Court against possible demolition of the temples but the auqaf department assured him that it would ensure protection of the worship places.

He said under Article 20 of the Constitution, every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice and propagate his/ her religion.

“Every religious denomination and every sect thereof shall have the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions.

“I had filed petition in the high court to ensure through court that the worship places of Hindus and Sikhs would remain safe,” he said.

He said in Pakistan the worship places of Hindus were safe but in India the Muslims and their worship places were totally unsafe.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1267330>

LAND DISPUTE CLAIMS THREE LIVES IN MARDAN

Dawn, June 26th, 2016

Mardan: A land dispute claimed three lives in Toru Mera area here on Saturday.

Police and witnesses said members of Zarshad and Naseer groups resorted to heavy firing after a heated argument. The firing resulted in deaths of three persons from both the groups, who were identified as Zarshad, Naseer and Arif. One of the victims, Arif, belonged to the Naseer group.

It was also reportedly said that Naseer and Arif were landowners while Zarshad was their tenant.

The officials of Toru police station registered cross FIRs in the case.

In the first FIR, lodged on the complaint of widow of slain Zarshad, police booked accused Itbar Khan, Ajab Khan, Naseer Khan, Subhanullah and Maroof.

The second FIR was registered on the complaint of Waheedullah, brother of slain Naseer Khan, against Sarfaraz, Irfanullah, Tahseenullah, Adalat and Izhar.

Police claimed to have arrested two of the accused, Itbar Khan and Maroof.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1267335>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 13TH TO JUNE 19TH 2016

FRESH SURVEY TO ACQUIRE LAND FOR MOTORWAY PROJECT

Dawn, June 13th, 2016

MANSEHRA: The revenue department has started a fresh survey of the land being acquired in Dodial area here for the Hassanadal-Thakot Motorway project.

The survey teams comprising officials of revenue department and National Highway Authority, which is executing the project, visited the various areas in Dodail and Shinkiari to determine price of the land in accordance with the formula already set by the government.

The teams are empowered to determine price of land being acquired for motorway project in accordance with the nature of the land as price of agriculture land is higher than that of the barren land.

“We have been directed not to purchase agriculture land from the project. But where there is no alternative we will also purchase agriculture land at higher prices,” said a surveyor on condition of anonymity.

Landowners in Dodial had raised objections on the motorway route and the price of their land fixed by the revenue department, which forced the government to start a fresh survey.

Sources said a delegation of landowners had met with deputy commissioner Iqbal Hussain and raised objection to the 'low' price of their land and route of the project. Following which, the DC had written a letter to the revenue department to fix prices in accordance with the nature of the land.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had performed ground-breaking of the second phase of the motorway from Havalian to Chaterplan at a public gathering here, last month.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1264484>

REAL ESTATE IN KARACHI TO STAY UNAFFECTED DESPITE BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Express Tribune, June 13th, 2016.

Shahram Haq

LAHORE: Pakistan's real estate markets will continue to carry on with their business as usual, despite the fundamentally tumultuous proposals announced in the new budget.

The underlying reason for the seemingly nonchalant attitude is most likely how the system is designed – understating property values with no mechanism in place to correct it.

In the new budget, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar proposed innovative taxes for the real estate market, while scaling upwards the taxes already in place. For instance, a capital gains tax of 10% was proposed if the property is sold within five years of purchase.

Meanwhile, withholding tax on sale of property was increased from 0.5% to 1% for filers and from 1% to 2% for non-filers. Similarly, withholding tax on purchase was increased from 1% to 2% for filers and 2% to 4% for non-filers.

However, the new proposals will only take effect if the prices of property exceed Rs3 million. The price of the land, however, is not the same as the market value at which these properties are traded.

The value of land, in the on-going scenario where government officials have been unable to keep the official records updated, is estimated by means of [calculated] conjecture by the deputy commissioner's office (DC). This DC value has not been updated for much of the country for a number of years, and remains to be even considered for revision in a city like Karachi, according to property dealers.

Despite many residential plots values hovering around tens of millions of rupees in Karachi, the DC value lists many of them in hundreds of thousands of rupees. The discrepancy means that Karachi remains largely unaffected from Ishaq Dar's proposal.

For the plots whose DC value exceeds Rs3 million, it would still be comparably little vis-à-vis the market price, so 1% or 2% of DC value pales in comparison to similar proportional taxes applied on their actual value.

“The proposed tax will not affect the Karachi market as it will be levied at DC rates which are much lower than the current land prices. The real estate market of Karachi is escalating rapidly and we are unable to satisfy our clientele's requirements due to short supply and massive demand,” said Ajay Khatwani, a Karachi based agent while talking with Tribune.

The discrepancy between DC rates and market values extends to other cities as well. But recently a drive launched in Punjab, largely focused in Lahore, aims to revise the DC prices of several plots and bring them closer to the corresponding market values.

This is primarily fuelling the ire of real estate agents who say that they'll have to pay significantly higher taxes, which adds to the cost of a transaction, deterring many investors from venturing into real estate transactions.

“Average DC value of DHA plots has been revised to from Rs2.2 million to Rs4 million recently, and we are expecting another hike that would probably push their DC value beyond Rs6 million,” said Abdul Ghafoor, CEO of Pak Properties.

If the second wave of appreciation were to go through, it could increase withholding taxes on transactions by over 170%, and if the withholding taxes were to be revised upwards as per the new budget's proposal, the increase could exceed 440%.

Up till this point, much of the transaction cost taken into account consisted of withholding taxes, however, imposition of a 10% capital gains tax also remains to be configured.

Capital gain occurs when a real estate's value appreciates, so a capital gains tax tries to procure a cut of the profit from the real estate trader.

Currently when property is traded, land seller has to pay 0.5% capital gains tax if he's a filer and 1% for non-filer, given that the property is sold within two years of purchase. Furthermore, buyer pays advance income tax of 1% in case of filer, and 2% for non-filer. This means that for a hypothetical trade where Rs4 million property changes hands, which was revalue upwards from Rs2 million, these costs could add up to Rs100,000 for non-filer.

Under the new regime, however, these costs would add up to Rs280,000, up by a precipitous 180%. Even this computation does not take into account withholding taxes, which could increase the aggregate cost to Rs520,000 from pre-budget cost of Rs220,000.

However, that is not all. “These are so many other taxes, such as the federal taxes, provincial taxes and Society transfer fees....,” said Waseem Tariq, CEO of F-1 Properties, a Lahore based agency.

On a similar note, Tariq warned that even imputing these costs would not provide a complete picture of the ballooning cost of a real estate transaction, since provincial taxes are expected to increase the costs further.

“Provinces are charging taxes in shape of 2% CVT and 3% stamp duty, and we are expecting the increase in these levies too in the new provincial budgets,” Tariq said.

It remains to be seen whether such measures will prove to significantly damper the real estate market, but real estate dealers are already worried that it would significantly curb speculative trading, at least in the official channels.

“People will make alternate agreements to avoid heavy taxation, this will result in increased cases of fraud and strengthen the land mafias, already active to exploit the masses,” Ghafoor added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1121418/budget-2016-17-real-estate-karachi-stay-unaffected/>

DR ASIM GOT ACRES OF LAND ALLOTTED TO HIM IN A DAY, COURT TOLD
Dawn, June 14th, 2016

Ishaq Tanoli

KARACHI: The revenue department has not received a reply from Chief Minister House to its letter seeking cancellation of acres of land allotted to former petroleum minister Dr Asim Hussain, an accountability court was told on Monday.

During cross-examination in Rs460 billion corruption reference, a revenue official told the defence counsel that acres of land had been allotted to the former minister in Korangi, Malir and other areas in one day.

The former federal minister along with his accomplices has been accused of allegedly misusing his authority for getting plots allotted fraudulently and encroaching upon state land for the expansion of Dr Ziauddin Hospital/Trust, money laundering, commission through fertilizer cartel for illegal curtailment of gas and fraud with public in the name of charity hospital.

Hammaduddin, a section officer in revenue department, was cross-examined by defence counsel on Monday. At the previous hearing, he had recorded his testimony and submitted the record of the land allotted to the former minister.

He deposed before the accountability court that the revenue department had not received any response to the letter sent to CM House for the cancellation of the allotment.

The defence counsel raised objections to the documents submitted by the revenue official.

The judge of the accountability court-IV, Saad Qureshi, adjourned the hearing till July 4 for further cross-examination and to record evidence of other witnesses.

Former petroleum secretary Ejaz Chaudhry, former chief executive officer of the Karachi Dock Labour Board Safdar Hussain, ex-director of the Karachi Development Authority Syed Athar Hussain and Ziauddin Hospital's finance director Abdul Hameed are also accused in the reference.

Initially, the Rangers had picked up Dr Asim in August last year and detained him for three months. Later, he was handed over to police and the National Accountability Bureau.

The NAB had also filed another reference of over Rs17 billion against him and some top officials of the Sui Southern Gas Company Limited and the Oil and Gas Development Company Limited for fraudulently awarding gas contracts of five gas fields to Jamshoro Joint Venture Limited.

Moreover, Dr Asim has also been facing a trial before an antiterrorism court in a case for allegedly treating and harbouring suspected terrorists and gangsters at the North Nazimabad and Clifton branches of his hospital.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1264641>

ZULFIKARABAD TO BRING A REVOLUTION IN SINDH, SAYS CM

KARACHI: The establishment of the new residential, industrial and recreational city of Zulfikarabad between twin districts of Sujawal and Thatta will bring about a revolution in residential and commercial activities in the province, said Sindh Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah, adding that it will provide easy access to the coal rich Tharparkar district.

He was presiding over a meeting on the proposed city at CM House on Tuesday. Chief secretary Siddique Memon, principal secretary to CM Alamuddin Bullo, Board of Revenue senior member Rizwan Memon, additional chief secretary for development Mohammad Waseem, irrigation secretary Zaheer Hyder Shah and others attended the meeting.

Zulfikarabad Development Authority (ZDA) managing director Ali Mumtaz Zaidi, while giving a presentation to the chief minister, proposed an alternative site of Haleji-Kohistan area, spreading over 60,000 acres, for Zulfikarabad city as it is close to the National and Super highways.

He added that it will carry the distinction of becoming the first city of the province that offers a lake view. The development of the new city will convert the deserted landscape of Haleji and Kohistan into resorts and horticultural and residential areas, said Zaidi.

Zaidi also proposed a cargo airport in private sector along the lines of Sialkot private cargo airport for the new city. He added that Karachi is getting more populated with each passing day, posing enormous problems to the citizens. He was of the view that planners should think about lessening the population pressure.

The economic zone of Zulfikarabad city has already been designated at Shah Bandar, Kharochhan, on the east of River Indus. The possibility of establishing a port and shipyard at Keti Bandar on the west of River Indus was also discussed during the presentation.

The chief minister said that he has urged the federal government to include Keti Bandar sea port project into the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. "I hope it will be included [considering] its strategic, geographic and commercial importance," he said.

During the presentation, it was also proposed that the site of the 44-kilometre-long Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Expressway and six-kilometre-long bridge on River Indus from Dhandhari be shifted to Ghoranabri, connecting the economically vibrant area of Mirpur Sakro on the west of River Indus to Chuhar Jamali lying on the east of River Indus.

According to the presentation, this will provide easy access between the remote areas of Thatta and the urban areas of Karachi and reduce the distance of Sujawal, Badin and Tharparakar to Karachi.

The chief minister directed the finance minister to explore ways and means to develop the proposed Zulfikarabad city and its industrial area and recreational sites through Public-Private Partnership.

Endorsing the presentation, Shah ordered the constitution of a committee headed by the finance minister, with MNAs and MPAs of Thatta and Sujawal, local government minister, Zulfikarabad Development Authority managing director and others as part of the committee. The committee was directed to file its recommendations within three weeks.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1122638/expanding-horizons-zulfikarabad-bring-revolution-sindh-says-cm/>

HAVELIAN-THAKOT CPEC PROJECT: FED GOVT'S SURVEY FOR ACQUISITION OF LAND OPPOSED
Business Recorder, June 16, 2016

PESHAWAR: Corridor Front, a forum of various political parties, has strongly protested over survey initiated by the federal government to acquire land between Havelian and Thakot of Hazara Division for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and asked Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to avoid cooperation in this regard.

Addressing at a joint press conference at Peshawar Press Club on Wednesday Corridor Front Convener Dr Said Alam Mehsud said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Pervez Khattak had taken stand on the CPEC issue which was highly appreciated by people across the province but he failed to maintain his stand accordingly.

Flanked by Farid Toofan of Awami National Party (Wali), Shahab Khattak Advocate of Awami Workers Party, Zubair Anjum of Jamiat Ulema Islam-Nazriati, Zahir Shah Safi advocate of Pakhtunkhwa Olasi Tehreek, Rahim Shah Advocate

of Fata Lawyers Forum, Mehsuf said that initiating survey for acquisition of land from Havelian to Thakot was meant that provincial government had also agreed to extend support to it.

“Our fight was with federal government for rights of the people and if provincial government also joined hand with it then for the Corridor Front there will be no difference for us between federal and provincial governments,” Dr Mehsud said.

He said it was impossible with support of provincial government to impose Section-4, saying that the CM should clarify provincial government’s position on that issue. He said the government had not allocated funds for western route which proved its mala fide intentions about the KP government.

He informed that the Corridor Front had taken very firm decision to launch agitation against the federal government for ignoring the KP province, which they added had already confronted several destructions in shape of terrorism, natural calamity and etc.

“We are not against CPEC but rights of our province are being usurped by the federal government which we cannot ignore,” he said. He further said that if the provincial government did not clarify its position then rallies would also be taken out against it.

The Planning Commission of Pakistan, he said was not competent enough to deal with the mega project like CPEC, which they have never experienced in past, therefore, a corridor authority be established, in which equal representation of the four provinces including Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Gilgit-Baltistan be ensured.

He stressed the need for an environmental study of the project in Gilgit-Baltistan and Hazara areas wherein the greenery will adversely affect due to CPEC because five thousands vehicles will ply on the route daily, saying that the northern areas should be provided electricity and natural gas in order to save the forests and greenery.

ANP-W’s Farid Toofan urged the people to take a unified stand on CPEC, come to the roads for their due rights because no one is ready to give rights of their province sans use of public force, so the people should take the matter seriously to ensure the bright future of their coming generations.

He made it clear that the coalition of the Corridor Front was not an alliance for elections but it was formed to snatch their rights from the federal government, which he added had been stolen by the federal government. He said sacrifices in the war on terror were rendered by people of KP province and now the benefits were given to Punjab.

Toofan alleged that the federal government, especially federal minister for planning and development Ahsan Iqbal had tried to deceive the participants of an All-Parties Conference, saying that if he (Ahsan Iqbal) was right he should made public minutes of the APCs.

The Corridor Front component groups announced that they would launch protest movement after Eid-ul-Fitr if federal government failed to ensure due share of KP in the CPEC in black and white.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/06/16/11-page/769531-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 6TH TO JUNE 12TH 2016
INDUSTRY, FARMERS PROTEST LAND ACQUISITION FOR LDA CITY
Dawn, June 7th, 2016

LAHORE: A large number of industry workers, owners and farmers staged on Monday a day-long protest against the ongoing land acquisition for the Lahore Development Authority's mega housing project—the LDA City, demanding the government to stop the process.

The protesters gathered at Kahna on main Ferozepur road around 10am under the banner of “Kahna Kacha Industrial Association” and later marched towards the Metro buses stop at Gajjumata, near Roohi Drain, where they burnt tyres on both sides of the road, blocking it for traffic and staged a sit-in from 12 noon to 6pm.

Carrying banners inscribed with slogans against land acquisition for the project, the protesters said they would never allow the government to acquire land for a housing project at by rendering thousands of workers jobless, disturbing the industry owners and consuming agricultural land.

“We are surprised why the LDA wants to shut the industry and make us jobless. It is naked highhandedness against thousands of workers who are unanimous in resisting the project by all means,” Akhtar Hussain, a protesting worker, told Dawn. A number of farmers also joined the protesters.

“The LDA officials are also threatening us. They are asking farmers to either surrender the land for the project or be ready for forced eviction. But we have decided that we will foil such bids,” says Haider, a protester.

Since the government allegedly wanted to get land by all means under the law, the farmers, industry owners and workers had joined hands against the plan, he added. He urged the government to drop the idea of LDA City.

“If the government continued with such tactics, the protest can be widened,” he warned.

Meanwhile, a number of motorists remained stuck on both sides of the road for at least six hours after the protesters blocked it by burning tyres.

“I am stuck here for a long time. Though they (wardens) are trying to divert the traffic, I won't take the alternative route because it is too long,” a rickshaw driver carrying two passengers told Dawn at Chungi Amarsadhu intersection.

The sizzling June heat compounded the misery of those stuck in the traffic mess.

The protesters rejected all requests, even by LDA senior officials, for ending the protest and insisted on assurances by no less than the authority's Director General Nabeel Javaid and chief minister's advisor Khawaja Ahmad Hassan.

Meanwhile, PML-N former MNA Rana Mubashir reached the spot and announced that he would support the protesters stance during their next meetings with the government high-ups.

“I am with you. Please stop this protest and ease the public mobility in such a hot weather,” LDA chief metropolitan planner (CMP) quoted Mr Mubashir as having told a group of protesters.

He said the LDA's land acquisition department had just started issuing notices to those whose property had been demarcated for the project under the law.

“Since we have yet to start demolition, we welcome the industrialists and their workers to hold talks with us. We assure them that we will resolve this issue,” he said.

He said more than 15 factories were operating in the project area since long.

The protesters finally announced ending the protest after their representatives were given firm assurance by Mr Mubashir to resolve the issue within a few days.

According to officials, the total land required for the plan measured around 69,685 kanals. This land includes 2,749.2 kanals of already approved private housing schemes, 318.6-kanals of graveyards, 910.4 kanals of industry, 596.6 kanals owned by army, 261.4 kanals belonging to other parties, 58,404.2 kanals of agriculture land, 1,834.1 kanals of Ring Road and 4,610.5 kanals of settlements (villages/ localities/structures etc).

LCCI: The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) president urged the LDA to stop the plan to convert Kahna Kacha Industrial Estate into a residential colony.

In a statement issued here, LCCI President Sheikh Muhammad Arshad said: “Unfortunately, LDA officials never bothered to take the LCCI and industrialists of the area on board and put the survival of hundreds of industrialists and thousands of workers at stake with a single stroke of pen”.

He said the LDA move would ultimately hit the national economy hard.

He said the LDA should keep in view ground reality while taking such decision, adding that demolition of the industrial estate would not only deprive thousands of workers of their jobs but also cause insecurity among the investors.

Mr Arshad said the Punjab government should immediately take notice of the situation as forced implementation of the plan would bring down the graph of government’s popularity. “It is the worst use of Land Acquisition Act 1894 which is now eating up Kahna Kacha Industrial Estate where over hundreds industrial units are not only providing employment to thousands of workers but also bringing in precious foreign exchange.

The LCCI chief said at a time when the country was struggling to enhance exports, collapse of Kahna Industrial Estate would further aggravate the situation.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1263280>

SGA SEEKS IMMEDIATE REPAIR OF ROHRI CANAL REGULATOR

Dawn, June 7th, 2016

HYDERABAD: The Sindh Growers Alliance (SGA) has called for immediate repair of the full-fall regulator’s wall at Moro saying that the damage has led to the closure of the main Rohri canal. It apprehended that around 2.6 million acres of land dependent on the canal might otherwise become barren.

SGA president Nawab Zubair Talpur told journalists at a press conference at the press club on Monday that irrigation department had become paralysed because of rampant corruption, rising nepotism and poor administration.

He said that Rohri main canal had been closed thrice over past six months. It was closed in January and March for 50 days and 15 days, respectively, and once again it had to be closed on Sunday after a portion of the regulator wall collapsed at Moro.

The repair work could take around 20-25 days and closure of the canal for that period could destroy almost all main crops as 2.6 million acres of land was dependent on the canal, he warned.

He said that the cracks had appeared in the regulator’s wall months ago and a tender for its repair was floated in January but the repair work did not start until the wall gave way under pressure.

He appealed to chief justice of Supreme Court to take suo motu notice of the regulator's wall collapse as it would affect lives of millions of people associated with agriculture.

Mr Talpur appreciated federal budget and said the government had brought down rates of fertiliser to Rs1,400 and Diammonium Phosphate (DAP) to Rs2,500 and reduced GST (general sales tax) on pesticides to 10 per cent although it should be zero per cent.

He said the federal government announced power tariff of Rs5.35 per unit for tube-wells under one-unit, one-rate policy across the country. Growers of Sindh were paying power tariff of Rs14.35 per unit for tube-well while Punjab growers were paying Rs8.35 for the same, he said.

SGA executive committee member Mohammad Anwar Kamboh demanded the Sindh government should fix support price of cotton at Rs3,500 per 40 kg immediately.

He said the government had set a target of 15 million bales of cotton last year but it could hardly get 7.3 million bales after revising the target several times. This year, the government had also set the target at 15 million bales but if Rohri canal remained closed it would be difficult to attain the target, he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1263179>

OVERSEAS PAKISTANIS FACE PROPERTY GRAB BACK HOME

The Express Tribune, June 9th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: Almost 10 million overseas Pakistanis, who contribute over \$18.45 billion to the national economy, are plagued by problems such as land grabbing on properties back home and a general lack of support from the country's diplomatic missions abroad, a document submitted by a Senate panel stated on Wednesday.

The report, prepared by the Senate's Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, pointed out that overseas Pakistanis faced "corrupt practices at all levels" in the country and exploitation and abuse at the hands of immigration officials, fake visa agents, job promoters and human traffickers alike. It also criticized Pakistani missions abroad for non-cooperation with Pakistanis living abroad.

The report was presented by the panel's convener Lieutenant General (retd) Abdul Qayum. The most common problem, the report said, faced by Overseas Pakistanis was the seizure of their properties in Pakistan by criminal elements.

The hardships of Overseas Pakistanis "start the day they are exposed to rigours of prevalent recruitment and selection procedure", it said.

The report says: "Properties of overseas Pakistanis are encroached (upon in Pakistan) and no department extends the desired help, while court cases take (a) long (time to settle) and cannot be pursued, while overseas Pakistanis reside abroad."

In the backdrop of mounting complaints by Pakistanis abroad about Pakistani diplomats' disinterest in redressing their grievances, the report noted that favouritism and political appointments at Pakistani embassies seriously compromised their integrity and functioning on merit.

"Performance of diplomatic missions abroad varies according to personalities of our ambassadors/heads of missions and embassy staff concerned — political appointees selected for embassies based on affiliations and disregarding criteria of

merit only look after their self interest. They also lack the vision and capacity to effectively address problems of overseas Pakistanis.”

The document stated that Pakistanis abroad also faced problem on NADRA-related issues and other official procedures, including renewal of passports and issuance of visas.

The report urged the federal government to direct the respective ministries of overseas Pakistanis, human resource development, interior and foreign affairs to tackle the following issues: Illegal human trafficking by agents, exploitation by fake recruiting agencies for issuance of visas, ignorance of host country laws by recruited workers while signing agreements, exploitation of workers by employers in host countries, including delayed and non-payment of salaries and substandard working conditions, problems in remittances through official channels, expensive medical treatment in host countries, lengthy procedure for transportation of dead bodies from host countries, delayed payment of death compensation for deceased overseas workers’ families, discriminatory treatment to Pakistani prisoners and detainees abroad, and several other related issues.

The report also recommended that manpower export licences should be issued “only to credible Pakistanis and educated professionals,” through a transparent system.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1119179/multiple-problems-overseas-pakistanis-face-property-grab-back-home/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 30TH TO JUNE 5TH 2016
COST IMPOSED ON KDA, LITIGANT FOR ABUSING JUDICIAL PROCESS
Dawn, May 31st, 2016

Tahir Siddiqui

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court has imposed a cost of Rs200,000 on a litigant for having illegally occupied government land for over 35 years.

The court also directed the respondent officials of the Karachi Development Authority (KDA) to deposit the cost of Rs100,000 for their inaction for 16 years.

Applicant Shaikh Imran Ahmed had obtained an interim stay order from the SHC on Jan 25, 2001 after the KDA moved the court against the judgement of a lower court in his favour regarding the possession of a 522-square-yard plot in North Karachi.

The court observed in its judgement that the applicant was guilty of abusing the process of court and “apparently officials of the Anti-Encroachment Cell, KDA/law department of the KDA were also in connivance with the applicant”.

The judge further remarked that there was no serious contest from the KDA when their action was challenged by the applicant in court. “If the court start accepting such frivolous claims and start issuing directions to the respondent/ KDA who were already looking for a pretext of court orders to regularise illegal possession on the government land then every inch of the state land would be awarded to the unscrupulous persons by the unscrupulous government functionaries in violation of the legal requirements for disposal of government land in the name of possession of occupants for several years,” the judge added.

The judge wrote that the courts were not supposed to help illegal occupants of the state land to perpetuate their possession on the government land. “The applicant had no case on merit and even on law, however, he had a meaningful long silence of KDA administration with him,” he remarked.

The court observed that the KDA never showed any interest in the revision application and on every date of hearing the applicant was facilitated in getting adjournment and, therefore, the interim status quo order had continued ever since.

“The applicant has been so confident about taking adjournment that from 2-4-2008 his counsel stopped coming to the court and the applicant was comfortable getting adjournment mostly on the frivolous ground that his counsel was busy in another court or not well,” he said.

The judge wrote in his judgement that the court on March 7, 2016 noticed the abuse of the court process by the applicant, who claimed adjournment on the pretext of illness of his counsel who had not appeared in court for the past eight years.

“In view of the above facts and discussion while dismissing this revision application, I am constrained to impose cost of Rs200,000 on the applicant for illegally occupying government land for 35-40 years including 26 years in courts, and the respondents are also directed to deposit cost of Rs100,000 on account of their willful inaction for 16 years which has definitely resulted in damaging the image of judiciary,” the judge ordered.

The bench further ordered the KDA to remove the encroachment from the state land within 10 days and file a compliance report in court.

The court also directed the KDA to hold an inquiry against its officer in terms of Section 8(2) of the Encroachment Act, 1975.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1261695>

CONSTRUCTION SECTOR DEVELOPMENT BOARD TO BE SET UP

Dawn, June 5th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: The government will establish a ‘Construction Sector Development Board to regulate and manage the real estate sector.

It has allocated Rs18.55 billion to focus on the provision and expansion of sustainable and affordable urban municipal services and housing facilities in collaboration with the private sector.

According to the annual plan document, the housing sector will be developed keeping in view increasing urbanisation and growth in population. A modern ‘Housing Information System’ will be established to provide data on housing demand and supply.

The private sector will be encouraged and facilitated to transform ‘katchi abadis’ into adequate sustainable settlements through the provision of low-cost and low-income housing, along with adequate allied infrastructure, like sewerage, clean water, gas and electricity.

The federal government will facilitate and support provincial and regional governments to shift the development trend towards vertical expansion, especially in the city centres to provide adequate and affordable residential facilities in addition to commercial space to citizens.

According to the document, zoning laws will be revised to cater to the growing demand for commercial and parking space in large urban centres. This will involve use of ‘mixed use’ areas – residential and commercial.

Decent and affordable mass transit systems along the pedestrian networks will gradually be established in all mega cities and rapidly growing secondary cities in a phased manner to transform Pakistani cities into cleaner and eco-friendly cities.

The community-based participation will be promoted to transform cities into ‘creative’ cities, where local and innovative solutions are found to local problems through community organisations in collaboration with the city governments.

These improvements will be the first step in developing ‘smart cities’ – cities that are capable of adapting to increase complexity and demand for knowledge communication given urban expansion.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1262824/construction-sector-development-board-to-be-set-up>

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July 2016

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

LOOKING BEYOND INFRASTRUCTURE, PUNJAB BUILDS KNOWLEDGE PARK

The Express Tribune, July 25th, 2016.

Shahram Haq

LAHORE: The Punjab government has initiated yet another project and this time its scope is not limited to key infrastructure development.

The project is a combination of academia and business and research centres and has the potential to convert the province into a knowledge-based economy.

The \$1-billion Lahore Knowledge Park was conceived a few years ago, following which Lahore Knowledge Park Company was established in October 2014 to implement this huge project.

The management, which has almost completed its groundwork, is hopeful infrastructure work will commence by September this year and within the next 18 months, its first phase consisting of basic infrastructure facilities along with a couple of life-sciences universities will be completed, hence paving the way for private investment in the project.

“It is a very interesting concept from which the entire world is benefitting,” said Lahore Knowledge Park Chief Executive Officer Shahid Zaman while talking to The Express Tribune.

He said the project had been designed on the public-private partnership model where the Punjab government would spend 20% and the remaining 80% equity would be invested by the private sector over a span of 25 years.

“Lahore Knowledge Park will be a fourth generation park being established over 852 acres of land located a few kilometres from the Pak-India border. It will consist of universities and schools, science and innovation hubs, a retail and central business district, a residential district, an entertainment zone and green areas,” said Zaman while giving details.

“The project will serve as a growth engine for Lahore as it will promote education in five key areas, namely, life sciences and bio-technology, design and creative industry, information technology, computer sciences and science and engineering,” he added.

The financial plan of the knowledge park has been designed by Singapore-based company Frost and Sullivan. Once completed, it is estimated, the project will generate around Rs173 billion in labour income and Rs35 billion in tax revenue.

The total revenue over a period of 25 years is expected to be Rs5.9 trillion, Rs253 billion in labour income and Rs178 billion in corporate income taxes.

“The project has gained immense popularity among local and international investors and a couple of foreign firms have offered to invest the entire equity of \$1 billion, however, we as a government want to keep the operational control and encourage more investors to bring their experience and innovation to this park,” said Zaman.

“The project, once operational, will create 40,000 jobs and produce 11,200 PhDs by 2040.”

“I think there is no need for the government to invest more, especially in the first phase that includes basic infrastructure and a couple of universities, since we have been approached by eight to 10 universities willing to open their campuses at the park,” said board member and entrepreneur Almas Hyder.

He said since it was a long-term project, successive governments would have to amend their rules and regulations accordingly for its sustainability.

Lahore University of Management Sciences (Lums) Vice Chancellor and Lahore Knowledge Park Board Member Dr Sohail Naqvi said it all depended on the governments as to how much they intended to invest in higher education.

“The spending has increased over the years and we may see more of such knowledge parks in the future.”

He said the knowledge park board had seasoned and experienced members and the change in governments would not affect the project.

“The project is valuable and attitudes of the governments are now changing; politicians now continue the projects, the main example of which is the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1148416/promoting-education-research-looking-beyond-infrastructure-punjab-builds-knowledge-park/>

DALITS DEMAND LAND FOR GRAVEYARD

Dawn, July 26th, 2016

LARKANA: A group of Harijans held a demonstration outside the press club here on Monday in protest against encroachment of land reserved for the community's graveyard on Mehar road.

Sanat Lal, Santosh Kumar, Mohan and Babu Lal who led the protest said that they used to cremate their dead on a three-acre piece of land allotted to the Harijans Balmiki community on Mehar road which had now been encroached upon.

The Sindh government was reluctant to give them possession of another six-acre piece of land allotted to them for the graveyard on the Larkana-Naudero road, they said.

They said that Hindus did not allow them to use their graveyard for final rituals and demanded the government and district administration should take action against the encroachers and immediately give them possession of the six acres.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1273195/dalits-demand-land-for-graveyard>

REAL ESTATE MARKET: KARACHI, LAHORE SHOW IMPRESSIVE GROWTH IN FIRST HALF

The Express Tribune, July 27th, 2016.

Shahram Haq

LAHORE: The real estate markets of Pakistan's top metropolitan cities continue to witness an encouraging trend for the first six months of the current year.

However, introduction of a new mechanism to gauge the value of property instead of the deputy commissioner's value in order to promote greater degree of transparency and new taxes in the federal budget 2016-17 may well have lasting effects on the real estate market for the rest of the year.

Although a committee has been formed to somewhat limit the effects of the legal changes, real estate experts argue that it all depends on the outcome of negotiations between the stakeholders and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar. Successful talks can further improve the market, however, if things remain undecided for long then the uncertainty may turn investors away.

According to a report launched by Zameen.com, Pakistan's first property portal, Karachi and Lahore in the first six months of current year have shown an impressive growth, however, Islamabad failed to attract investors.

The property market of the port city of Karachi improved sharply during the first six months of 2016.

As per the data collected by Zameen.com, DHA City Karachi (DCK) performed remarkably well as prices of 500-yard plots increased 23.91%. However, DCK property values are still not on a par with those in DHA Karachi. So, investors are naturally attracted to the former locality.

Development work in Bahria Town Karachi is on schedule and a steady rise in prices is evident in the locality. During the first half of 2016, prices of a 250-yard plot rose 11.82%.

Gulshan-e-Iqbal, on the other hand, showed stability and did not impress investors, as a moderate growth was the order of the day for the 250-yard plots in the locality.

Lahore's property market performed remarkably well in the first half of 2016. Prices spiked in various localities, for instance the price of 10-marla plots in DHA Lahore's Phases VII to IX increased 13.48%, placing it high on the list of coveted areas for real estate investment.

The 10-marla plots of Bahria Orchard also performed remarkably well, as prices rose substantially by 23.08%. Meanwhile, for the value of one-kanal plot in the locality, moderate growth was observed.

Despite legal complications, the LDA Avenue I also saw controlled growth in the value of one-kanal plots and exponential growth in the value of 10-marla plots. Wapda Town and DHA Lahore's Phases I to VI, however, showed mediocre growth, the report said.

Investors were disappointed with the performance of the capital city in the first half of the year. Controlled growth was observed only in DHA Islamabad's one-kanal and 10 marla plots. This locality performed well because of the on-going construction of the signal-free Islamabad Expressway and the development work that was being carried out in several parts of DHA Islamabad.

Meanwhile, Bahria Town Islamabad/Rawalpindi, Sector B-17, Sector E-11 and Sector F-11 squeezed out unexceptional growth.

Bahria Town alone showed a 10.20% and 6.45% drop in prices of one-kanal and 10 marla categories, respectively.

Sector F-11's commercial properties showed better activity due to the Capital Development Authority's strict new policy towards non-confirming use of residential properties in the city.

"The first half of the year has proven to be promising for the property sectors of Lahore and Karachi. However, we are not too taken aback over the slow performance of Islamabad's property market, as it still has the potential to grow," said Zameen.com Chief Executive Officer Zeeshan Ali Khan.

The markets will continue to suffer for a few more months due to a nearly stalled market in July, added Mian Talat, a Lahore-based real estate leader.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1150064/real-estate-market-karachi-lahore-show-impressive-growth-first-half/>

SC MAKES IT EASIER TO PROVE LAND-GRABBING CASES

Dawn, July 31st, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Observing that it was nearly impossible for any victim of land-grabbing or illegal dispossession to prove that the accused is, in fact, a part of an organised land-grabbing mafia or qabza group, the Supreme Court has held that any complaint received under the Illegal Dispossession Act, 2005 will be decided purely on the merits of the complaint.

In the past, victims of organised land-grabs had no way to prove that they had been swindled or defrauded, because qabza groups usually operated through proxies.

"The verdict is a warning for all potential buyers; buy properties with their eyes open and after thorough research, preferably from the actual owner, and that too after exercising extreme caution," a legal expert told Dawn. He said the law sets no pre-conditions; therefore, if a buyer is trapped by some unscrupulous person who fraudulently sells him the property, the buyer will be liable for punishment if a case is instituted against him in a court of law. In such cases, the law entails ten years in prison with compensation paid to the victim.

"In any proceedings initiated under the Illegal Dispossession Act, 2005, the deciding issues would be: whether the offence against a lawful owner or occupier, as described in the complaint, has indeed taken place and whether it is the accused who has committed it without any lawful authority," says a judgement, authored by Justice Faisal Arab.

The relaxed criteria can possibly make it substantially easier for victims of land-grabs to plead and win their cases.

Justice Arab was a member of the five-judge Supreme Court bench that heard a set of petitions, moved by the federal government, Ms Gulshan Bibi and Mohammad Sirajuddin Khan.

"Anyone found committing the offence described under Section 3 would thus be amenable to prosecution under the provisions of the Illegal Dispossession Act, 2005 and no past record of the accused needs to be gone into by the court," the judgement emphasised, adding that once the offence stands proved, the accused cannot escape punishment.

Earlier, the judgement explained, a complaint under the act was only maintained if the accused bore the antecedents of being a land grabber or member of a 'qabza group' — a distinct class of offenders who usurp the property of others in an organised manner.

They usually target unoccupied or deserted urban properties belonging to the federal or the provincial governments, municipal authorities, autonomous or semi-autonomous bodies, trust or waqf, and at times even properties belonging to private individuals, by resorting to different forms of fraud and forgery.

Professional land grabbers, the judgement said, first have the target property transferred in the name of a person who enjoys their confidence and then create a third party interest. In doing so, the land grabbers themselves remain hidden because they do their business through proxies, so that the real beneficiary cannot be identified, the judgement explained, adding that with each new act of illegal dispossession, the face of the proxy kept changing.

Thus, courts seized with complaints of illegal dispossession were facing great difficulty in deciding matters since the complainant had to establish that the accused belongs to a land mafia, while all accused invariably deny the charges.

The denial of such a plea would serve the best defence against his prosecution since extrinsic evidence would be required to establish that the accused is, in fact, a professional land grabber.

This evidence would depend on the testimony of persons who may not be known to the complainant at all, thus the only alternative to this would be that in some judicial pronouncement, the accused has already been declared to be a known, acknowledged and established land grabber.

Anything short of classifying the accused as a known land grabber would not be sufficient to prosecute him under the law, the judgement recalled, adding that the complainant would thus be required to cross this hurdle. Failure to do so would result in the dismissal of the case, irrespective of the truthfulness of the complaint, the judgement said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1274417>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 18TH TO JULY 24TH 2016
HAZY PICTURE OF PROPERTY VALUATION
Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, July 18th, 2016

Mohiuddin Aazim

For two weeks beginning July 1, activity in the real estate sector slumped as the new rules for property valuation took effect and fresh investment in the real estate came to a virtual halt.

Real estate prices have also began falling in Karachi in response to the budgetary announcement that the fair market price of immovable property would be determined by valuers appointed by the State Bank of Pakistan.

On July 4, the SBP announced the names of the property valuers. Those who thought the implementation of this move might be delayed lost all hopes and became panicky, a fact acknowledged by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar.

But by mid-July the government succumbed to the growing pressure of the real estate tycoons and the speculators in the property business who were hurt by the move. The minister then held a brainstorming session with senior officials of the Federal Bureau of Revenue to find ways for mitigating the growing opposition of the new property valuation rules.

Chances are that some adjustments may have to be made to appease the special interests, according to the sources privy to Dar's meeting with FBR officials. They say that the FBR has already started examining some proposals forwarded by these influential lobbies directly and through a chartered accountancy firm that seeks to tone down the new rules of the property valuation.

The move to involve professional, SBP-approved valuers in ascertaining fair market prices of immovable property is aimed at ending under-declaration, discouraging channelling of ill-gotten money into real estate and boosting government revenue. According to real estate experts, trillions of rupees worth of black money has been whitened over the past three decades by corrupt officials and money launders, taking advantage of a faulty system of property valuation.

Previously, the job of property valuation was carried out by the revenue officials under an archaic system which did not reflect the market price. For example various properties in DHA, Karachi, were valued at Rs1,650 per square yard, against the prevailing market price of up to Rs155,000.

Occasional moves to check this menace and control the spread of the parallel economy could not succeed.

Real estate transactions are made in cash or through Benami accounts. The properties are registered at rates fixed by the Deputy-Commissioner or the revenue tables of land prices set by the district or provincial governments.

Such properties were sold at market prices which helped tax evaders earn capital gains that were tax-exempt till FY12. In FY13, however, this exemption was withdrawn and 10 and 5pc levy was imposed respectively on the capital gain earned by those who sold their properties within 1-2 years of the purchase. The capital gain on the sale of property after two years of ownership, however, remained exempted from income tax till FY16.

In the FY17 budget, the taxable period for capital gains on disposal of immovable property has been extended up to five years. And, a flat 10pc tax has now been made applicable on the seller of the immovable property if he sells it within five years of purchase.

But through an amendment to section 68 of the Income Tax Ordinance, 2001, the task of determining fair market price of property has been given to the professional valuers approved by the SBP.

The SBP has, accordingly, announced a 106-member approved panel of the property valuers. Nineteen of them have been permitted to determine the fair market of a property of unlimited amount, 59 for a property worth up to Rs1.5bn and 28 others for a property worth no more than Rs500m.

The central bank has made it clear to all the approved valuers that the panel will remain effective till the time the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan sets up its own regulatory regime for valuers and necessary amendment is made to the relevant law.

“Now, the reason why property prices have begun falling is that the prospective buyers know that the market value to be determined by professional buyers will be far more than what it would have been had the value been determined under the current revenue value tables,” says a former chairman of the Association of Builders and Developers.

Buying a high priced property and paying 10pc capital gain tax on it if it is sold before five years means a lot more additional payment in real terms. This has lessened the incentive for investment hoppers, tax-evaders and money launders to a great extent. That is why property prices are coming down not only in posh areas like Defence Housing Schemes and Clifton but also in middle-income group neighborhoods like Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Gulistan-Jauhar and North Nazimabad etc, realtors say. President DHA and Clifton Association of Real Estate Agents Raja Mazhar claims that property prices in posh areas have declined by 10-20pc.

Interestingly, whereas the government claims that the move of determining fair market price of the real estate will discourage investment of ill-gotten money in this sector and help in reducing land prices, businessmen think otherwise.

Business leaders fear that since the fair market prices of properties determined by SBP-approved valuers would need a final nod from Inland Revenue commissioners, it would promote corruption. KCCI President Younus Muhammad Bashir has demanded that the new rule must be revoked forthwith.

The KCCI also demanded that the previous system for property valuation, through a pre-defined category-wise table, must continue but this property valuation table be revised more frequently and more categories be added to it.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1271539/hazy-picture-of-property-valuation>

PROPERTY MARKET EXPECTS GOVT TO TAKE BACK CONTROVERSIAL TAX DECISIONS

The Express Tribune, July 18th, 2016.

Shahram Haq

LAHORE: Real estate markets of Pakistan are likely to resume business in full swing this week after remaining somewhat stagnant for about a month as market players are confident they will be able to get maximum relief from Finance Minister Ishaq Dar in a meeting slated for Monday.

At present, real estate agents of Lahore and Karachi – two big markets of the country – are protesting against the increase in taxes and revision in the land evaluation mechanism in the 2016-17 budget announced in early June.

However, some players believe that the government will take back the decisions, which will spur activities in property markets across the country.

“We hope the government withdraws most of the decisions taken in the recent budget,” said Mian Talat, a leader of realtors in Lahore.

He was of the view that the government would continue collecting taxes on the value of land set by the provincial revenue departments with some upward revision in the price of properties considered undervalued.

This way it is expected to withdraw the new law that calls for assessment of property values by experts of the State Bank of Pakistan and levy of tax on actual value of the property. Currently, a huge difference exists between government-determined and market values of the real estate, especially in Karachi.

In the budget, the federal government has also imposed 10% withholding tax on the transfer of immovable property in an attempt to increase tax revenues from the sector.

Most of the real estate sector is ready to accept the upward revision in the official land prices. In Lahore, the value of properties set by the district commissioners has been revised a few days ago, which has brought some of the most tradable properties in the tax net.

Such taxes are only applicable if the official or market price of the property is more than Rs3 million.

However, the stakeholders are not willing to pay federal taxes on land prices that will be evaluated by the State Bank of Pakistan and insist they want to pay taxes according to prices set by the provincial governments.

According to real estate agents, market activities have nearly come to a halt as no one can afford to pay taxes at such high rates.

Housing societies are taking an undertaking from those few people who dare to transfer their properties that they will pay taxes at agreed rates in the future. But most of the people have either stopped or reversed their deals temporarily.

Defence and Clifton Association of Real Estate Agents President Raja Mazhar said there were few areas in Karachi where property prices stood undervalued.

“Most of the areas in the city are giving revenues to the government and the property is undervalued in only a few areas; we are ready to work with the departments concerned for a decent revision,” he said.

Mazhar claimed that real estate markets were in panic and flight of capital had begun, adding the government would soon realise aftershocks of the new taxes and legislation.

“It seems that the government has made the legislation without proper homework; it lacks the ability to implement its own laws,” he remarked.

The real estate players are hopeful that Monday will bring good news for them, but many are prepared to expand the scope of protests if things remain unclear.

“We will close our businesses and will stage country-wide protests if things do not turn around for the better,” Mazhar said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1143619/budget-fy17-property-market-expects-govt-take-back-decisions/>

50 COMMERCIAL ENTITIES BEING RUN BY ARMED FORCES

Dawn, July 21st, 2016

Amir Wasim

ISLAMABAD: The Senate was provided on Wednesday details of commercial entities being run by various wings of the armed forces in the country.

In a written reply to a question asked by Senator Farhatullah Babar of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Defence Minister Khwaja Asif informed the house that there were nearly 50 “projects, units and housing colonies” functioning in the country under the administrative control of Fauji Foundation, Shaheen Foundation, Bahria Foundation, Army Welfare Trust (AWT) and Defence Housing Authorities (DHAs).

According to the details provided in the reply, eight DHAs were established in major cities. These DHAs — mostly created through ordinances — are in Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi-Islamabad, Multan, Gujranwala, Bahawalpur, Peshawar and Quetta.

Besides, there are 16 “projects/units” functioning under the AWT, 15 under the Fauji Foundation and 11 under the Shaheen Foundation.

The house was informed that Bahria Foundation was not administrating any housing colony in Pakistan, “however, an offshore tolling type LNG project is under its consideration”.

The Projects/Units Being Run By The AWT Are:

Two stud farms in Pakpattan and Okara

Army Welfare Sugar Mills, Badin
Askari Project (shoe and woollen), Lahore
Army Welfare Mess and Blue Lagoon Restaurant, Rawalpindi
Real estate comprising three small housing schemes in Lahore, Badaber and Sangjani
Askari General Insurance Co Ltd Rawalpindi
Askari Aviation Services, Rawalpindi
MAL Pakistan Ltd Karachi
Askari Guards (Pvt) Ltd, head office (HO) in Rawalpindi
Askari Fuels (CNG) with HO in Rawalpindi
Askari Seeds, Okara
Askari Enterprises, Rawalpindi
Fauji Security Services (acquired from Fauji Foundation), HO in Rawalpindi
Askari Apparel, Lahore
Askari Lagoon, Faisalabad.
The projects/units under Fauji Foundation are:

Fauji Cereals
Foundation Gas
Fauji Fertiliser Company Ltd
Fauji Cement Co Ltd
Fauji Oil Terminal and Distillery Co Ltd
Fauji Kabirwala Power Company Ltd
Foundation Power Co (Dharki) Ltd
Askari Cement Ltd
Askari Bank Ltd
Foundation Wind Energy (I and II) Ltd
Noon Pakistan Ltd Lahore
Fauji Meat Ltd
Fauji Fertiliser Bin Qasim Ltd
Fauji Akbar Partia Marine Terminal Ltd, HO in Karachi.

A company under the name of Pakistan Maroc Phosphore SA was set up in Morocco by the Fauji Foundation in 2008.

Similarly, the projects, units and housing colonies under the administrative control of Shaheen Foundation, which is a trust of the Pakistan Air Force, are:

Shaheen Airport Services
Shaheen Aerotraders
Shaheen Knitwear
Shaheen Complex, Karachi
Shaheen Complex, Lahore
Shaheen Medical Services
Hawk Advertising
Fazaia Welfare Education School System
SAPS Aviation College
Air Eagle Aviation Academy
Shaheen Welfare Housing Scheme, Peshawar.

The Senate was told that Shaheen Foundation was established in 1977 under the Charitable Endowment Act 1890 “to promote welfare activities for the benefit of serving and retired PAF personnel, including civilians and their dependents, and to this end generate fund through industrial and commercial enterprises”.

REAL ESTATE BUBBLE

Dawn, July 21st, 2016

Moazzam Husain

THE question in many people's minds over the Eid holidays was what was going to happen to property prices going forward. The preceding week, an important amendment had been made in the income tax rules whereby property valuations, for purposes of tax, would be determined not by the provincial governments but by valuers appointed by the State Bank of Pakistan.

Values would be determined at market prices instead of the historically low documented prices that appear in transfer deeds and registration documents.

What this means is that at the time of a transaction, the seller would have to approach a nominated valuer and get the property price assessed. The transaction would then get recorded in the register at no less than this assessed price.

That property prices are undervalued — in some areas hugely while in others only marginally — is an open secret. This has created a colossal black economy and where undocumented wealth, often from dubious sources, finds a tax haven. The money so invested does not productively contribute to any economic activity. It creates an artificial bubble in prices and fuels speculation.

Bona fide projects offering above market returns were having trouble attracting investors when so much 'funny money' was being made in real estate speculation over these last four or so years. So it was with all this in mind that in May this year I had submitted a recommendation for the Federal Budget 2016-17 — a one liner that read "please get money out of property and channelised towards more productive economic endeavours".

Now the new rules are looking to address this and gradually bring this money into the tax net. That this was going to negatively affect property prices was a foregone conclusion. The question in everybody's mind was: By how much?

That answer would appear to depend on two things: one, the sincerity of purpose with which the government now follows through with implementing the mechanism. In other words, how watertight and incorruptible it makes the process. Two, the price erosion on each property will be in direct proportion to the extent to which it has been undervalued in the register.

Finally, how and over what time period would this erosion play out? Just as during times of a speculative boom, an expectation of higher future prices sees buyers scurrying to make a quick gain before dumping it on the next buyer, in a prelude to a slump the opposite happens.

To begin with, many potential buyers would not have the full amount equivalent in 'white money' with which to pay the property's market price. On top of that, since many buyers were in it for speculative gain only, and not for any genuine need, and now all of a sudden that this no longer seems possible, many of them would evaporate. That would mean fewer buyers.

Where potential buyers will now take their money is anybody's guess. My hunch is they would look towards other avenues of speculative investment of which there aren't very many. But they should not be of any concern in our calculations. Instead, the big opportunity is that if the rules are implemented as they are intended, then all investment that

is currently held in property assets becomes documented, in other words 'white money', and from here it can move and find other avenues of productive investment in other parts of the economy.

That is a good thing, although the process is likely to be a long-drawn one as sellers would be in no hurry to sell in a declining market, except those who perhaps need the cash urgently or had invested borrowed money. In this way it may be at least another 12 months before the market arrives at a new equilibrium.

Meantime, is there anything more the government can do? Here's an idea:

A disproportionate amount of Pakistan's wealth is held in real estate assets. Progressive economies need new business start-ups, growing emerging businesses and commercialisation of innovative ideas. The State Bank has an opportunity to now spur the development of alternate asset classes such as venture capital funds, private equity and investment funds.

Additionally, information memorandums containing business and project investment opportunities, on which some prior due diligence has been conducted by the State Bank or its nominated agency, can be showcased to institutional and individual investors.

Even a capital gains tax waiver may be offered as an inducement. With some imagination, money can be induced out of property and channelised towards productive economic endeavours that would deepen capital markets, spur economic growth and result in job creation.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1272131/real-estate-bubble>

SUKI KINARA SITE: LAND OWNERS SEEK MARKET RATE COMPENSATION

The Express Tribune, July 21st, 2016.

Peer Muhammad

ISLAMABAD: Land owners of the Suki Kinara dam, to be constructed in the Mansehra district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), are seeking market rate compensation of their lands, saying area in Khaghan-Naran is very expensive due to its commercial importance.

"The price per kanal being paid to owners at far flung areas of Chilas and Kohistan for Diamer-Bhasha dam ranges between Rs1.20 to 1.60 million per kanal which is totally barren," said ex-nazim Khaghan and District Council Mansehra Member Syed Moeenul Haq Shah while talking to The Express Tribune.

He is also representing the land owners Action Committee.

Contrary to this, he said, the prices offered here are between Rs0.1 million and Rs1.50 million per kanal, which is unjust as the current market rate is about Rs2 million to Rs10 million.

"The owners of the land are demanding a just price for their precious land or at least a price compatible to the one offered at other places," said Shah.

Planning Commission Chairman Ahsan Iqbal had earlier accused the people of Kaghan and Naran of asking unreasonable prices for their lands coming under the Suki Kinara Dam project, which caused a delay in starting the project.

Meanwhile, the locals say their land is very costly because of the area's tourism potential and its off-season crops and it is unfair that the government wants to pay a lower price of 0.6% of the total cost.

Shah said the total land required for the project is 1,500 kanals and people are demanding Rs2.20 million to 2.80 million per kanal, which is lower than the market rates. “Considering this price, the cost comes to about \$36 million, which is again less than 2% of the cost of the project,” he said.

Defending the locals, Shah further said that the ‘would-be affectees’ are seeking compensation for lands and not the price of houses and forest but the government was not ready to give that even. “Almost 1,500 families will be displaced; we must treat them fairly otherwise it could have adverse consequences.

Suki Kinara 870 megawatt (MW) hydroelectric power project has now been made part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects. It faced a delay of one year because the K-P government failed to resolve the land acquisition issue.

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<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1146098/suki-kinara-site-land-owners-seek-market-rate-compensation/>

DEVELOPMENT: BALOCHISTAN SEEKS TO EXPAND GWADAR INDUSTRIAL ZONE

The Express Tribune, July 21st, 2016.

QUETTA: The Balochistan government has agreed to provide 3,000 acres of land for the expansion of Gwadar industrial zone in order to make it further functional, said Industries and Trade Secretary Noor Muhammad Jomezai on Wednesday.

Chairing a meeting of the Gwadar Industrial Estate and Development Authority, he said that the provincial government was taking steps to offer incentives to investors and industrialists.

Besides protection of investment, industrialists would be allotted land on fair price and soft conditions, Jomezai added.

“Real estate activities should be discouraged in the industrial zone,” said the secretary, adding that the plots allotted for setting up industries should not be utilised for any other purpose.

“All hurdles in the way of development of the industrial zone should be removed.

“The industrialists should be assured that the government is in favour of development of industries and revival of sick units.”

He said that possible tax exemption would also be ensured for the industries, adding that the development of industrial zone would help ensure employment opportunities for thousands of people, which would prove to be a milestone for the development of the province as well as the Makran belt.

Jomezai directed further improvements to the plan and urged swift work on the Gwadar industrial zone.

It was also decided to shift the office of the industrial zone from Karachi to Gwadar in a bid to enhance industrial activities in the zone.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1146100/development-balochistan-seeks-expand-gwadar-industrial-zone/>

EXPANSION OF GWADAR INDUSTRIAL ZONE BALOCHISTAN GOVT TO PROVIDE 3,000 ACRES OF LAND

Business Recorder, 21 July 2016

QUETTA: Balochistan provincial government would provide 3,000 acre of land for expansion of Gwadar Industrial Zone in order to make it further functional, Secretary Industries and Trade, Noor Muhammad Jomezai said on Wednesday.

The provincial government was taking practical steps to give incentives for investors and industrialists to develop industries and enhance its activities, he said while chairing a meeting of Gwadar Industrial Estate and Development Authority.

Besides protection of the investment, the industrial would be allotted land on proper price and soft conditions, he added.

The Secretary said, the real estate activities should be discouraged in the Industrial Zone, adding, the plots allotted for setting up of industries should not be utilized for any other purpose. He said, all the hurdles in the way of the development of the industrial zone should be removed.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/07/21/5-page/778168-news.html>

PROPERTY VALUATIONS

Dawn, July 23rd, 2016

THE government will try and spin the decision as a victory for the taxman and a step towards the further documentation of the economy.

But it is nothing short of a climbdown and a backtracking on a flagship budgetary promise of Finance Minister Ishaq Dar.

Next week, government negotiators and real estate representatives will meet once again and compare the valuations of the property market in 18 cities across the country that are now to be drawn up separately by the FBR and the private sector.

The original scheme, announced with much fanfare by Mr Dar in his budget speech, had aimed to drive a stake through the property scam in the country: a capital gains tax was to be levied at 10pc for properties sold within five years of purchase and, crucially, the value of the property was to be determined by a panel of State Bank-approved valuers.

If implemented, that scheme would have had a triple effect: raising billions in revenue for the state; deepening the economy's documentation; and driving speculators out of the property market, thereby possibly reducing the cost of home ownership for millions.

The sheer ambition of the original scheme was itself a red flag. A weak state led by a government with a poor record on reforms was always going to struggle to implement the plan unveiled in the budget.

Yet, what is perhaps most dispiriting about the ongoing negotiations with the real estate sector is how the government is leaning towards giving fresh legal cover to the patently illegal.

Drawing up separate valuations for 18 cities means that the government will now negotiate with the private sector to fix land prices that both sides know to be false — the real estate sector's fundamental aim being to avoid declaring the true market value of properties in official documentation.

Indeed, following the climbdown on bringing traders into the withholding tax net, the government is sending a signal to the market that its edicts are, in fact, only the start of a negotiating process with the private sector and that the latter will eventually emerge victorious if it remains organised and unified in its opposition to the government's agenda.

Perhaps the real flaw in the government's approach is that it appears to see everything through the prism of short-term revenue generation.

Certainly, the net gain from this clash with the sector may be a few extra billion rupees for the exchequer. But those gains pale in comparison to the net social losses of a property sector that is skewed immorally towards the richest in society and that has become a haven for the unscrupulous.

By pretending to take on powerful vested interests with an ill-conceived plan the government may unwittingly be allowing those interests to further entrench themselves.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1272642>

EXPANDING FARMS HARM NATURE ON 58 PCT OF WORLD'S LAND: STUDY
Business Recorder, July 23, 2016

Alister Doyle

An expansion of farmland has damaged nature beyond a “safe” limit on 58 percent of the world’s land surface, threatening natural services such as crop pollination by insects, scientists said on last Thursday.

Grasslands, such as in United States, Argentina, South Africa or Central Asia, are among natural systems most affected by declines in animals and plants caused by human activities, they wrote in the journal Science.

Northern pine forests and tundra are least affected, they said.

Overall, the study said the diversity of animals and plants on 58 percent of the world’s land area, home to 71 percent of all people, had fallen below a safe threshold, driven mainly by an expansion of farmland as well as by roads and bigger cities.

They defined “safe” as places where the local abundance of species was at least 90 percent of levels in comparable regions untouched by human activity. They based the conclusions on 2.38 million records for 39,123 species at 18,659 sites.

The declines raise risks for natural services such as pollination of food crops by insects, production of nutrients by soils, or the ability of forests to absorb carbon dioxide as a natural brake on climate change.

“If we keep degrading biodiversity there will be a point where it’s very difficult to support agriculture,” lead author Tim Newbold of University College London said.

Still, the study said there was uncertainty about the 90 percent threshold for damage – some other scientists believe nature can withstand bigger declines.

“Given the stakes it’s best to be precautionary,” said Newbold, who previously worked at the UN Environment Programme. Intact natural systems are most resilient to shocks such as droughts, floods, disease or global warming.

“Decision-makers worry a lot about economic recessions, but an ecological recession could have even worse consequences,” Andy Purvis, another author of the study at the Natural History Museum, London, said in a statement.

“Until and unless we can bring biodiversity back up, we’re playing ecological roulette,” he said.

The report complements work by a separate group of scientists seeking to outline planetary boundaries, or safe limits for human prosperity in areas such as biodiversity, climate change, ocean acidification and freshwater use.

Sarah Cornell, who coordinates research into planetary boundaries at the Stockholm Resilience Center, welcomed findings as a step to pin down links between biodiversity and ecosystems.

Loss of biodiversity “means a much more fragile system,” she said.-Reuters

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/07/23/23-page/778797-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 11TH TO JULY 17TH 2016
VERDICT ON PLEAS FOR PROTECTION OF 11 HERITAGE SITES RESERVED
Dawn, July 15th, 2016

LAHORE: A Lahore High Court division bench on Thursday reserved judgment on petitions regarding protection of 11 heritage sites allegedly hit by the Orange Line Metro Train project.

Before reserving the judgment, the bench comprising Justice Abid Aziz Sheikh and Justice Shahid Karim observed that the law envisaged protection of the heritage but the government wanted to protect the project.

“The court will do justice which will also be seen,” the bench said.

During the hearing, Supreme Court Bar Association President Syed Ali Zafar, who is assisting the court on the matter, stated it was right of the government to construct and develop public infrastructure in a city to meet the demands of the people.

He said it was not for the court to stop the government from planning, expanding and developing infrastructure and it was an established fact that the courts did not interfere in policy matters.

However, he said, the development must always be sustainable and whenever the government undertook an urban planning project it must ensure that it did not harm any protected site.

He said if any development scheme was contrary to the Constitution or the law and fundamental rights, the courts had an obligation to stop such project on the principle that a vibrant existing urban fabric was connected to the right of life.

He relied on the Antiquities Act, 1975 and said this law specified that all monuments, objects and sites of historical interest were protected from any damage and as such imposed a positive duty on the government, while at the same time prohibiting it from allowing any construction within 200-feet of a monument.

Mr Zafar said if Orange Line Metro Train project would harm any antiquity, there could not be any question of giving any permission for construction. He suggested the government should appoint a panel of international experts having qualification and experience to determine the damage and effect of the project on the monuments of Lahore and then make a final decision based on the report of such experts.

In case the experts concluded that there was damage to the historical sites, then the relevant changes should be made in the project to ensure that no harm whatsoever was caused to the monuments, he concluded.

When asked, Punjab Advocate General Shakilul Rehman Khan told the bench that seeking assistance of international experts on the project was not possible for the government at this stage.

Advocate Azhar Siddique, counsel for civil society, said the petitioners had no objection if a commission comprising international experts was formed to determine the impact of the project on monuments.

The bench reserved the judgment on the petitions regarding the heritage sites while adjourning hearing of main case against the whole project for a date after the court summer vacation.

The bench had on Jan 28, 2016 stayed construction work of the project within 200-foot radius of 11 heritage sites — Shalimar Garden, Gulabi Bagh Gateway, Buddhu ka Awa, Chauburji, Zebunnisa’s Tomb, Lakhshmi Building, General Post Office, Aiwan-i-Auqaf, Supreme Court’s Lahore Registry building, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church at Nabha Road and Baba Mauj Darya Bukhari Shrine.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1270989>

PROPOSAL FOR FIXING VALUES OF PROPERTIES

Dawn, July 15th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting will be convened on Monday to consider various proposals, including amnesty scheme for determining fair market value of immovable properties across the country to raise revenue from the sector.

In the budget 2016-17, the government has introduced an amendment in the income tax law that the fair market value of any property to maximise capital gains tax will be determined by a panel of approved valuers of the State Bank of Pakistan.

However, the decision was not supported by any rules as how to implement the decision.

An official source in the FBR said that Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has ordered the tax authorities to review various proposals of the stakeholders regarding fixing values of properties for the purpose of taxing.

Dar asked the FBR chairman to attain views of all stakeholders in the matter at the earliest.

Several proposals were submitted to the FBR for framing rules for the implementation of the decision. However, the one proposal submitted to Finance Minister Ishaq Dar for consideration was of a Karachi-based chartered accountant Ashfaq Tola, who was a former member of the tax reforms commission.

Mr. Tola listed several issues, which might arise because of changes in the procedure for the valuation of immovable property.

At the outset, he said there will be collusion between valuers and tax officials for financial incentives, which may result in loss of revenue to exchequer. He further said the valuers and tax officials might also collude to understate the value of a property to reduce their capital gains tax liability.

The valuation of properties by different valuers might result in difficulty of benchmarking as the process of valuation is judgmental.

The change procedure may also result in unnecessarily excessive litigation as the taxpayers as well as tax officials might disagree with valuations of each other's appointed valuers due to no benchmarking.

Three proposals are on the table for consideration in the meeting on Monday to maximise capital gains tax.

According to a proposal, government might announce a onetime amnesty to declare property at actual cost and pay taxes at 2pc or 3pc on the amount of difference between declared cost and actual cost.

Such differential amount may be added to declare assets after availing such scheme and payment of taxes. Also, if the property is held for more than five years, no such taxes may be paid.

The second proposal suggested a fixed tax regime for the immovable property. Under this, it was suggested to introduce a fixed tax of 3pc to be paid at every time of sale of property, which is to be charged on amount of difference between collector value and market value.

Under the third proposal, it was proposed that provinces must be convinced to revamp values in valuation table notified by the collector of the district under section 27-A of the Stamp Act, 1899 at par with the current market values. In cases where the difference between values as per valuation tables and market value is substantial, the values might be gradually increased over a period of two to three years.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1270829/proposal-for-fixing-values-of-properties>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 3RD TO JULY 10TH 2016
NEW PROPERTY TAX IN PUNJAB TO HURT ORDINARY CITIZENS
Dawn, July 6th, 2016

LAHORE: The new property tax imposed on 'utilised' plots which aims to create more provincial revenues is likely to burden ordinary citizens and pensioners rather squeeze the speculative trade of real estate.

The Punjab government has fixed two years of delivery of possession to the owner for the levy of tax.

The government amended the Punjab Immoveable Property Tax Act 1958 through the Punjab Finance Bill 2016, paving the way for the provincial Excise and Taxation Department to collect property tax with different ratios for different categories on vacant plots in order to increase tax base and check speculative trade of real estate.

Other objectives of the tax are to improve of supply of housing by discouraging retention of vacant plots for long periods of time and strengthen local government tax base.

Officials initially estimate the revenue collection of around Rs250 million in the current fiscal year 2016-17.

The tax, which has actually been imposed to bring 'unbridled' real estate sector into tax net, is going to pass major relief to the same sector as the Punjab cabinet had reportedly given approval that the tax would be levied after two years of delivery of possession to the owner against the proposal of the E&T Department which did not want the time frame.

Informed sources privy to the development told Dawn the two-year relaxation would ultimately provide relief to property investors and totally burden ordinary citizens including pensioners who retain property for personal reasons.

They said the real estate sector would easily skip tax for seven categories throughout the province because of time period relaxation 'intentionally' given to them.

Sources, however, claimed the tax ratios for vacant properties would be affordable for citizens.

Moreover, the provision relating to exemption of building and lands used exclusively for educational purposes is proposed to be clarified by adding an explanation.

Punjab E&T Director General Akram Ashraf Gondal said the department, despite having provision in the law for collecting property tax from lands, did not invoke it in the past but the amendment had now empowered the department to tax the vacant land/plots as a policy.

He said the department was planning to start a detailed survey of such empty residential, commercial and industrial properties with the help of city development authorities, cooperative housing societies and local administrations to compile a data and notify tax as per rate of land, hoping to complete the process by the end of September 2016.

Gondal further said the new amendment would help the provincial government to collect more revenues, document provincial economy and overcome speculative business in sale and purchase of properties.

He said the tax with multiple and reasonable rates would be applicable on transfer and acquisition of property.

The amendments: As per amendment in Act V of 1958, (a) In section 2, after clause (a) the following new clause (aa) shall be inserted: “(aa) ‘buildings and lands’ include vacant plots or a parcel or portion thereof having fixed boundaries intended for specific purpose including residential, commercial and industrial use”.

(b) In section 4: (i) in clause (d), the following explanation shall be inserted and shall be deemed always to have been so inserted: Explanation: The expression ‘buildings and lands or portions thereof’ shall mean the buildings and lands or portions thereof owned by the government or by a body owned or controlled by the government”

(ii) For clause (i), the following shall be substituted: “(i) One residential house or vacant plot, measuring an area not exceeding five marla, used or to be used for residential purpose except a residential house or vacant plot with annual value of more than five thousand rupees situated in a part of a rating area and categorised as category-A area” and

(iii) after clause (i), the following clause (j) shall be inserted:

“(j) a vacant plot whose possession is handed over to the owner for the first time and remains vacant or without construction for a period not more than two years from date of delivery of possession.

Explanation-If possession is handed over to any owner, the period of two years shall be reckoned from the date even if the plot is transferred to a subsequent owner.”

(c) In section 5-A, for the full stop, a semi colon shall be substituted and thereafter, the following proviso shall be inserted:

“Provided that the annual value of a vacant plot shall be in accordance with the valuation table notified for respective locality of the rating area” and

(d) after section 16, the following section 16-A shall be inserted: “The authority responsible for registering an instrument of sale, gift or exchange of immovable property shall not register the instrument unless it is satisfied that the outstanding tax has been paid.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1269276/new-property-tax-in-punjab-to-hurt-ordinary-citizens>

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August 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 29TH TO SEPTEMBER 4TH 2016

SINDH'S PACE OF PROGRESS

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, August 29th, 2016

Mohammad Hussain Khan

UNUSUAL delays in the execution of projects are a normal practice in Sindh. One such case is that of Agro Export Processing Zones — announced in early 2,000 for seven districts of Sindh, including Karachi — which are yet to be established.

These zones were to be set up in Karachi, Benazirabad, Badin, Mirpurkhas, Hyderabad, Ghotki and Naushahro Feroze.

After nearly a decade's delay, it is only Karachi's zone that, lately, has seen some progress in land allotments, and towards registration of sub-leases. The Sindh government's lack of interest, belated fund releases, encroachment of land and lack of facilities have contributed to delays in allotment of plots for growers and traders.

Karachi will become Pakistan's first ever agro-processing zone, located off the Super Highway near Sabzi Mandi, on over 50-acres. According to project director Azam Channa, 30-acres of land have been fully secured with boundary walls around the zone and 50pc of the plots' sub-leases will be handed over to plot owners soon. Zones in other districts are to be set-up on 10 acres each, he said.

There are plans to hold seminars to encourage growers to apply for plots in six other zones. The management committee, which supervises Karachi's export zone, is headed by Khalid Ejaz. He says the main roads have been built but link roads are yet to be constructed. Payment for the provision of electricity has been made to K-electric.

"The project will facilitate increased exports of surplus commodities like vegetables and fruits. We will be meeting phytosanitary conditions and the zone will function on industrial lines where dehydration plants, cold storages and value addition will be available to benefit exporters and consumers at the same time", says Ejaz.

Growers will get 70pc of the plots in the zone and traders/exporters, the remaining 30pc. But there are reports that growers are ready to sell their plots to traders/exporters instead of using them. Sindh Abadgar Board leader, Mahfooz Ursani, who plans to set up a dehydration plant for onions and chilli, says it is true that growers always look for an opportunity to sell such plots. By and large, they tend to avoid investing in market-oriented businesses and stick to the cultivation of crops.

Long delays have also discouraged investors. But Ejaz insists that they are now being persuaded to set up plants in the zone.

Although an amount of Rs150m is said to have been released for Karachi's processing zone, the fate of those planned for the other six districts seems to be hanging in the balance. Suitable lands are either to be identified or obtained by the agriculture department.

According to the Sindh Chamber of Agriculture General Secretary Nabi Bux Sathio, the Sindh government should consider one more processing zone for Tando Allahyar that has one of largest vegetable markets in the Sultanabad area. Mango and banana orchards are located in and around Tando Allahyar, too.

Land-grabbing is a major problem. The site of vegetable market, off the Hyderabad by-pass, spread over 100 acres, is occupied by people who are close to the Sindh government. The government's lethargy usually complicates matters, enabling land mafias to take recourse to fake claims and frivolous litigation.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1280521>

GWADAR PORT PROJECT DISRUPTED IN PAST: PM

Dawn, September 2nd, 2016

Behram Baloch

GWADAR: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif claimed on Thursday that Gwadar seaport city would have become functional a long time ago had the initiatives his government took in 1991 and 1999 not been abandoned.

Addressing a gathering after inaugurating a string of development projects, he said that the Gwadar port was his dream and he was pleased to witness its development as an international city.

Mr Sharif regretted that the pace of development in Gwadar initiated by his government in 1991 had been disrupted. During his second tenure as prime minister he was going to inaugurate the Gwadar port in 1999 but the move was

disrupted again, he added. Had these initiatives not been disrupted, the port city would have been developed a long time ago, he said.

However, Mr Sharif hoped, Gwadar would soon emerge as one of the most prosperous cities in the country.

The prime minister witnessed signing of several agreements between Pakistani and Chinese companies for different projects.

He said the start of multibillion dollar projects in Gwadar was proof that investors had confidence in Balochistan's security situation. All these projects once completed in next few years would bring in a world-class seaport to the region, he added.

Mr Sharif said Gwadar was the central point of focus in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. The port city, he added, would have a positive impact not only on Balochistan, but the whole country.

He said the proposed 300MW coal-fired power plant would help energise various projects, including a de-salination plant, a \$39 billion international airport and an efficient train service. Gwadar would be connected to the motorway and a road network through \$100bn worth of projects, he said, adding that the city would also have a vocational training centre and a university.

The premier appreciated the role of the armed forces, law enforcement agencies, police and other departments for bringing peace and stability to the province. Terrorists were on the run now and in their last-ditch efforts they were striking soft targets.

He said the newly inaugurated projects worth Rs50bn would help create 50,000 jobs and called for giving preference to the people of Gwadar and adjacent areas in recruitment.

Mr Sharif was grateful to the Chinese government for the support it extended for the development of the port city. He lauded China's role as a 'true friend' and thanked the Chinese ambassador for announcing more funding for various projects in the city.

He said several coal-fired projects in other parts of the country would help enhance efficiency of the industries. Through its solar, wind and hydel projects the country would get rid of loadshedding by generating 10,000MW by 2018, he added.

Balochistan Chief Minister Sanaullah Khan Zehri said that declaring Gwadar a 'tax-free zone' had helped attract investment and hoped that the pace of development would improve in the coming days. He also mentioned the setting up of a security division for the protection of foreign investors in the area.

He said the plummeting real estate business in the area had now been improving at a rapid rate. He spoke about a number of projects that were in different phases of completion, adding that the first phase of Gwadar Free Port would complete in 2017.

Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Sun Weidong mentioned his country's support for the construction of Gwadar Free Zone and handing over a school for local students.

He said that people of Gwadar and those living along the CPEC would benefit the most and lead to economic development of Pakistan and the region.

Later, addressing a gathering after inaugurating a 174km road connecting Sibi with Kohlu, PM Sharif said that prosperity in Balochistan was the ultimate destination, adds APP.

“The prosperity of Balochistan is our destination. The course is coarse,” he said, adding that though many people had in the past talked about Balochistan’s development they never paved the way to reach this destination.

Executed by the National Logistics Cell (NLC), the road is the shortest link between Balochistan and Punjab.

After its completion, the distance between Sibi and Kohlu has been reduced from 600 to just 174 kilometres.

The work on the project was halted in 2006 owing to the law and order situation. However, it was revived after the government signed a contract with the NLC in 2014 that completed the project within one and a half years.

Mr Sharif announced the construction of a 20km road between Sibi and Talli and 80km road linking Kohlu with Rakhni.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1281519>

NAB ARRESTS ALLEGED LAND GRABBER

Dawn, September 3rd, 2016

PESHAWAR: The National Accountability Bureau, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Friday arrested a man for allegedly grabbing a valuable six-kanal commercial property of the state.

According to a statement issued here, the land, Hamid Mehmood Zuberi grabbed, is known as Muhammadan graveyard (Nadan Baba Qabristan) situated near Hassan Garhi area of Peshawar Cantonment, which is worth millions of rupees. He grabbed the land on the basis of fake and forged documents in connivance with officials of the settlement department.

The statement said that the property was neither private nor owned by evacuee property trust.

The accused along with others prepared a prima facie bogus stamp paper dated 28-10-2009 in respect of the property. Then they filed a suit in a civil court in 2010, based on these fake and forged documents in order to legalise the fraudulent transaction through a compromise decree.

It was stated that the accused would be produced before the accountability court for obtaining his physical remand for further investigation in the case.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1281748>

ABAD STRESSES NEED FOR HIGH-RISE RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS

Business Recorder September 02, 2016

Mohsin Abubakar Sheikhan Patron-in-Chief, Association of Builders and Developers of Pakistan (ABAD) on Thursday stressed the need of high-rise residential buildings to overcome the shortage of houses.

Talking to media at one of the state of the art high-rise residential projects ‘Al Khaleej Towers located at Azizabad, he dispelled the impression that skyscrapers were causing civic problems, saying that land prices were skyrocketing that tarnished the hope of middle class segment of the society to purchase own house for their family.

“It is unfortunate that the civic agencies are recovering billions of rupees on concerned account of infrastructure development but no one knows where that money goes as the problem of infrastructure is prevailing across the city,” he lamented.

“For example, a builder is paying more than Rs 20 million to civic agencies against a plot of 1000 square yards for infrastructure development and other civic facilities but nothing is being delivered”. He said that shortage of housing units was presently roaming around eight million with an increase demand of around 1.5 million housing units per annum and added that high-rise residential projects are viable source to meet the said rising demand of shelters.

Commenting on the betterment charges, which were recently increased by the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA), he termed the increase in betterment charges by the SBCA as unjustified, saying that now an owner of a 120 square yard plot would not be able to build his home as he/she had to pay over Rs 1.2 million on account of betterment charges.

On the other hand, the ABAD has proposed the government to build houses on 120 square yards of plot at the rate of Rs 1.2 million to 1.5 million and we are waiting for the approval of this proposal. He expressed the hope that the issue of the betterment charges would be solved soon.

<http://www.brecorder.com/business-and-economy/189:pakistan/81801:abad-stresses-need-for-high-rise-residential-projects/?date=2016-09-02>

WORKSHOP CONCLUDED AT UAF: SPEAKERS FOR DEVISING STRATEGIES TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

Business Recorder, 2 September, 2016

Faisalabad: Speakers at a three-day workshop have called for devising strategies to combat climate changes which are decreasing agricultural productivity.

They stated this at a three-day workshop on Agriculture Production System Simulator Modeling APSIM arranged by US Pakistan Center for Advance Studies in Agriculture and Food Security (USPCAS-AFS), University of Agriculture Faisalabad.

The workshop concluded on Thursday in which 62 people across the country took part.

UAF Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Iqrar Ahmad Khan said that farming community has low income due to low productivity and there is dire need to take adaptive measures.

He said that public awareness and joint efforts on the part of all stakeholders were essential to fight the challenges. He said that we are destroying the world with our own hands, due to deforestation and increasing pollution.

CAS Chief of Party Dr Bashir Ahmad said that the purpose of this workshop was to train and professionalize trainees with the tool of capacity building, applied research and curriculum reforms how to control climate change.

He added there will be more workshops related to climate change for controlling adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

Dr Ashfaq Ahmad Chattha said that USP-CAS said that by the end of the century the temperature will further rise. He said that heat tolerant and climate resistant varieties need to be developed to overcome the issue of food insecurity.

He said they made a proper network project by which they will collaborate with all expertise of climate change and share each other views. He said that the Ministry of Climate Change in collaboration with stake holders becomes important to come forward and take necessary action and hold it accountable on problems of climate change and they should be taken on board. Certificates were distributed among all the participants.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/09/02/13-page/790948-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 22ND TO AUGUST 28TH 2016

QAYYUMABAD'S LONG BATTLE AGAINST DHA

Dawn, August 22, 2016

Fahim Zaman | Naziha Syed Ali

KARACHI: In late 2005, a meeting was called by the then commander V Corps, Lt Gen Syed Athar Ali Shah. Aside from a select group of officers in uniform who were present on the occasion, several officials from the City District Government Karachi (CDGK) had also been summoned. They included, among others, the then nazim Mustafa Kamal, municipal commissioner Lala Fazalur Rahman, as well as Bilal Manzar and Mazhar Khan of the katchi abadi and land departments.

According to a source present at the meeting, the CDGK officials were given a dressing-down because they were creating “problems” for the Defence Housing Authority (DHA), Karachi, whose executive board is headed by the commander of the Karachi-based V Corps. “It was a typical case of the military authorities flexing their muscles to intimidate civilian officials,” said Adil Abbasi, former deputy director katchi abadi (planning) Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC).

The particular “problem” the military authorities wanted to address that day was the resistance that some KMC/CDGK officials had been putting up since 20 years against DHA Karachi’s demand to surrender land earmarked for the development of amenities for Qayyumabad — a katchi abadi situated along Korangi road near the KPT Flyover.

Corrupt provincial government officials from the higher bureaucracy with vested interests of their own had colluded to issue a notification acceding to DHA’s demand several months ago on Feb 2, 2005. (The Sindh government’s machinations whereby they obliged the military authorities are detailed later in this story.) But some local government officials were still holding out, unwilling to hand over possession of land that had been allocated for Qayyumabad’s amenities, and this was what had evidently prompted DHA Karachi to bring in the big guns.

The local elections in December last year, however, have spurred Qayyumabad residents to mount a fresh campaign to reclaim the land they say is rightfully theirs. Among them is Shamshad Khan, Qayyumabad union council’s newly elected UC nazim. Son of a veteran local politician, he and his father — as well as other residents of the area — have had run-ins with DHA officials in the past over the acres in contention, which is why DHA had never managed to actually take physical possession of the land. “On one occasion, I beat up [retired] Major Tatheer Abbas — a DHA official from its land department — when he’d arrived to knock down the graveyard wall,” said Mr Shamshad. “He ended up with 22 stitches.”

Confined within 109 acres, Qayyumabad katchi abadi is one of the most densely populated and polluted residential areas of the city. It is home to more than 70,000 people — including Pakhtun, Punjabi, Sindhi, Baloch and Urdu-speaking ethnicities, as well as Christians and scheduled caste Hindus — who live in cramped abodes no bigger than 80 square yards that jostle each other for space and have nowhere to expand except vertically.

Consequently, illegal construction of multiple floors, with its attendant risks, is common. “As per standard town-planning principles, at less than six square yards per person, the dead in a DHA graveyard have more space than a person living in

Qayyumabad,” remarked a former deputy director KMC. According to Mr Shamshad, “There isn’t a single public school here, nor a playground or dispensary”.

On the face of it, there seems little reason for this once marshy piece of land to have caused so much friction between DHA and KMC/CDGK authorities since the late ‘80s. There is no contiguity between the land allocated for Qayyumabad’s amenities and the rest of DHA that lies south of the katchi abadi. In fact, these 30 acres along with the built up area of Qayyumabad do not even fall within the eight DHA phases in District South; they are part of District Korangi.

However, commercial developers have always viewed these 30 acres as potentially lucrative real estate. Their assessment is being borne out by the sky-high prices that plots carved out of this land command today.

Till the late 1960s, Qayyumabad was just another shantytown in Karachi’s south. But its population rapidly swelled between 1968 and 1976 when squatters from near Kala Pul were moved to this large stretch of water-logged land — that lay wedged between Korangi road, Malir River and Manzoor Colony nallah — on the orders of the government (commissioner Karachi) to make room for DHA phases I and II. Its impoverished residents provided unskilled labour for various sectors; for example, as coolies at the railway station, manual workers at the harbour, construction workers at the many upmarket residential localities springing up in the vicinity at the time, etc.

Through the years, the residents of Qayyumabad have consistently maintained that DHA has unlawfully grabbed 53.22 acres that are part of their locality, including 30.32 acres earmarked as amenity areas to serve their needs.

However, their negligible political and financial clout puts them at a huge disadvantage in trying to establish their claim. They are, after all, up against DHA, the country’s most powerful land authority that provides real estate windfalls to the men in uniform while catering to the residential and commercial aspirations of the super-rich.

The saga began on Dec 6, 1979 when, in response to the defence ministry’s insatiable appetite for land, BoR Sindh (the original owner of all land in the province) allotted the Pakistan Defence Officers Cooperative Housing Society (PDOCHS) — the predecessor of DHA Karachi — 640 acres on a 99-year lease, parts of which were initially designated as DHA Phase IX but later became what is today known as Phase VII extension.

Four years later, on Jan 26, 1984, the defence ministry itself de-notified (excluded) the katchi abadis of upper Gizri, Machhi para and Qayyumabad from the limits of the Clifton Cantonment, insisting that the government of Sindh cater for them. Once the area reverted to BoR Sindh, the government of Sindh directed KMC to plan and provide for the needs of these katchi abadis.

A survey of Qayyumabad conducted by the relevant BoR officials, the results of which were later recorded on a map dated July 17, 1985, shows the area of Qayyumabad as being 163.18 acres. Once transferred to KMC, Qayyumabad became the responsibility of the katchi abadi department.

Subsequently, KMC developed a master plan for Qayyumabad over the area of 163.18 acres including 30.32 acres specified for amenities, and the settlement was notified under MLO 183 as a katchi abadi by the government on Nov 13, 1986. (Any settlement in Karachi existing from before March 23, 1985 qualifies to be regularised as a katchi abadi, which gives ownership rights to the residents and entitles them to municipal services.)

A detailed Qayyumabad katchi abadi layout plan was thus finalised by KMC and subsequently gazetted by the Sindh government. The map shows the contentious 30.32 acres reserved for amenities including a primary school, secondary school, hospital, college, graveyard and park, etc. Other pieces of land were designated for a Karachi Water and Sewage Board (KWSB) sump, a Karachi Electric Supply Corporation (KESC) substation, katchi abadi offices, etc.

The process was completed with due recourse to the public. A brief presented by KMC in a meeting on Jan 4, 2004, held under the chairmanship of the chief secretary Sindh with DHA officers attending, recalled that, “Before approval of layout plan ... public objections were invited through leading newspapers but no objection on the planning of katchi abadi was filed by DHA or otherwise by any agency....”

Meanwhile DHA Karachi had come into existence through Presidential Order Number 7 of 1980 issued by Gen Ziaul Haq. In the late ‘80s, well after the defence ministry itself had excluded Qayyumabad from the limits of Clifton Cantonment, a certain retired major Humayun Butt became exceedingly active in the construction business.

Very well connected, with several army generals among his extended family, the major managed to get the 30.32 acres declared as Humayun Commercial which also appears in DHA Karachi maps.

Over the next several years, DHA Karachi remained engaged in pressurising KMC to surrender the amenities. In one letter dated Nov 13, 2002, additional director land retired Lt Col Muhammad Younis wrote that “...the [53 acres] in question was wrongly notified as part of katchi abadi.

Despite concerted efforts/repeated requests vis-à-vis clear directive of the chief secretary Govt of Sindh vide minutes of the conference held on 7-2-2001, denotification action has not yet been initiated”. The authority also made attempts to physically take over the land and even filed a case in the Sindh High Court arguing ‘incorrect’ de-notification (Suit No.586 of 1989).

BoR maintained that the contours of the area concerned were in consonance with the actual position of the Qayyumabad settlement on ground after the ministry of defence/Clifton Cantonment Board’s de-notification and that DHA had been well aware of the fact. According to documents available with Dawn, when the court ordered that a joint demarcation of Qayyumabad’s limits be carried out to resolve the matter, DHA officials did not show up, despite two summons to do so.

The minutes of a meeting held on May 21, 2001 record the then municipal commissioner KMC as pleading that not only was the KMC’s stance legally sound, but that there was also a moral imperative for ensuring amenities even for a katchi abadi. An excerpt from the document reads: “The legal position on limitation to challenge the notification issued in 1986 is 30 days...Qayyumabad colony is thickly populated and necessarily required (sic) this land for amenit[ies] proposed. It is almost impossible to avoid congestion and provide basic facilities of life without such provision.”

However, DHA was not moved. Its manipulation of facts can be seen in a letter dated Sep 6, 2002 and addressed to the Sindh government’s katchi abadi department, in which DHA said that when Qayyumabad was declared a katchi abadi in 1986, the area occupied by it “was actually 109.36 acres only”.

To support its claim, the aforementioned letter states the following: “The Survey of Pakistan map of 1989 is used as a base to establish the limit of the katchi abadi in 1989,” and that “the map sheets clearly show the layout of the katchi abadi in 1989.” Ironically, this statement by DHA is absolutely correct. But it is not the whole story.

Settlements like Qayyumabad are by their very nature ad hoc and disorganised. Their residents do not put down their roots in uniform 80-yard plots organised in a neat geometrical grid. According to the locals, as well as BoR and KMC records, prior to regularisation, inhabitants of the 163 acres known as Qayyumabad were haphazardly scattered across it, with many of them maintaining buffaloes on the open land as an additional means of income.

It was only after the Sindh government declared the area a katchi abadi in 1986 and KMC re-organised it as per its layout plan, that the residents were moved into their allotted 80-yard plots over 109.36 acres, leaving vacant 53 acres where their

amenities were slated for development and the remaining for the locality's expansion. And that was where the Surveyor General of Pakistan found them in 1989.

In the entire saga, the most telling evidence of DHA's ruthless pursuit of the land meant for Qayyumabad's amenities is a map submitted on behalf of DHA and ostensibly developed by architects at Fareed Associates — a copy of which is in Dawn's possession. The plotting of the then proposed DHA Phase XI can be seen on the map.

The company's 'seal' in the upper right hand corner carries the date Aug 30, 1977, indicating that DHA's plotting of the area dates back to that year. The map also shows 'Humayun Commercial' located on the 30.32 acres, thereby evidently undermining BoR's claims.

However, that line of argument contains a massive factual error: the 640 acres of which these 30.32 acres are a part had not even been leased to the PDOCHS until Dec 6, 1979. "Also, our company seal is always in the bottom right corner, never in the upper right one", claimed a former employee of the firm, which is now largely inactive.

On the bottom right of the map can be seen two signatures, that of retired Lt Col Ali Bin Ahmad and former commissioner Karachi M.M. Usmani — ostensibly to lend legitimacy to the document. According to Mr Fareed, the owner of the firm, it was much later that his company had actually developed the layout plan for the 640 acres and in it, he said, they excluded the entire area of Qayyumabad katchi abadi, including the portion later claimed as Humayun Commercial.

A senior architect for the firm claims that Major Humayun was so sure that DHA would prevail over the civilian authorities that he had already started selling plots in 'Humayun Commercial' as soon as DHA Karachi began sparring with KMC over the ownership of the land.

While responding to Dawn, retired Lt Colonel Jamshed Niazi, director land DHA, pointed out that most of the 640 acres allotted to DHA by BoR Sindh in 1979 were lost due to the construction of the Malir River bund (embankment) in the mid '80s.

He also reiterated that in response to the defence ministry's denotification of Qayyumabad katchi abadi from Clifton Cantonment limits, BoR erroneously declared 163.18 acres as katchi abadi, all of which left only about 60 acres for DHA. "Even the commissioner Karachi in a letter indicated that DHA was left with only 60 acres." He did however concede that 282 acres were later allotted in lieu of land lost when the Malir River was channelised.

An examination of the original lease for the 640 acres, which was signed on Dec 6, 1979 between the Sindh government and the PDOCHS — DHA's forerunner — belies the military authorities' stance from a legal point of view.

According to sub clauses b and c of Clause 12, only 50pc of the 640 acres, ie 320 acres, exploited for residential and commercial plots was to be retained for allotment to officers of defence services with an equal number of plots to be allotted by PDOCHS to civilian officers of the Sindh government.

Instead, plots on less than 12 acres were finally allotted to them by DHA, in a section of land later named Commissioner's Society that was wedged between the Malir River, the graveyard and the katchi abadi's eastern end.

("The location, between the graveyard and the katchi abadi, was so bad that almost as soon as I was allotted a plot there, I sold it," said a Sindh government official. "For the same reason, the plots in that area fetched far lower prices than the rest of DHA Phase VII extension." However, Mr Niazi maintained that "DHA compensated Sindh government officials within the 282 acres later allotted to the Authority.")

Thus, according to DHA's own admission, it acquired 342 acres (60 plus 282 acres). Out of this, 12 acres were given for plots for civilian officials, thereby retaining 330 acres in the name of plots for officers of the defence services. That was already more than what constituted its share of 640 acres.

Incidentally, it is also far more than what DHA Karachi is legally entitled to. Documents submitted to the Supreme Court in the ongoing 'Karachi unrest' case 16/2011 by the office of the deputy commissioner South, state that "DHA possesses 5,257 acres excess Sindh government land without any allotment/payment".

Asked about the need for so much land, DHA Administrator Brigadier Zubair Ahmed explained that previously DHA did not have a laid down policy for allotments, but during Gen Musharraf's tenure a comprehensive policy was formulated for the provision of plots to officers after every so many years of service, seniority and sacrifice. Previously there was no provision for allotment of plots for lower ranks but it was felt that even non-commissioned men who had rendered sacrifices must be compensated, which drove up the increase in demand for land several fold.

Through the years, DHA continued to insist on its 'right' to Qayyumabad's amenities land along Korangi road as well as a small piece of land set aside to accommodate the future expansion of the community.

Although for the last 20 years Qayyumabad residents have doggedly resisted DHA's efforts to take physical possession of the land, KMC was unable — due to pressure from DHA Karachi — to develop the amenities it had budgeted for and which Qayyumabad was entitled to as a regularised locality.

It could not give land to KESC for its substation, or to KWSB for its sump to supply water to ease the residents' hardships. Shahid, a young resident of the locality, said bitterly: "When you don't have water you simply buy it from tankers. But we can't afford more than jerrycans sold here on donkey carts. That limited water is usually consumed for cooking purposes and by the women for their needs."

After Gen Musharraf's military government took over in 1999, DHA redoubled its efforts to coerce BoR into de-notifying the 53 acres it coveted. As if that were not enough, Sindh government officials claim that the corps commander's brother, Syed Ghazanfar Ali Shah, was also very well received at BoR itself. "Earlier we kept resisting DHA, but what could we do when such influential people began to exercise their clout?" asked a dejected KMC official.

Land grabs — whether by individuals or organisations — are always carried out in complicity with government functionaries in positions of opportunity. The case of Qayyumabad katchi abadi's land too is no different. The defence authorities' arm-twisting finally bore fruit in 2004 at the hands of unscrupulous public officials.

The secretary GA&C Aijaz Hussain Kazi, acting under instructions from the chief secretary Sindh, initiated a summary (diary number 411 and dated Oct 23, 2004) for approval by chief minister Arbab Rahim, for local government "to re-notify Qayyumabad katchi abadi over 109.36 acres". This effectively meant surrendering 53.22 acres to DHA Karachi.

The summary was received the same day and listed at number 6005 on the additional chief secretary local government's inward register. "Sensing opposition from the local government department, the summary was swiftly withdrawn by the CS office," revealed a retired secretary to the government of Sindh.

Later, a similar summary bearing exactly the same number was re-drafted and sent by the chief secretary's office directly to the chief minister in sheer violation of rules of business, ie bypassing the administrative (local government) department input. Instead, after approval by the chief minister, the summary was sent to Waseem Akhtar, then MQM's minister for local government (and current nominee for mayor), for implementation by his department.

Given this fait accompli, the Sindh Katchi Abadi Authority re-notified the limits of Qayyumabad on Feb 2, 2005, reducing it to 109.36 acres. This, despite the fact that the amenities had been planned and notified 18 years earlier by the Sindh government's Housing Town Planning, Local Government & Rural Development Department on Nov 13, 1986 and gazetted by the Sindh government on Feb 12, 1987.

According to KMC officials, the duplicitous manner in which the land was surrendered suggests it was not just the pressure exerted by the men in khaki, but that individuals in the higher echelons of the Sindh government were adequately compensated through allotment of plots in the area.

Interestingly, the ministry of defence's original pretext while requesting allotment of land in Karachi was that it was required "for the benefit of the widows and children of the shuhada", which later evolved into "for the benefit of officers of the defence forces who have little or no other means to put a roof over their heads". However, according to a former member land utilisation, BoR Sindh, the allottees of the Qayyumabad amenities land are all well-known commercial developers and investors with deep pockets.

Here it is pertinent to note that as per law, a piece of land once declared as an amenity not only cannot be put to commercial or residential use, it cannot even be used as another kind of amenity than the one specified.

In a cruel irony, the numbers assigned to 'Humayun Commercial' plots — land that rightfully belongs to Qayyumabad katchi abadi — were re-designated and prefaced with the letters 'QK' during Mr Athar Ali's tenure as corps commander. As things stand today, the amenities' land has all been allotted and continues to change hands at the DHA Karachi office.

Moreover, some of the allottees, as per documents available with Dawn, have paid a mere Rs 4,000 per square yard to DHA Karachi for these commercial plots that are today being traded at Rs200,000 per sq yard — which adds up to an eye-watering one billion rupees an acre. To put things in perspective, consider this: DHA Karachi charges Rs16,000 per square yard as development charges alone in DHA Phase VIII from an ordinary allottee of 1987. Another example: DHA Karachi has charged Rs 120,000 per square yard for commercialisation of residential plots near Do Darya in Phase VIII.

Meanwhile, not far from where the elite of the city live in luxurious residences, where their children attend expensive private schools and have access to landscaped neighbourhood parks, the chance that the residents of Qayyumabad will get the spaces for their amenities back seems slimmer than ever. As if to drive the point home, DHA Karachi has erected a wall that runs approximately 5,000 feet along the periphery of the katchi abadi, separating it from the rest of DHA, cleaving the haves from the have-nots.

When asked about the Qayyumabad residents' right to amenities, DHA Administrator Brigadier Zubair Ahmed said: "I agree on a humane level that every locality should have amenities." He further added: "If the Sindh government says it's not DHA land but belongs to the katchi abadi people, then we will change our stance. Until they say that, I as administrator DHA cannot surrender this land because I'm custodian of DHA's interests and what has been given to us officially, I need to defend it until the time it is modified."

However, some months ago, reportedly as a result of pressure by the army chief, the illegal allotment of 530 acres of mangrove forest along Gizri Creek — whose ultimate beneficiary was DHA — was cancelled after an expose in Dawn. Can Qayyumabad's residents expect the authorities to take note of their legitimate expectations to a reasonable quality of life as citizens of Karachi?

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1279039>

TEENAGE BOY'S LIPS CUT BY UNCLES, COUSIN OVER LAND DISPUTE
Dawn, August 22nd, 2016

DADU: Lips of a boy were cut by maternal uncles and a cousin over a farmland dispute at the village of Omer Panhwar near Dadu city on Sunday.

The student of second year (per-engineering) of Degree Collage Dadu, Raiz Panhwar, was brought to the Dadu Civil Hospital in injured condition by Khudabad police area police.

Talking to reporters, medical officer Dr Talib Hussain said the boy's lips were cut with a dagger. He said the legs and arms of the boy also had scars. His condition was serious and it would take him 20 to 25 days to improve, he added.

Dadu ASP Mohammad Sarfaraz Virk said that Khudabad police had lodged an FIR against maternal uncles Haroon, Tarique, cousin Pir Bux and two unknown accused.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1279064>

THE SCRAP OF PAPER THAT BRINGS PEACE TO SMALL FARMERS

Business Recorder, August 22nd, 2016

KizitoMakoye

Katrina Hhaynihhi and her husband Simon could not be more proud of the piece of paper held tightly in their hands: a title deed which not only proves they are sole owners of their land but also ends a simmering dispute with their neighbours.

The couple is crop farmers and ekes out a living on a small holding growing

beans and maize in Tanzania's northern Mbulu district.

For years they battled a neighbour who insisted on grazing his animals onto their land: "This document means a lot to us. Our land is now secured and we do not expect any conflicts with our neighbours," said Katrina.

The title which has brought peace to the Hhaynihhi family is known as a Certificate of Customary Right of Occupancy (CCRO) document.

"There used to be lots of disagreements around grazing and the (herders) use of forests and water sources. Those issues have been solved," the mother of six told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The Hhaynihhi family grow a variety of crops including sunflower seed on their 11 acre farm, earning around Tanzanian shillings 5 million (\$2,500) a year.

For them, a land title has made a big difference, providing a sense of security which means they have invested more into their farm.

"This land title has given us the confidence to carry out different farming activities to boost our income, said Katrina, and we don't consume everything we produce – we sell some of our crops to get money."

Katrina, 48, and Simon, 46, are just two of several hundred farmers in the Mbulu district in Tanzania's Manyara region who have benefited from Farm Africa's Land Mapping Project which aims to build a detailed land-use plan to address conflicts.

Land registration in Tanzania is inefficient but can also be corrupt, according to Transparency International's 2014 Global Corruption Barometer.

While farmers across the country have used swathes of land for growing crops over many years, most do not have any documented evidence to prove that it is theirs, Farm Africa analysts said.

Without adequate tenure or security, farmers are not only less likely to invest in their land but also become vulnerable to powerful outsiders who have been found to collude with corrupt village leaders to seize property, the charity has found.

Beatrice Muliahela, Farm Africa's project coordinator, said securing village land is necessary to empower rural communities, giving them strong legal protection both for the land itself but also the resources that lie on it.

"When the land is clearly demarcated, it makes it easier to agree who has the right to what," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

According to Muliahela, since its launch two years ago, the project has resolved several land-related disputes, most sparked by the expansion of agriculture and dwindling water and forest resources.

Katrina Hhaynihhi says the land mapping project has changed her community, helping local people understand the importance of conserving the environment and taking care of the land.

Previously, she said, very few villagers had the skills to address problems such as soil erosion and falling water levels but now they have established a village environmental committee to take care of surrounding resources.

A by-law has also been put in place to ensure that farmers are aware of no-go areas for grazing animals and forest land is marked out clearly so those with livestock have their own areas.

Thomas Mbagi, Farm Africa's project officer, said the villagers participated in creating the land use plan and the by-laws are approved by the village assembly.

Tanzania's Village Land Act of 1999 empowers village councils to make decisions on land use and this ties in with Farm Africa's aim to forge joint partnerships between villagers and local authorities on forest management.

Mbagi said land titles or CCROs have helped villagers to access loans and get capital to invest in their businesses, learning income generating techniques that are environmentally sensitive such as re-planting when trees are felled.

"It is very hard to graze around or near water sources these days" said Katrina, who is a member of the village environmental committee.

"If we had not received support from Farm Africa our lives would be worse because the forest cover would perish through trees felling and grazing."—Reuters

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/08/23/20-page/788193-news.html>

PATWARIS EXPLOITING FLAWS IN NEW LAND RECORD SYSTEM

The Express Tribune, August 24th, 2016.

Rana Tanveer

LAHORE: Even after introduction of the 'state-of-the-art' Land Record Management & Information System (LRMIS) people have to bribe patwaris for correction of minor errors in the land record.

After introduction of the LRMIS, patwaris are left with limited powers and they try to make as much money as they can out of these powers, The Express Tribune has learnt. Issuance of a fard (document) and registration of land mutation fall exclusively within the purview of the LRMIS. However, the system still depends on patwaris for inheritance mutation, correction of names, land demarcation and rectification of errors.

Instead of fixing these errors at the institutional level, the LRMIS and patwaris shift the responsibility to landholders. Consequently, landholders have to bribe patwaris to get these errors rectified.

A lot of errors remain in the names of landholders in the computerised land record. When people contact the Land Record Centre (LRC) for issuance of a fard (paper), the centre refuses to issue it due to discrepancies in their names on their national identity cards and the land record.

To rectify these errors, LRC officials tell people to get their names verified by the patwaris of their areas. When people go to the LRC for mutation of inherited land, the LRC tells them to get their family tree verified by the patwari of their area.

Jahangir Ali Khan, a resident of Goel village in the Ferozewala tehsil, says he had visited a patwari to get his and his siblings' names corrected in the land record. He said the patwari had demanded Rs5,000 per person to expedite the matter. After some of his colleagues interceded he lowered his demand from Rs5,000 to Rs2,000 per person. Khan says he refused to pay the bribe and asked the patwari to return his application.

The patwari then told him that he could pick the document in two days following the regular process. When he visited the patwari two days later, Khan says, the patwari told him to wait for two more days because he was correcting the land records of some of his seniors. He says that when he visited the patwari two days later he asked him to come back in four days.

Babar Hussain, a resident of Ferozewala, said that he had visited a patwari for verification of his family tree to apply for an inheritance mutation. The patwari demanded Rs10,000 for the job. He said that his application had been pending with the patwari for days. He said that he had now realised that he would have to pay bribe for verification of his family tree.

Muhammad Rashid, who assists patwari Rafiq of Goel village because he is ill nowadays, told The Express Tribune that patwaris had to charge the applicants to meet the expenses of their offices. Asked about the delay in disposal of applications, he said that disposal of an application could take up to six months.

Ferozewala Assistant Commissioner Rana Shakeel Aslam told The Express Tribune that the government was paying all expenses of patwaris' offices. He said that applicants could file complaints against the patwaris demanding bribe from them. He said that he would punish the corrupt patwaris.

A senior official of the LRMIS said on condition of anonymity that there were errors in the computerised land record system so that it was dependent on patwaris. He said the LRMIS did not have any field staff. Consequently, it had to rely on patwaris for verification of family trees. He said that efforts were under way to develop a system with the help of the National Database and Registration Authority for verification of family trees.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1168812/patwaris-exploiting-flaws-new-land-record-system/>

Dawn, August 27th, 2016

Irfan Husain

IT'S become a cliché to say that all countries have armies, but in Pakistan, the army has a country.

But clichés have an element of truth. I was reminded of this while reading Dawn's recent investigative report about the Karachi Defence Housing Authority's land-grab in the squatter colony Qayyumabad. According to this detailed account, around 30 acres were set aside by the municipal authorities for amenities like power generation, water purification, a school and a playing field for the deprived people of this slum.

But DHA had its eyes on this land, and after a series of legal and administrative manoeuvring — to say nothing of muscle flexing — has managed to have the disputed land transferred. It has also been reported that a key player was a retired major who was selling commercial plots even before the paperwork had been completed.

The military has long been expanding its footprint across Pakistan's cities through its multiplying defence societies. Land is acquired at nominal rates from provincial governments, and developed with money taken as advance payments for residential and commercial plots from officers. Allotment letters are then sold to civilians at several multiples of the price they paid.

Thus, some of the richest families in the country live in some of the most garish houses in these housing colonies. We have become so accustomed to this unending land-grab that we don't notice that Pakistan is probably unique in this respect.

As Dr Ayesha Siddiqi has noted in her book *Military Inc*, militaries in China, Egypt and Indonesia run large business enterprises. And while we are up there with our Fauji Foundation, to the best of my knowledge, our officers have done better than their counterparts in other countries with their defence societies. In addition, they have also benefited from vast tracts of agricultural land in Punjab and Sindh.

For over 15 years, military authorities have been locked in a conflict with peasant farmers in Okara over tenancy rights. The army has reportedly been running farms and dairy plants in the area for years, and is trying to force local farmers to sign new, disadvantageous tenancy agreements. Protests have been crushed with much violence.

But the military has not been alone in depriving the poor of their land and their rights. A few months ago, this newspaper ran another investigative report that focused on the breaches of laws and regulations by a project on the outskirts of Karachi. Here, a well-connected tycoon is alleged to have used his clout with the Sindh government to bulldoze huts and throw locals out to create the infrastructure for his giant housing project.

In Islamabad, poor Christians have been living in fear of eviction from their katchi abadi as the Capital Development Authority seeks the Supreme Court's approval to level the slum. As reported, retired chief justice Iftikhar Chaudhry has recently written a (poorly drafted) letter to the current chief justice seeking his intervention to have a plot allotted to him.

In a country with a rapidly growing population, pressure on urban housing will obviously increase. But this alone doesn't explain the insatiable lust for land that has afflicted so many wheeler-dealers. Speculation happens everywhere, but in Pakistan it has reached fever pitch as qabza groups use political connections and violence to grab land.

So when did it all start? Younger readers might be unaware of this, but the country's birth was accompanied by our first land-grab. As refugees fled across the new border with just the clothes on their backs, many clutched documents proving

ownership of property. To compensate them for their loss, the newly established Evacuee Property Trust handed them equivalent houses or agricultural land abandoned by Hindus and Sikhs fleeing in the opposite direction.

However, many Muslim claimants were desperate for cash and sold their claims to well-heeled businessmen who then proceeded to acquire choice properties for peanuts. Thus were many early fortunes made in Pakistan.

But these grabs pale into insignificance when compared to some of the army's manoeuvres. For instance, under Ayub Khan, retired officers were allotted agricultural land in Punjab on the pretext that they would be able to defend the area against an Indian attack. In Sindh, land made available for farming with the building of dams and canals was also allotted to officers.

I can understand such generosity with state lands if the beneficiaries are the dependents of servicemen who have fallen in battle. But surely officers who retire after their normal time in uniform leave with a reasonable pension package. And officers who retire at an early age almost invariably find jobs

But since this has now become a service perk, surely it can be restricted to one plot per officer. When Musharraf seized power in 1999, he released his assets; these included several plots that were then estimated at many millions.

As long as this unseemly acquisition of land by the military continues, it might be seen as a colonising force.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1280186>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 15TH TO AUGUST 21ST 2016

PUNJAB FINALISES CONTOURS OF LAND RECORD AUTHORITY

Intikhab Hanif

Dawn, August 15th, 2016

LAHORE: Punjab government has reportedly finalised contours of the land record authority which it is introducing to modernise the system of land data and to improve the related service delivery.

The authority will be created under a law which is reportedly being introduced initially through an ordinance. Its principal office will be in Lahore.

Its functions include formulation of strategy, policies and plans for the management of land records, provision of efficient services to people, developing a human resource management system, advising the government on improving and modernising land record management, managing technical cooperation and coordination with other government departments, including foreign organisations and international inter-governmental organisations.

Other functions include laying down administrative, financial, legal and technical framework for the information technology based land record management and related services, exploring new revenue models and sources of revenue, computerising the record-of-rights or part thereof or any other land related document, preparing computerised land record, running related centres, handling fees and charges and executing contracts of any nature.

The authority will be headed by the Board of Revenue senior member, having all divisional commissioners as members. The government will also nominate another five members.

The authority will appoint its own staff. And if required the government will transfer its own human resource to it. Such officials could be absorbed in the service of the authority with their consent.

For linkage with the revenue field formation, there will be divisional, district and tehsil level monitoring committees under commissioners, district collectors and assistant commissioners.

The authority will prepare, amend and keep the computerised land record. It will also specify the documents forming part of record-of-rights which are to be computerised.

The computerised land record will be presumed to be true until the contrary is proved or a new entry is lawfully substituted in it.

An assistant director land records or land record officer shall exercise certain powers of assistant collector of the first grade.

Officials said all assets and properties, including the service centres in possession of the existing land computerisation project, will be transferred to the authority.

All persons employed in the project and at the service centres shall be deemed as authority employees on the terms and conditions contained in their contracts. They will be adjusted against positions created in the authority in the prescribed manner.

Land record assistant directors and officers working in the Directorate of Land Records, Punjab, shall also stand transferred to the authority on the same terms and conditions as mentioned in their contracts.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1277611>

LAND TO BE GIVEN TO PQA: PSM BOD FAILS TO FINALISE PRICE

Business Recorder, August 16, 2016

Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) Board of Directors which met on Monday in the Ministry of Industries and Production (MoI&P) reportedly failed to finalise the price of 157 acres of land to be given to Port Qasim Authority (PQA) on a 30-year lease, well-informed sources told Business Recorder.

The land will be utilised to set up loading station for imported coal from the ship and construction of coal stock store. The coal will be transported to coal-fired power plant being established in Sahiwal. Secretary Industries and Production, Khyzer Hayat Gondal, who is also the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of PSM, attended the meeting. Initially, the Board attempted to transfer the land to Punjab Mines & Minerals Department. This idea was abandoned after resistance from the Sindh government.

The sources said a heated debate was witnessed in the Board meeting presided over by Engineer Jabbar Memon, the only member from the private sector, on the land issue and PSM's management was accused of creating hurdles in finalisation of deal despite three or four consecutive meetings.

The meeting which continued for almost one and a half hours discussed the issue of land price and suggested the price at around Rs 8.5 to 9 million per acre with an addition of 10% premium as indexation to the increase in price of land. However, the meeting remained inconclusive and decided to place the issue before the Cabinet Committee on Privatisation (CCoP) which is the competent forum to decide the issue of those entities which are on the privatisation list.

The PSM team led by Captain Shamsi Hasan (Retd), the key official who is looking after the interests of federal government, seemed in a panic after the meeting. Engineer Jabbar Memon, who witnessed the destruction of steel mills as a member of the BoD, was seen as giving advice to the PSM team.

Port Qasim Authority repeatedly reviewed their demand of land for 100, 150, 200, 134 & 144 acres of PSM utilised/core land for establishment of coal stock yard and loading in its letters of October 29, 2015, January 01, 2016, March 28, 2016, May 27, 2016 and July 14, respectively. Secretary Ministry of Industries & Production has given a No Objection Certificate to use the required land or its transfer to PQA for subject project during an Inter-Ministerial Meeting of Ministries of Industries & Production and Ports & Shipping, held on 12th January, 2016.

According to official documents, Privatisation Commission, in its letter of January 29, 2016 stated that the Ministry has no objection to transfer of PSM land to PQA for the project and requested to examine the proposal and to take further necessary action as deemed appropriate.

Port Qasim Authority had shared a revised layout plan and demanded the exclusion of the land covered by water drain out of the total earmarked land. The issue of pricing of land was discussed in detail. PSM representatives were of the view that the value of land was Rs 15 million per acre and the final price of the land only to be decided by the PSM Board.

Ministry of Ports & Shipping and PQA were of the view that the recent sale value of the land to SSGC in November 2014 was fixed @ Rs 8.5 million per acre by PSM Board, which is a fair value for the requisite land, therefore Rs 8.5 million per acre be charged by PSM with an addition of 10% premium as indexation to the increase in price of land. On the other hand, the representatives of PSM were of the firm view that the land can be leased out only on its assessed value which is Rs 15 million and in compliance with PC directives.

PSM is going to incorporate the said value in books of account for the year 2014-15. Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGCL) has already obtained a stay order against PSM for not paying outstanding bill of Rs 48 billion. PSM is on the list of active entities which are being privatised. Likewise, the government has to get No Objection Certificate (NoC) from Sindh government. Supreme Court (SC) in its decision in 2006 had also taken a serious note of the land price evaluation.

<http://www.brecorder.com/agriculture-a-allied/183:pakistan/75410:land-to-be-given-to-pqa-psm-bod-fails-to-finalise-price/?date=2016-08-16>

C-15, C-16 DEVELOPMENT: MASSIVE LAND SCAM AVERTED, SAYS MINISTER

The Express Tribune, August 18th, 2016.

Riazul Haq

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Administration and Development Division (CADD) stumbled onto an attempt to illegally acquire 600 plots worth Rs3 billion in the undeveloped sectors C-15 and C-16.

CADD Minister of State Tariq Fazal Chaudhary told the National Assembly about the scam on Wednesday while replying to a question from Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) lawmaker Sheikh Salahuddin.

Salahuddin had asked about encroachments in Islamabad and the government's efforts to address the issue.

"Recently we discovered that around 600 plots in C-15 and C-16 were being squatted on and that a fence was being erected around them," he said, adding, "We not only foiled the attempt but have taken the land back in our custody."

He said that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had been intimated about the land scam and all efforts were being made to stop such activities in the future.

He said a building control authority has also been established to look into such matters and establish a mechanism to stop such activities.

The minister, himself an MNA from Islamabad, accepted that “encroachments and adverse possession are growing with the passage of time,” while positing that no large buildings or plazas have been built illegally on state land.

Chaudhary maintained that the incumbent government had already taken serious action against those involved and a high-profile Federal Investigation Agency inquiry was under way regarding encroachments in slums. “Every day, actions are being taken against illegal constructions in the city,” he said.

The minister again candidly accepted that the anti-encroachment resources are insufficient to handle the rising number of such as issues, which impacts response time.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf’s Shireen Mazari struck a chord by stating that the amount of government land in the city under adverse possession was increasing.

She said that in F-10, land marked for a government hospital had been grabbed by encroachers, while nothing was being done about illegal construction near natural waterways, where some people, she claimed, had built fences and walls.

To this, the minister replied that city bylaws do not allow for walls or fences in such areas. He also clarified that a past policy of giving possession of such land on lease to private parties had been withdrawn.

To another question, the minister replied that the government was working on adding parking lots in major city markets and commercial areas such as Super Market, Jinnah Super Market, and Blue Area. “We are going to inaugurate a parking plaza in Jinnah Super Market soon,” he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1164912/c-15-c-16-development-massive-land-scam-averted-says-minister/>

CHINESE TEAM REVIEWS GWADAR PROGRESS

The Express Tribune, August 18th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: A 10-member Chinese delegation headed by a senior government official visited Gwadar and reviewed progress on various ongoing projects. The delegation visited the Gwadar Port, Gwadar Expressway, Free Zone, Pak-China Friendship Primary School, Faqeer colony and some other projects related to the development of the city.

Gwadar Port Authority Chairman Dostain Khan Jamaldini and Balochistan’s Additional Chief Secretary for Planning and Development Muhammad Dawood Baraich briefed the Chinese delegation about the pace of work on the projects.

The delegation was informed that the completion of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the functioning of Gwadar port would bring about a positive economic impact not only on Pakistan but the entire region.

The implementation of mega projects including construction of Expressway and Gwadar International Airport would be initiated with Pak-China cooperation this year. The delegation was told that Pak-China cooperation would bring about economic revolution in the region including Pakistan.

Speaking to the delegation at the occasion, Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) Director General said that the authority was implementing several development projects in Gwadar out of which a number of projects including GDA Hospital, GD School had been completed.

The delegation was also briefed about the Gwadar master plan.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1164873/update-chinese-team-reviews-gwadar-progress/>

REALTY MARKET: FBR'S PROPERTY VALUATIONS 'UNREALISTIC'

The Express Tribune, August 19th, 2016.

MULTAN: The business community and trade lobbies have rejected the property valuation tables prepared by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) for the Multan district, saying the valuations are very high and unrealistic for industrial as well as other pieces of land in the city and are not acceptable.

Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) President Fareed Mughis Sheikh, while expressing concern, pointed out that the valuation tables were prepared without consultation with the stakeholders for the sake of forcibly collecting maximum tax.

He also rejected the FBR's proposal for collecting 5% advance tax from the developers and builders.

He noted that there were many legal flaws in the valuation system which needed to be removed in consultation with the Multan Chamber and other stakeholders as there could not be two regulators.

He emphasised that amendments to the valuation tables were necessary to make them practical and pragmatic.

Sheikh suggested that suitable changes should be made to the law to remove the anomalies at the earliest as almost all property transactions were at a standstill for the time being.

He urged Finance Minister Ishaq Dar to take immediate notice of the matter and resolve it immediately so that real estate transactions and dealings could be resumed.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1165544/realty-market-fbrs-property-valuations-unrealistic/>

OFFICIALS' NEGLIGENCE RESULTS IN ENCROACHMENT UPON PRECIOUS PLOT IN KARACHI

Dawn, August 20th, 2016

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The 'deliberate' negligence of senior officials of the Ministry of Housing and Works has resulted in encroachment upon an expensive commercial plot on a prime location in Karachi. The approximate worth of the plot is Rs10 billion. Action against the 'delinquent' officials is awaited as the file has stuck to the table of the minister of housing and works.

The plot measuring 3.14 acres is situated near the Karachi Cantt railway station, the prime location of the city. The land mafia had made several attempts to get the plot during the tenures of previous governments, but they failed due to the timely intervention of officials who were custodian of the land.

However, this time the plot was encroached upon as the custodian provided congenial environment to the other party, an inquiry report prepared by the housing ministry has revealed.

As per the background of the matter, the land commonly known as Carlton Hotel Plot was given to the Ministry of Housing and Works in the 1980s by then president General Ziaul Haq for construction of apartments.

After Gen Zia's death, the plot was given to the Pakistan Public Works Department (PWD) and several schemes were planned for its utilisation. But none of the schemes could be executed for one reason or another, a senior PWD official said.

In 1996, the ministry decided to transfer the plot in the name of an individual in lieu of an alternative piece of land. But the deal could not materialise because a PWD engineer, Zohair Khaliq, opposed it in writing. Mr Khaliq was subsequently removed from his post.

In 2009, senior authorities wanted to construct apartments on the said land, but scrapped the plan after the PWD objected to the plan.

In September 2011, a superintending engineer of the PWD in Karachi, Mohammad Nawaz, was suspended and later transferred to Sukkur after he opposed the transfer of the multi-billion rupees plot to a joint venture of the Pakistan Housing Authority (PHA) and private company against Rs340 million. The joint venture wanted to construct commercial and residential units on the plot.

Mr Nawaz later challenged his suspension in the Islamabad High Court.

According to the court documents, Mr Nawaz informed the Ministry of Housing and Works on Sept 5 that "the cost of the plot was being offered as equity in the joint venture which was against the interest of this department". He said the PWD had made tremendous efforts to save this plot from land grabbers and influential people in the ast. The PHA, therefore, must deposit the total value of the plot in the government treasury as per the decision of the president of Pakistan before taking over the possession of this plot.

After Mr Nawaz sent the letter to the authorities, he was informed by the department that he had been transferred to Sukkur.

Mr Nawaz's petition had pointed out that the said plot always remained a lucrative piece for the land mafia. The officials who dared to put up resistance to this shabby deal were being victimised.

For the past few years, the plot had been in the possession of the PHA and the authority had hired a security company to avoid any land grabbing on it.

On March 15 last year a meeting presided over by the secretary housing and works decided that the PWD would establish its offices on the Carlton Hotel Plot.

In September last year, the PHA's contract with the security company had lapsed and the plot was open for land grabbers, according to the inquiry report on the encroachment.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1278789>

INDUSTRIAL PLOTS ALLOTTED UNDER AL-WATAN SCHEME TO BE CANCELLED

Dawn, August 20th, 2016

Parvaiz Ishfaq Rana

KARACHI: The Port Qasim Authority (PQA) has decided to cancel all the industrial plots allotted under the Al-Watan scheme launched about 10 years ago, official sources told Dawn on Friday.

The scheme, spread over 500 acres and involving plots of 1,000 square yards, was aimed at setting up cottage industry in the port area.

It was initiated by the then minister for ports and shipping Babar Ghori.

However, the PQA board in a recent meeting decided to cancel the scheme and give back the plots to allottees along with compensation at the rate of Defence Saving Certificates, sources added.

Low prices and high development cost are said to be the factors behind the PQA decision.

There are around 1,300 plots under the scheme and were sold for Rs330,000 each in 2006. However, the Port Qasim at that time was to incur a development cost of around Rs1.8 million to Rs2m on a plot. "But with the passage of time the cost has gone up and the PQA board has been left with no choice but to cancel the scheme," the sources said.

Besides financial losses, there were many other loose ends in the scheme as it was being run more like a housing society, the sources said. Like the Pakistan Textile City, the Al-Watan scheme has also not been provided with utilities.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1278700>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 8TH TO AUGUST 14TH 2016

CM ORDERS SURVEY OF ENCROACHED GOVT LAND

Dawn, August 10th, 2016

Hasan Mansoor

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Tuesday ordered the Board of Revenue (BoR) to conduct an extensive survey of the government land under encroachment and file a report to devise an effective strategy for removal of encroachers.

"It must be a detailed report containing the areas, size, worth and location of the government lands, which have been illegally grabbed by the land mafia," he told senior member of the BoR Rizwan Memon during a meeting.

The chief minister was learnt to have expressed his anger over the increasing pace of encroachment on government land in the province with particular reference to Karachi. He was informed about the continued 'china cutting' in the city at which he warned the SHOs of all police stations that they would be held responsible for the future activities of the land grabbing mafia in their jurisdictions.

Officials said the CM was informed that the anti-encroachment police force was merely 1,046-strong in the whole province while their number was just around 200 in Karachi, which was insufficient.

The BoR officials demanded for a significant increase in the number of the force, which as per their demand, should be around 1,000 only for Karachi. The total number of such force in the entire province, thus, be increased proportionately.

"For a city of 20 million, a force of 200 policemen to check the strong land-grab mafia is highly insufficient. It has to have much more personnel who are well-equipped and rigorously trained," said an official in the Sindh government.

The sources said the chief minister approved the demand of the BoR and asked them to move a summary for increase in the anti-encroachment force, which he would approve as part of the strategy to reclaim the precious land being lost to the strong mafias.

The officials, however, said it would be decided later whether new policemen would be recruited for the force, or the force would be raised from the personnel transferred from the police department.

At the meeting, said a statement, Mr Shah directed the senior member of the BoR to frame a policy under which the police station concerned would be held responsible if government land was grabbed in their jurisdiction.

The chief minister told him that there were reports in the media that the land mafia was still busy on 'china cutting' activity.

“This is unacceptable. For God’s sake, tell them [land mafia] to have mercy on this city, otherwise I won’t have mercy on the mafia,” he said.

CM Shah visited the city courts buildings, reviewed its entry and exit points and issued necessary directives.

Additional IG Karachi Mushatq Maher briefed the chief minister on measures taken for security there.

The chief minister stopped at the Paper Market and expressed his displeasure to see garbage along the road. He warned the DMC South officials to take care of it or face consequences.

He also stopped at the D. J. Science College while coming back to CM House. He met the college principal and told him that he was an alumnus of the college.

An eight-member delegation of the Bohra community called on the chief minister to felicitate him on his election as provincial chief executive.

Representatives of the Ismaili community also visited CM House and met the chief minister.

The officials said Mr Shah spoke with the leaders of the two communities over a recent security alert issued by the provincial home department.

However, sources said, he assured them that the government had arranged for a foolproof security of the two communities that had played a huge role in the development of the city.

Director General Rangers Sindh Maj-Gen Bilal Akber called on Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah.

Basically, the officials said, it was a courtesy call by the Rangers chief but during their meeting they discussed the overall law and order, on-going targeted operations and security measures for independence celebrations in Sindh.

Mr Shah visited the Aga Khan Hospital to visit those injured in the blast in Quetta, and inquired after their health.

He spoke to Kamran Murtaza, a leader of the lawyers’ community, and assured him that his government was providing necessary security to the lawyers and judiciary.

Mr Shah regularised the services of 701 officers of the National Programme for Improvement of Water Courses (NPIW).

These officers of NPIW were appointed in 2005 on the contract basis from grade B-16 to B-18 under a foreign funded project to line water courses in the province.

When the project was completed the salaries of these officers were stopped. The Sindh government kept extending their contract from time to time but Mr Shah finally regularised their services.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1276534>

HIGHER VALUATION OF INDUSTRIAL PLOTS HAMPERING EXPANSION

Dawn, August 11th, 2016

Aamir Shafaat Khan

KARACHI: The government must revisit values of industrial plots to appropriate level as many industrialists have stalled expansion plans while the flight of capital may increase, Vice Chairman of Businessmen Panel and former president FPCCI Zakaria Usman said on Wednesday.

The new values for industrial plots have been increased up to 600 per cent from July 1, 2010 to July 1, 2016, thus creating uncertainty among businessmen and investors. This also includes a 20pc increase made by the Sindh government from July 1, 2016.

Mr Usman said the new values have emerged as a great threat to the industrial sector.

As per the SRO issued by FBR on August 2, the price of open industrial plot in Category I have been hiked from Rs2,200 per square yard to Rs12,000, up by 445 per cent. The Category 1 areas include SITE Industrial Area, FB Area and Landhi Industrial Area.

The valuation of plots in Korangi Industrial Area, Bin Qasim Industrial Area and North Karachi Industrial Area, falling in Category II, have been increased from Rs1,100 per yard to Rs8,000, showing an increase of 627pc.

The value of constructed area has been increased from Rs386 per sq foot to Rs3,000, increasing its value by 667pc while the cost of construction hovers around Rs500 to Rs1,500 per sq foot, he informed.

After the SRO, the price of open industrial plots in Category I has reached to almost Rs60 million per acre while the price of plot falling in the area marked as Category II has reached almost to Rs40m.

He claimed Pakistan is becoming a trading state with many industrialists preferring trade due to energy crisis, taxation and refund issues and scarcity of water.

He urged the government to immediately withdraw the aforementioned SRO and revise the values appropriately.

Owner of Parekh Estate at Clifton, Abdul Wahab Parekh said for industrial (built up plot), the new values for plots falling in category I, II and III have been raised to Rs3,000 per square feet from Rs386.

Giving valuation rates of various areas of Karachi, he said in residential open plot category, the new value is Rs35,000 per square yard in A-I category which was 14,850 in July 2010.

For Category I, II and III has been raised to Rs25,000, Rs12,000 and Rs6,000 per square yards from Rs9,625, Rs5,500 and Rs2,475.

For residential (single storey) the new valuation rate for Category A-I, I, II, III, IV is Rs40,000, Rs32,000, 20,000, Rs11,000 and Rs6,000 on July 1, 2016 as compared to Rs23,100, Rs12,375, Rs7,700, Rs3,300 and Rs2,475 on July 1, 2010.

For residential (ground plus one storey), he said the new valuation rate for Category A-I, I, II, III and IV is now quoted at Rs50,000, Rs40,000, Rs25,000, Rs13,750 and Rs7,500 as compared to rate of Rs28,875, Rs15,469, Rs9,625, Rs4,125 and Rs3,094 on July 1, 2010, Wahab said.

From July 1, 2016, the valuation rate for commercial open plot A-I category has been fixed at Rs100,000 per square yards which was Rs34,500 in July 1, 2010. For Category I, II, III and IV – the new valuation rate has been increased to Rs75,000, Rs60,000, Rs25,000 and Rs19,000 from Rs21,563, Rs10,350, Rs5,175 and Rs2,760 per square yards.

For commercial single storey, the new valuation rate for Category A-I, I, II, III, IV and V has been raised to Rs67,500, Rs54,000, Rs35,000, Rs18,000 and Rs10,000 per square yards from Rs41,400, Rs28,750, Rs14,950, Rs6,900 and Rs4,658 prevailing on July 1, 2010.

For flats, he said, the new valuation rate for Category A-I, I, II, III and IV has swelled to Rs5,000, Rs4,500, Rs2,500, Rs1,500 and Rs1,000 per square feet from Rs2,475, Rs1,788, Rs990, Rs495 and Rs413 prevailing on July 1, 2010.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1276766>

QAT MOOT ASSERTS RIGHTS OF THAR COAL LANDS OWNERS

Dawn, August 11th, 2016

MITHI: Rasool Bux Palijo, chief of Qaumi Awami Tehreek (QAT), has warned the companies engaged in coal mining in Thar Coal Area to stop victimising locals and usurping their rights.

Speaking at the 'Thar Coal conference' held in Islamkot on Wednesday, he said that the federal and Sindh governments should act wisely and treat all citizens equally in the best interest of the federation and integrity and solidarity of the country.

He said the QAT was not against progress, prosperity and mega projects but it was against exploitation of people. The federal and Sindh governments and the companies must stop meting out step-motherly treatment to locals, he said.

Mr Palijo said the authorities concerned should step in immediately to redress people's grievances. The huge reserves of coal were the property of local people, hence, it was their natural right to get priority in jobs at the mining firms, he said.

He asked the companies' heads to sit with 'actual owners of the land' and settle their accounts with them before evicting them from their heaths and homes.

He urged his workers to create awareness among people on Thar coal and advised media persons to do investigative reporting on the issue. The federal and Sindh governments had not even been able to provide adequate healthcare to Tharis whose children were dying from preventable diseases by the hundreds, he said, adding Tharis must educate their girls to lessen the chronic problems they were facing.

Sindhiani Tehreek president Ms Shamshad Leghari assured the participants of the conference that her party would stand by them in their peaceful struggle for rights.

“Please don’t push Tharis to the wall but treat them like actual owners of these minerals,” she said. She warned if Tharis’ right to their own land was denied their reaction would be dangerous both for Sindh and federal government.

Senior QAT leader Qadir Ranto criticised the Sindh government for its failure to save Tharis from terrible droughts and stop deaths of minor kids.

Advocate Wasand Thari said that Tharis had never taken law into their hands during protests but he cautioned if coal companies usurped their rights they would put up a stiff resistance.

The companies were giving jobs to people from other provinces, which was not tolerable at the cost of Tharis, he said.

Social activist Kirshan Sharma slammed the coal companies for backtracking on their promises with locals and asked the companies to act wisely as parceling out jobs to outsiders instead of locals could endanger communal harmony in the area.

Mir Hassan Arisar, Saindad Hingorjo, Ms Zahida Shaikh, Arif Junejo, Amjad Palijo, Teerath Jhangi and others also spoke at the conference in which a large number of QAT workers and villagers participated.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1276747>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 1ST TO AUGUST 7TH 2016

SC BARS WORK ON BAHRIA TOWN LAND ALLOTTED BY MALIR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Dawn, August 2nd, 2016

Tahir Siddiqui

KARACHI: The Supreme Court on Monday restrained Bahria Town, a leading real estate firm, from undertaking any development activity on the state land allotted to it by the Malir Development Authority (MDA) illegally and gave two months to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to complete its investigation into the matter.

A two-judge bench comprising Justices Amir Hani Muslim and Mushir Alam gave these directions at the court’s Karachi Registry while hearing a set of applications against illegal allotment of state land and adjustment of land in 43 Dehs by the MDA.

The land in question involves the under-construction Bahria Town project located about nine kilometres from Toll Plaza on the Karachi-Hyderabad super highway

The NAB prosecutor general filed an interim report in a sealed envelope along with a copy of the survey report prepared by the Directorate of Survey of Pakistan, Ministry of Defence, which was taken on record.

According to the survey report, the total land consolidated by the MDA and handed over to Bahria Town measured 9,385.185 acres.

In the survey report, the portion marked in pink as “A” showed that Bahria Town had developed 386.276 acres of land which was not yet consolidated by the MDA.

The survey report also showed some other portions of state land that had been developed by Bahria Town despite the fact that they had not been consolidated by the MDA.

The total land developed/under development but not consolidated by the MDA came to make 2,771.79 acres.

The bench inquired of the chief secretary, senior member, Board of Revenue, and the advocate general of Sindh to satisfy it under which law the MDA was competent to exchange private land with the land falling in the area reserved as corridor. The three officials, however, could not offer any explanation and submitted that no such powers were available with the MDA to allot or exchange the private land with the state land.

The bench observed that it had come on record that no portion of the land pertaining to the subject matter was ever allotted under Section 10(4) of the Colonisation of Government Lands Act, 1894, by the Sindh government to the MDA.

The bench restrained the Bahria Town from undertaking any development activity in areas demarcated in the survey report.

The MDA was also restrained from consolidating any further portion of the private land for the Bahria Town or any other private enterprise under the garb of exchange of land in exercise of their powers conferred on them under the MDA Act or the rules framed thereunder.

The bench also restricted the Board of Revenue from dealing with the land of the MDA or any other Authority which was the subject matter of these proceedings in any manner whatsoever.

“In order to ensure that no further construction or development activity is carried out on the land specified hereinabove, we direct the NAB authorities through the Prosecutor General that they should immediately if possible by tomorrow obtain Google Earth maps/images of the entire land stated to be in possession of the Bahria Town as per the survey report and submit the same for record,” the court ordered.

Meanwhile, the chief of Bahria Town Malik Riaz Hussain claimed that the Supreme Court had not imposed any restriction on development of his projects. In his tweets, he called it “misreporting of facts” by the media and vowed to continue the development of the mighty project.

“Misreporting of facts regarding #BahriaTown #Karachi absolutely malicious. SC didn’t put any restrictions on develop work by #BahriaTown,” he said. “#BahriaTown ll [will] continue all construction & related activities on the consolidated land 9385 acre. Twisted facts r product of cynical minds. We ve [have] been facing ths [this] mafia from day one & will continue to do so to safeguard development & investment in Pakistan.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1274788>

CDA TERMINATES LAND LEASE AGREEMENT OF GRAND HYATT

The Express Tribune, August 2nd, 2016

Rizwan Shehzad

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has terminated the “controversial” land lease of the under-construction Grand Hyatt Hotel on the Constitution Avenue.

CDA counsel Kashif Ali Malik told Islamabad High Court (IHC) judge Mohsin Akhtar Kayani that the civic agency board has cancelled the 99-year lease agreement with the BNP (private) Limited.

On July 1, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) had sealed the under-construction Grand Hayat Hotel — owned by the BNP (Pvt) Limited — for various building and layout plan violations.

The CDA counsel maintained that BNP (Pvt) Limited created third party interest without adhering to the CDA by-laws.

A report submitted earlier by the CDA revealed that the first bidding for the construction of the five-star hotel was cancelled on August 2, 2004, while the CDA started the auction process again on September 28, 2004.

The report said that certain changes were made (on CDA's part) in the terms and conditions of the auction including the extension of the original lease period from 33 years to 99 years, reducing payment of initial bid money from 25 per cent to 15 per cent within 45 days and the balance payment within 15 years instead of 120 days.

On March 9, 2005, the CDA auctioned the 13.5-acre plot to the BNP Group for Rs4.88 billion. The CDA Board, however, handed over the possession of the plot in 2005 after receiving only Rs800 million.

The BNP has paid the CDA Rs1.02 billion while the remaining Rs3.85 billion was recoverable in installments until 2026.

Earlier, the Public Accounts Committee noted that the BNP Group earned over Rs3 billion in profits from selling residential units while the CDA did not receive even half of the total sum.

The report said that BNP Group – comprising Bismillah textiles (Pvt) Ltd, Niagara Mills (Pvt) Ltd, Paragon City (Pvt) Ltd and Belhasa International Company LLC) – was pre-qualified along with six others. It added that as per the BNP Group memorandum of understanding Lt-Gen (retd) Tauqir Zia was designated as the chief executive while Abdul Hafeez Sheikh as the contact person for liaison with the CDA.

The report said that the BNP Group that participated in the bidding process, and it was issued an offer letter by the CDA, did not sign the lease agreement with the CDA. It said that the CDA offered the plot to BNP Group but signed the lease agreement with another company called Elite Fashion, a subsidiary of Bismillah Textile, which was renamed as BNP (Pvt) Limited on May 2, 2005.

The report said that the construction was to be carried out within a period of three years from the date of approval of the building plan, however, no construction was carried out at the site. On May 5, 2006, the BNP (Pvt) applied to the CDA for rescheduling of payment on grounds that due to the earthquake in October 2005 the project was put on standstill. Subsequently, the CDA Board approved the payment rescheduling on 16, 2007.

The plans of the 'Hotel Tower' were approved for two to 47 storey(s), service apartments with a height of 710 feet for the hotel tower, however, the Civil Aviation Authority objected to the height of the building and it was restricted to 330 feet height.

The CDA report said that the BNP (Pvt) Limited made post-bid changes as well as other gross illegalities, building plan violations, adding that it sold out the apartments without obtaining any approval from the CDA. It said that the BNP (Pvt) Limited has constructed 120 apartments (in each tower) in violation of the approved building plan which allowed only 60-service apartments in each tower..

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1153884/cda-terminates-land-lease-agreement-grand-hyatt/>

FEDERAL GOVT FACES RESISTANCE TO GETTING PSM LAND

The Express Tribune, August 2nd, 2016.

Shahbaz Rana

ISLAMABAD: The federal government is facing resistance from bureaucracy in getting 157 acres of "core land" of Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) on 30-year lease for using as a dump yard for coal to be consumed in power projects in Punjab.

The bureaucrats serving in the Ministry of Industries, Privatization Commission and the PSM are reluctant to push the case due to lower lease price of the land and change in status of the core land that can only be used for the PSM operations, said sources. The bureaucrats are playing 'safe'.

The federal government is trying to get 200 acres from the PSM on 30-year lease through Port Qasim Authority (PQA), out of which 157 acres of land is marked as "core land", showed the official documents. The dumped coal will be then transported to upward Punjab for use as fuel in power plants.

The government's decision to cut the PSM "core land" and convert it to coal storage also suggests that the federal authorities are not keen to revive the country's largest industrial unit, which is shut for the last 14 months.

In its second last meeting, "the Cabinet Committee on Privatization (CCOP) approved transfer of 200 acres of land from the assets of PSM to PQA for the purpose of setting up a coal stock yard for the power projects subject to payment of lease money to PSM at the current market rate," according to the CCOP minutes.

As many as 19,013 acres are in possession of PSM, out of which 4,400 acres of land is marked as "core land".

In its last meeting, the PSM board approved the handing over of about 157 acres of PSM core land to PQA at the rate of Rs9.35 million per acre for the lease period of 30 years for the construction of coal stock yard, subject to three conditions.

These conditions are issuance of NOC by Privatization Commission for leasing out the "core land", withdrawal of stay order obtained by Sui Southern Gas Company from Sindh High Court against sale of assets and indemnification by the PQA that in case of enhancement of rates, the PQA will pay the additional rates.

The board determined Rs9.35 million per acre rate is about 38% lower than Rs15 million per acre demanded by the PSM management, according to the sources.

However, the PQA has based its demand on an earlier agreement between the PSM and SSGC under which the gas utility company obtained 11 acres of land at Rs8.5 million in 2014. It was offering 10% higher price than the 2014 rates.

But the three conditions set out by the board for the lease are not likely to be met.

"The PSM board should implement the CCOP decision and the Privatization Commission has nothing to do with the lease of land," said Mohammad Zubair, Chairman of the Privatization Commission.

He said the Commission played its role by getting approval from the CCOP and after that, the PSM board was competent to take any decision.

The government is running the closed PSM affairs on ad hoc basis and has shown no interest in reviving the sick unit. Despite closure of the mill, last month the Ministry of Industries extended the contracts of employees of Hadeed Welfare Trust (HWT) for one year.

However, on Monday the ministry issued another notification, holding its earlier extension notification in abeyance. Despite the government's indifference towards the country's largest industrial unit, the PSM management needs Rs380 million per month for paying salaries and another Rs190 million for other operational expenses.

The official spokesperson of the Ministry of Industries, Sher Ayub Khan, said the land lease transaction was between two federal entities and due process will be followed.

Khan – a grade 21 officer – said since the PSM was on the active privatisation list, the decision has to come from the Commission.

On Monday, the PSM and National Industrial Park (NIP) agreed to lease 930 acres of land at Rs13 million per acre, suggesting that Rs15 million demand from PQA was not irrational. NIP would use this non-core land for setting up industrial zones.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1153852/steel-mill-saga-continues-federal-govt-faces-resistance-getting-psm-land/>

EIA PUBLIC HEARING: INCLUSION OF PARK LAND IN C-14 OPPOSED

The Express Tribune, August 5th, 2016.

Shahzad Anwar

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) strongly opposed the Capital Development Authority's (CDA) plan's for the C series of sectors because it would encroach on land that falls within the Margalla Hills National Park (MHNP).

A few months back, the civic body had sought a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from Pak-EPA for development of new residential sectors C-14, C-15 and C-16.

The CDA had submitted an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to the Pak-EPA in which detailed information was provided about existing environmental conditions, impact of the project, and suggested mitigation measures during execution of the proposed work.

Before granting an NOC to the civic body, the Pak-EPA on Thursday held a public hearing at its office to incorporate public views and opinions.

Pak-EPA Director General Irfan Tariq emphasised during the public hearing that the CDA must exclude MHNP land from in Sector C-14 before moving forward. He also asked the CDA officials to give timeline for the establishment of sewerage treatment plants (STP), and a proper resettlement plan for the local population and any livestock, besides submitting a comprehensive plan regarding ground water recharge in the proposed sectors.

During the EIA report presentation by a CDA consultant, it was said that more than 600 kanals of MHNP would fall within C-14, where a 26-foot-wide road would be constructed with 150 feet right-of-way on both sides, in line with the Islamabad Master Plan.

The problem is that the Islamabad Master Plan was approved in 1960, while MHNP became a national park in 1979. No construction is allowed in national parks.

The consultant said more than 9,000 locals would be resettled during the development of the three sectors, and that they would be compensated in line with the land sharing formula on the basis of awards announced in 2008. The awards would give land owners developed residential plots equivalent to one quarter of the land taken from them.

The CDA, however, has not been able to convince the environmental watchdog that the plan provides for feasible resettlement of local farmers and livestock. Similarly, the CDA has said that the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) would provide water for these sectors, but the civic agency's plan did not satisfy the EPA.

The EPA chief directed the civic body to provide a more robust and clear plan for ground water recharge in the area as well as a clear-cut schedule for development of STPs.

The CDA submitted that existing graveyards, religious sites, and natural waterways would be incorporated in the plan where the waterways are not in deep depressions, while 300 of feet green area would remain parallel to existing railway lines.

EPA officials stressed that the authority must avoid changing the natural course of waterways, whereas the environmental watchdog remains unsatisfied with the CDA's strategy regarding railway lines, as they cross urban thoroughfares and also go through residential neighbourhoods.

The EPA suggested that proper measures must be put in place to ensure safety and to prevent fatal accidents. The EPA also suggested the installation of noise reduction structures along railway lines should be included in the development plan.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1155835/eia-public-hearing-inclusion-park-land-c-14-opposed/>

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September 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 26TH TO OCTOBER 2ND 2016

SC REFERS ORANGE LINE METRO TRAIN CASE TO LARGER BENCH

Dawn, September 27th, 2016

Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Monday ignored a request for suspending the Aug 19 judgement of the Lahore High Court of halting construction on an ambitious Rs45 billion Orange Line Metro Train (OLMT) but referred the Punjab government challenge against the order to one of its larger benches for hearing.

A three-judge Supreme Court bench, headed by Chief Justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali, had taken up a set of four separate but identical petitions moved by the Punjab government, Lahore Development Authority, the Punjab Mass Transit Authority and the National Engineering Services Pakistan (Nespak) against the high court's suspension of the construction work within 200 feet of 11 heritage sites. The order came on a petition of a civil society activist Kamil Khan Mumtaz.

The heritage sites include Shalamar Gardens, Gulabi Bagh Gateway, Buddha ka Awa, Chauburji, Zebunnisa's Tomb, Lakshmi Building, General Post Office, Aiwan-i-Auqaf, Supreme Court's Lahore registry building, St Andrews Presbyterian Church at Nabha Road and Baba Mauj Darya Bukhari's Shrine.

While referring the matter to a five-judge larger bench, the chief justice observed that the court would decide the matter after examining it thoroughly.

The larger bench will commence hearing on the matter from Oct 10.

In a joint application submitted by senior counsel Khawaja Haris, the petitioners had pleaded before the Supreme Court that the contracts for the construction of civil works of the OLMT was time bound, therefore, their completion within the stipulated time was essential.

The scope of civil works involves construction of a metro train corridor (27.1km long), including an elevated U-shaped viaduct (25.4km), underground section (1.72km), 26 stations (24 elevated and 2 underground), depots and stabling yards, the petition explained, adding that under the commercial contract the provincial government and its agencies were under obligation to hand over the civil works to the Chinese contractor within 10 months of the commencement date of the contract.

In case of failure, the Chinese contractor will be entitled to recover liquidated damages at the rate of 0.02 per cent of the contract price of the civil works, the petition argued.

The OLMT is being financed by Chinese Exim Bank and the smooth and continuing availability of these funds is dependent upon timely completion of the various stages of the project, the petition highlighted, adding that delay in the completion of the civil works will not only result in considerable increase in the cost of the project, it is likely to frustrate the entire project.

Besides, the sum of Rs26.8 billion of public money already spent on the civil works will go waste, pleaded the petition. It said it was thus evident that the general public and the provincial government would suffer heavily if the high court judgement was not suspended.

The main petition has argued that Lahore being the second largest urban centre in Pakistan, with current estimates projecting a population of more than 10 million, suffers routinely from extreme congestion, long commute times, choking air pollution, deadly traffic accidents and inadequate public transport.

According to it, existing roads and flyovers cannot fully redress congestion and transportation overload. Mass transit systems are necessary for mobility needs of general public and for solving the problem of pollution. The transportation is one of the most significant contributors to climate change, accounting for 25 per cent of global emissions in absence of effective mass transit schemes.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1286345/sc-refers-orange-line-metro-train-case-to-larger-bench>

‘STATE BANK FAILED TO PROTECT LAND FROM ENCROACHMENT’

Dawn, September 29th, 2016

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: An audit of the accounts of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has exposed shortcomings on the part of its administration, which failed to protect land worth millions of rupees from encroachment.

According to an audit report, prime land in Islamabad’s G-7/1 sector and plots in Khuzdar have been encroached upon; the SBP management did not allot 82 apartments in its staff colony to employees and paid Rs22.8 million to its staff as house rent.

The report revealed that SBP land worth Rs77 million was encroached upon by the Madressah Ghousia Monia Ziaul Aloom in 2002-2003. It stated that the matter was reported to the management on April 16 2013, and “the management replied that it had been pursuing the case with the relevant authorities”. However, the auditors found that the reply was “not tenable”.

In 1993, when the SBP Staff Colony in G-7/1 was being built, a pesh imam was appointed to lead prayers at a mosque for resident employees. In 1997, the management decided not to construct any residential accommodation on SBP property across Pakistan and ongoing construction was abandoned.

The bank retired the pesh imam under the Voluntarily Separation Scheme in 2001, who handed over the management of the temporary mosque to a friend. The new administrator had the seminary registered through misrepresentation.

When the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) took up the matter, SBP officials said they had asked the Islamabad chief commissioner to retrieve the land, who had refused to do so on the pretext that he could not take action against the

seminary administrator because the seminary had been registered with the Joint Stock Company, and that he could only take action against unregistered seminaries.

Chairing the PAC meeting, PPP's Syed Naveed Qamar expressed his displeasure, saying this answer was not adequate. PAC member Sardar Ashiq Hussain Gopang criticised the SBP management's lethargic attitude, saying the land would not have been encroached upon had it been the personal property of bank officials.

The SBP official responded that the bank had asked the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to erect fences surrounded the land, but the authority had not cooperated with them.

He said the SBP has filed a suit against the incumbent pesh imam of the seminary and won the case in civil court, but the other party appealed the decision in the Islamabad High Court where the matter is pending adjudication.

Audit authorities also informed the committee that since the SBP did not utilise its 7,800 square yards of land (worth Rs117 million) in G-7/1, in 1999 the then prime minister transferred the land to the Pakistan Housing Authority, which constructed residential apartments on SBP land and sold them to individuals.

The auditors said the bank had demanded alternate land from the CDA to set up a cash centre but the request was denied.

The report also said SBP land worth Rs25 million was being encroached upon by private parties in Khuzdar, due to inefficiency on the part of the management.

Mr Qamar directed the SBP to set up a cell to retrieve land that has been encroached upon and to monitor its immovable assets.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1286812>

LEGAL ACTION UNDER WAY AGAINST ENCROACHERS OF SRTC LAND, PA TOLD

Dawn, October 1st, 2016

Bhagwandas

KARACHI: The Sindh transport department (STD) has not allotted any part of its land in Sukkur to any organisation. However, illegal construction had been carried out on it and legal action has been taken against the people involved, said transport minister Nasir Shah. He was responding to queries by legislators during the question hour — pertaining to the transport department — in the Sindh Assembly's Friday session.

Responding to a question by Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) legislator Saleem Rajput regarding the land of Sindh Road Transport Corporation (SRTC) at Shikarpur Road, Sukkur, the minister said over six acres — around four acres opposite Degree College and over two acres opposite Sukha Talab — were owned by the SRTC but after its closure in December 1999 the land was given to the STD. The land was later taken over by some people who constructed some structures / shops etc on it. The department has registered a FIR and legal proceedings are under way against those involved.

In reply to another of his questions regarding employees of the defunct STRC and whether their dues had been cleared, the minister said that SRTC's 1,843 employees were given golden handshakes but at present he did not know the amount paid to them and would inform the assembly soon.

MQM legislator Heer Soho raised the issue that one of the written answers to a question said “not available”. The transport minister acknowledged that this was not the way to answer a question by his department and that he had already taken action concerning it. He said it was the department’s responsibility to provide the necessary information and stern action would be taken against the officials concerned who had not provided the required information to the assembly and instead had responded in such a manner.

A written reply to a question by MQM legislator Rana Ansar regarding rickshaws, said that the transport authorities had been given permission for only one plus four passengers for rickshaws, and all rickshaws that had enhanced seating capacity of 6, 9, or 12 were operating illegally. The police were taking action against such illegal vehicles. Only one plus four seat rickshaws were allowed to operate on link roads and these could not be operated on main roads.

Pakistan Peoples Party legislator Khurshed Junejo raised the issue that the bus terminal at Larkana was in a poor state with hardly any facilities for passengers. The minister agreed with him and said that though it was constructed in 2000, it was not properly maintained owing to which its conditions had deteriorated. He, however, said that it would be rehabilitated soon.

Responding to a question by Ms Soho regarding the poor state of bus terminals in Karachi, the minister said that there was only one government operated bus terminal at Yousuf Goth and it had all the required facilities. Other terminals in the city had been set up by private bus operators and some might not have the required facilities. He said that the government planned to set up two more terminals; at the Superhighway and the National Highway. These terminals would have all the required facilities.

Responding to a question by Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf legislator Seema Zia that majority of the private bus terminals were set up on encroached government land, he said that such activities were being monitored and anti-encroachment operation would be taken against these establishments one day.

A written reply to a question regarding usage of CNG in the public transport said that the Transport and Mass Transit department was making efforts to ban the use of CNG in public transport to save the lives of passengers and hopefully this would soon be done. The answer further says that presently up to two CNG cylinders could be installed in cars / vans but large sized busses could install up to four cylinders.

In reply to a question by Ms Soho regarding fees for route permits charged by the department between 2008 and 2013, the minister said that the fees was fixed many years back and over 150,000 route permits were issued to various vehicles with over Rs210 million collected during that period. He said that the fees had been revised / enhanced in 2015 and subsequently the amount collected has also increased but he did not have it now and if required he could present it in the assembly soon.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1287142/legal-action-under-way-against-encroachers-of-srtc-land-pa-told>

ILLEGALLY GROWN CROPS OVER 5,000 ACRES DESTROYED IN THARPARKAR

Dawn, October 1st, 2016

Hanif Samoon

MITHI: Standing crops grown over as many as 5,000 acres were destroyed to discourage unscrupulous elements who had grabbed the part of state-owned land meant for animal grazing in Tharparkar district.

Mikhtiarkars (revenue officials) of Islamkot, Nagarparkar, Mithi, Kaloi, Chhachhro, and Diplo talukas employing men and machinery destroyed the crops after a resolution in this regard was recently adopted by the district council.

The resolution was presented by Kanwar Karni Singh and supported by a majority of the house.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Hussain Baloch said that recent rains had revitalised the around 700,000 acres of the land designated by the government as grazing field for more than six million animals. However, he said, some greedy people encroached upon a portion of the land and started cultivating their crops. The trend had to be discouraged, he said.

“The operation is continuing with the support of all stakeholders of the area,” he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1287139/illegally-grown-crops-over-5000-acres-destroyed-in-tharparkar>

MODERN PARKS TO BE BUILT IN THREE DISTRICTS

The Express Tribune, October 1st, 2016.

BAHAWALPUR: The government has set aside Rs565 million for establishing state-of-the-art horticulture parks on 155 acres of land in three districts of Bahawalpur Division.

The mega recreational projects will be initiated in Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar and Rahim Yar Khan districts under the next fiscal year’s development programme.

The parks would consist of modern recreational facilities, landscaping, historical monuments, sports facilities, and botanical and zoological gardens.

These details were shared by Bahawalpur Commissioner Saqib Zafar while chairing a meeting at his office on Friday.

“These projects will provide decent recreational facilities to millions of residents along with enhancing health, aesthetics and environmental profile of these three districts,” he said.

Zafar said the projects included a park in the Bahawalpur district spread over an area of 67 acres that would be built with an estimated cost of Rs187 million.

Another park in Bahawalnagar covering an area of 30 acres will be established at an estimated cost of Rs98 million. The park in Rahim Yar Khan spread over an area of 58 acres will be built at an estimated cost of Rs280 million.

The commissioner directed the officials to take effective measures to discourage the culture of wall-chalking and pasting banners on buildings that damaged the aesthetic look of urban areas.

Parks and Horticulture Authority Director-General Dr Ehtesham Anwer Mahar said greenbelts and flowerbeds would be planted along all major roads of the city.

He added the beautification and augmentation of 17 parks had been completed, while landscaping and beautification of all entry points of the city was under way.

In modern times, parks are not considered amenities but rather necessities, providing recreation and essential respite from the city’s hustle and bustle. Visionaries believe parks must be available to all residents, especially those who do not have the resources to escape to the countryside.

In recent years, government’s interest in city parks has revived. Governments and civic groups around the country have revitalised run-down city parks, constructed greenbelts and planted gardens in vacant lots.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1191575/beautifying-cities-modern-parks-built-three-districts/>

DARGHAI GILL FOREST: SPECIAL BODY FOR SOLUTION OF LEGAL ISSUES OF LAND

Business Recorder, 1 October 2016

LAHORE: The special committee for development of Darghai Gill Forest, Kala Shah Kaku, has decided to co-opt with the DCO Sheikhpura and the chief settlement commissioner Punjab to ensure solution of legal issues of the said land.

A meeting of the special committee constituted by Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the progress of tree plantation and development projects in Darghai Gill Forest, Kala Shah Kaku, spreading over 30 acres of land was held in Civil Secretariat on Friday.

Additional Chief Secretary Punjab Shamail Ahmad Khawaja presided over the meeting.

The members of the special committee gave detailed briefing about the Darghai Gill Forest, and the issues pertaining to the dispute about 13 kanal of this forest area also came under discussion.

The ACS issued direction to send a letter to the advocate general Punjab to depute an efficient law officer to prosecute the cases in this regard.

Chairman Punjab Cooperatives Board of Liquidation Mushtaq Anjum, Secretary Forests Punjab Capt Jehanzeb Khan (ret'd) and Additional Director Law Muhammad Naeem participated in the meeting.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/10/01/9-page/798912-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 19TH TO SEPTEMBER 25TH 2016

VILLAGERS PROTEST AGAINST ARRESTS, DEMOLITION OF HOUSES

Dawn, September 21, 2016.

SUKKUR: Several families along with other residents of Haji Gulzar Kharoos village, located within the limits of the Airport police station, took to the streets on Tuesday to protest against what they claimed to be an operation during which their houses were bulldozed and 10 people were taken into custody by the police late on Monday evening. They said all their belongings including cash, valuables, household articles and herds of animals were taken away by the police.

The police confirmed the arrest of eight suspects stating that a case (FIR No. 53/2016) pertaining to criminal activities including dacoities was registered at the Airport police station against them. They claimed that the suspects were apprehended from different areas falling within the limits of the Airport, C-Section and Pannu Aqil police stations. The police, however, did not confirm or deny the villagers' claim about the demolition operation or seizure of their belongings.

Mohammad Murad, Haji, Abdul Hakeem, Jamshed, Ms Safooran and Mai Bakhshal who led the protest at the village told the media that a strong police contingent drawn from several police stations conducted raids on several houses and subjected men and women to torture.

An elderly woman, Ms Ameeran, got her backbone damaged during the police action, they claimed. They alleged that the police team had also brought an armoured personnel carrier (APC) to bulldoze the houses of Ali Mardan Kharoos, Nabi Dad, Meero Khan and Meer Mohammed Kharoos and the guest room of Haji Manthar Kharoos.

They said that 10 members of the affected families were taken into custody during the action. They identified the arrested men as Dilsher and Dilber, sons of Haji Gulzar, Latif, son of Haji Wasand, Bukhsh Ali, son of Hakim Ali, Hazoor Buksh Ali and Bakht Ali, sons of Daulat Ali, Ali Gul and Arbab, sons of Darya Khan, and Mohammed Fareed, son of Allah Dino. The FIR did not contain the names of Bakht Ali and Mohammed Fareed, it later emerged.

The protesters further told the media that the police contingent that carried out the operation was led by DSPs Mushtaq Shah and Qalandar Bukhsh Soomro.

The villagers claimed that the police took away cash, jewellery and household articles besides two tractors, two motorcycles, 50 goats, 40 buffaloes and three cows with them after bulldozing the houses.

“We found only 14 animals kept at the Lakhi Ghulam Shah police station after the operation was over,” they said, adding that their all other belongings were found nowhere.

In reply to a question by reporters, the affected families alleged that the police resorted to the action at the behest of their rivals in a dispute. “Our rivals have already got the Damdamo police post, earlier set up next to the village, vacated so that we are not able to seek security,” they alleged. They appealed to the chief minister, provincial police chief and the Sukkur DIG to take notice of the police action and excesses being let loose on their by their rivals.

Meanwhile, the Airport police have said that eight arrested suspects were sent to jail after a charge-sheet against them was submitted in a court of law on Tuesday.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1285011>

CONTEMPT NOTICES ISSUED TO MILITARY ESTATE OFFICER, FORMER CBH HEAD

Dawn, September 23rd, 2016

HYDERABAD: The Hyderabad circuit bench of the Sindh High Court on Thursday issued notices to the military estate officer (MEO), then cantonment executive officer (CEO) of Cantonment Board Hyderabad and SHOs of GOR and Cantonment police stations in contempt of court pleas involving the Panhwar Goth dispossession case.

A division bench comprising Justices Shahnawaz Tariq and Mahmood A Khan passed the order on two separate contempt pleas after the court orders passed on a petition filed by Ms Khan Bibi were not complied with by the respondent MEO Mohammad Farooq and then CEO Chodhry Umer Siddique and SHOs.

The court directed the petitioner’s counsel Ayaz Tunio advocate to press his stay application before the appellate court (Additional District Judge-V) where appeal against the dismissal of the main case was pending regarding the village land. The bench directed the respondents to be in attendance on Oct 20 at 11am.

Mr Tunio contended that his client was being dispossessed despite the fact that the record of the CBH itself showed the village was located on 6-10 acres.

On July 23, 2015, both parties – the petitioner and respondents – were directed to maintain status quo and not change status of land in any manner but CBH was trying to build a wedding hall there, he said.

He said the order was not complied with by the respondents for which contempt pleas had been filed.

Imdad Unnar and Arshad Pathan who represented respondents MEO, CEO, contractor of marriage hall and Hyderabad Gymkhana said the court was in fact misled by the petitioner to get interim relief and when the respondents were not harassing or dispossessing the petitioner the matter should end here.

Mr Tunio requested that notices should be issued on contempt of court pleas against the then CEO, MEO and SHOs Abdul Razzaq and Ayoub Soomro.

Tunio had filed separate contempt of court applications for violation of July 23 June 24, 2015 orders passed by the court in the petition.

The Hyderabad circuit bench of the Sindh High Court on Thursday directed the Sindh Wildlife Department (SWD) to file comments on Oct 13 on a petition challenging the construction of saline water reservoir near a village in Thar coal project area, which had lately triggered protests by villagers.

A division bench comprising Justices Shahnawaz Tariq and Mahmood A. Khan did not agree to contentions raised by Mayhar Kazi, counsel for the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company and Saman Raffat Imtiaz, counsel for the Sindh Coal Authority (SCA) and allowed an application for making SWD as respondent.

Kazi stated that the petitioners did not own land and since they had not denied the respondents' claim as to their ownership it was an implied admission on their part that they did not own the land. No dam was being built in Gorano village, he said.

Ayatullah Khowaja and co-counsel in the case Zubair Abro argued that the respondent needed to obtain a no-objection certificate from the SWD as to the existence of wildlife sanctuary around the project's site.

SCA's Saman Raffat Ismail said the proposed pond was a natural depression which did not require special construction.

"The petitioners have produced no document to establish their claim on land in any part lying within the area required by SCA," she said.

SCA needs 1,400 acres in Gorano village for the reservoir and out of 1,400, 70 per cent belongs to Sindh government and 30 per cent is used by villagers for cultivation and cattle grazing.

The report of SCA's consultant submitted for EIA already concluded that there was no risk at all to villages from the reservoir, she said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1285460>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 5TH TO SEPTEMBER 10TH 2016

COLONISATION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, September 5th, 2016

Dr. Zuhair Hasnain

Agriculture contributes well over 20pc to the Gross Domestic Product and provides livelihood to 45pc of the total labour force of the country.

It is the main source of raw materials to major industries such as cotton and jute fabric, sugar and edible as well as non-edible oils. The countryside also provides a market for industrial goods.

Despite its importance to the material economy, its acreage under farms is shrinking. The eating up of green and open spaces by concrete structures

of ever-expanding cities is a major problem. Agricultural land is being depleted by rapid countrywide construction of walled housing colonies, shopping malls and industrial units.

While travelling through the Kallar tract of rice (the world-famous scented-rice growing zone), the citrus-growing belt of Sargodha and the mango growing areas of Multan, one can see the changing landscape.

Only 25 years back Lahore and Faisalabad had patches of agricultural land but today there is no arable land within the vicinity of these cities. The ideal situation would be an even distribution of people around the countryside. But people are migrating to the cities for better economic and educational opportunities and a better quality of life. Policymakers have no hard and fast plan to stop the current demographic mode. This can be done, though it has yet not started in Pakistan.

A series of reasons and factors are responsible for this migration. Farming requires exhaustive and strenuous labour; with the next generation pursuing new occupations. When buyers offer attractive rates for fertile fields, the farmer is tempted to sell. Policymakers have generally neglected the modernisation of farming. As agriculture is no lucrative business, many abandon farming and it leads to migration.

Our country, already, is facing severe water and energy crisis threatening agriculture. It's the state's responsibility to stop the destruction of green fields. More state cultivable land needs to be bought under cultivation, and agriculture and food security needs to be made a vital part of national policymaking.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1281999>

CM GETS CONTEMPT NOTICE IN BOTANICAL GARDEN LAND CASE

Dawn September 7th, 2016

PESHAWAR: A Peshawar High Court bench on Tuesday issued the contempt of court notices to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Pervez Khattak and two others over the possession of a vast piece of land of the University of Peshawar's botanical garden in Azakhel area by the Nowshera district administration in violation of the court's order.

Justice Yahya Afridi and Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim issued the order on a contempt of court petition filed by the University of Peshawar's syndicate against the Nowshera district government's act of cancellation of lease of the land given for the Botanical Garden and Centre of Bio-Diversity and taking of the possession of that land early this year.

The next date of hearing into the petition will be fixed later.

Apart from Chief Minister Pervez Khattak, the two other respondents in the case are Nowshera district nazim and CM's brother Liaquat Khattak and deputy commissioner Iftikhar Alam.

Mian Muhibullah Kakakhel and Saifullah Muhib, lawyers for the petitioner, said On Feb 24, 2014, the chief minister had ordered the handing over of around 500 kanals of the botanical garden's land for the setting up of two other universities, Air University and Technical University.

They added that on June 9, 2014, the high court had declared the said CM order illegal and that the government had challenged the verdict in the Supreme Court but later withdrew the petition.

The lawyers pointed out that despite losing the said case, the district nazim had issued an order on Feb 3 to cancel the lease of the land measuring 567 kanals and that the administration CM gets contempt notice in botanical garden land case had directed the UoP to hand it over to the government.

They added that while the high court issued directives to the respondents to maintain status quo on the issue, they took possession of the said land and locked the main entrance to the botanical garden.

Mr. Muhibuillah pointed out that there were various under-research unique species of fish and plants in the botanical garden, which needed great care on day-to-day basis and if they were not taken care of properly, the same would lose its worth.

The petitioner claimed that in Dec 2003, the UoP syndicate had approved the establishment of Centre of Plant Biodiversity, which included setting up of a Botanical Garden in Azakhel, Nowshera.

He said the Higher Education Commission in order to support the university in its efforts to establish the centre had sanctioned a grant of Rs37.861 million.

The petitioner said the Nowshera district government had leased out land measuring 689 kanals to the university to establish the centre through a lease deed issued on Dec 16, 2005 for a period of 99 years.

He said the Nowshera district government had issued a notice to the university in Dec 2015 showing its intention to cancel the lease and that after the university submitted a reply to the said notice, the district government issued the impugned order on Feb 3 canceling the lease of 567 of the total 689 kanals of land.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1282606>

DIAMER-BHASHA DAM LAND ACQUISITION PLAN APPROVED

Dawn September 10th, 2016

Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet approved on Friday the plan for the acquisition of land required for the construction of the Diamer-Bhasha dam.

While approving the plan, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif urged the authorities concerned to maintain transparency in the distribution of compensation money to the people affected by the project.

“Our government arranged the funds for the Dasu dam through the World Bank and all the required measures are being enforced for the construction of the Diamer-Bhasha dam,” he said.

Mr Sharif said the construction of big hydel projects would greatly help in meeting the energy needs of the country and would also mitigate the threat of floods.

The government was determined to solve the energy problems being faced by the country, he said.

According to analysts, the Diamer-Bhasha dam will be a gravity dam and will be built across the Indus in Gilgit-Baltistan.

It will be the world’s highest roller compacted concrete (RCC) dam. It will be located about 315km upstream of the Tarbela dam and some 180km from Gilgit.

The dam will have a maximum height of 272 metres and will have a reservoir of about 8.1 million acre feet (MAF) and a live storage of 6.4MAF.

The dam will produce 4,500MW of electricity through environmentally clean power houses, provide large amounts of water for irrigation and drinking purposes, serve to extend life of the Tarbela dam, and mitigate the threat of floods.

The cabinet also approved the compensation rates for barren land to be acquired in Chilas.

The meeting approved an agreement between Indonesia and Pakistan on cooperation in the field of defence. It also ratified a memorandum of understanding on cooperation between the State Bank of Pakistan and the Central Bank of Jordan.

A protocol to amend the Saarc Limited Multilateral Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters was also ratified.

The Prime Minister’s Global SDGs Achievement Programme was also approved by the cabinet.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1283195/diamer-bhasha-dam-land-acquisition-plan-approved>

LAND ALLOTMENT CASE: NAB DIRECTED TO ACT ACCORDING TO LAW

The Express Tribune, September 10th, 2016.

Karachi: The Sindh High Court (SHC) directed on Friday the National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) chairperson to act according to law against the provincial chief secretary, Muhammad Siddique Memon, who is facing an inquiry in an illegal land regularisation case.

In August last year, Memon had gone to the SHC stating that the NAB was accusing him of illegally regularising and allotting six acres of land in Karachi's Scheme 33.

The chief secretary said he had been served a call-up notice by the bureau, calling him for questioning in the case. He claimed that neither had he allotted such land nor had he regularised it. "Therefore, the notice from the NAB is mala fide and interference in the smooth functioning of the Sindh government," he had claimed.

The petitioner maintained that the NAB's call-up notice is illegal and unconstitutional since he has no role in the commission of the alleged offence. Therefore, Memon had pleaded the court to grant him bail before arrest to enable him to appear before the NAB for questioning.

The SHC had then granted him interim pre-arrest bail for a surety of Rs500,000.

On Friday, the Memon's lawyer argued that the NAB chairman had allowed the inquiry without examining the case in detail. Therefore, the bench directed the NAB chief to examine the case and take action strictly in accordance with the law.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1179571/land-allotment-case-nab-directed-act-according-law/>

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October 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 24TH TO OCTOBER 30TH 2016

CS TOLD TO IDENTIFY HICCUPS IN LAND RECORD AUTHORITY DRAFT LAW IN 48 HOURS

Dawn, October 25th, 2016

Mansoor Malik

LAHORE: Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif has ordered the chief secretary to identify delays in approval of the proposed legislation on the Land Record Authority (LRA) and report to him within 48 hours.

It is learnt the Punjab government wanted to present the Land Record Authority's draft law in the ongoing session of the Punjab Assembly, which was prorogued on Monday.

Asserting urgency, the chief minister presided over a meeting and reviewed progress on the Land Record Management Information System (LRMIS), which aims at making the masses' land rights secure and improve investment climate by reducing the potential for disputes.

The LRMIS project is being executed by the Board of Revenue with financial assistance of the World Bank.

The chief minister directed the planning and development chairman to approach the World Bank asking it for a panel of three reputed international consultants for undertaking an assessment as to how the LRMIS project has progressed, especially its utility for the common man, transparency, accountability of its operations and achievement of objectives and targets. The chief minister has given two weeks to the P&D chairman for completing the task.

Following discussion, the chief minister directed the P&D chairman and LRMIS Project Management Unit (PMU) to withdraw the October 19 letter “providing for postings of tehsildars/revenue officers in record centres (ARCs) on temporary basis” and submit details of all postings and transfers whereby revenue officers were adjusted temporarily against such positions.

The chief minister also constituted a committee headed by additional chief secretary and comprising Chief Minister’s Inspection Team member and services secretary to evaluate the nature of disciplinary actions taken by the LRMIS PMU. The committee will also be required to look into the nature of cases referred to the Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) by the LRMIS and submit its finds within five days.

Mr Sharif also asked the P&D chairman to hold forensic audit, through an independent agency, of the figures presented by the PMU indicating monitoring checks as well as citizens’ feedback. He sought a report on this subject within two weeks.

In order to evaluate the system in depth, the chief minister also constituted another three-member committee headed by CMIT chairman to conduct a comprehensive audit of the recruitments made in the PMU. The committee comprising services and regulations secretaries, has been asked to submit its findings within a week.

Expecting substantial progress on his directions, the chief minister has called another meeting on the subject on October 29.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1292184/cs-told-to-identify-hiccups-in-land-record-authority-draft-law-in-48-hours>

OWNERS DEMAND MARKET RATE FOR DASU DAM LAND

Dawn, October 25th, 2016

MANSEHRA: The people affected by the 4200 megawatts Dasu hydropower project on Monday demanded fresh survey for the determination of the prices of their land and properties in line with the current market trends.

“Though I am PML-N member, I will firmly stand with the Dasu dam-affected people. The federal government is not sincere about resolution of their grievances as it started work on their land without making any payment,” MPA Abdul Sattar told a jirga in Barseen area of Kohistan. The event was organised to decide future strategy about the Dasu hydropower project.

The dam-affected people also staged a sit-in at the project’s site complaining the survey for land price’s determination had been suspended for four months.

Members of an 80-member committee formed by the affected people also attended the jirga and announced they won’t allow work on their land until the federal government settled all outstanding issues.

MPA Sattar said the families affected by Dasu hydropower project sought market prices of their land. “If the government can divide land acquired for Diamer-Basha dam into two categories, urban and rural, then why it can’t do so with the land being acquired for Dasu dam,” he said.

The MPA said the government was in the process of acquiring a land of 90,000 kanals for Dasu dam and that it even started work on the project but land and property owners still awaited any payments. He said Kohistan was a mountainous area with few plains so if the government acquired agricultural and plain lands in the region for Dasu dam, the people would lose major way of earning i.e. agricultural land.

The MPA said the affected people would never accept payments of their land in line with the previous survey carried out by Wapda. “I ask the federal government to sort out the matter with the committee of landowners otherwise all sorts of work will remain suspended and thus, causing huge financial losses to the exchequer,” he said.

Haji Ghulam Hussain, Haji Smunder Khan, Maulana Walliullah Tohidee and Maulana Attaur Rehmana, Raja Mohammad Arif also spoke on the occasion.

Later, landowners staged a sit-in at the site of Dasu dam and demanded fresh survey for the determination of the price of their land in line with the current market trends.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1292149/owners-demand-market-rate-for-dasu-dam-land>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 17TH TO OCTOBER 23RD 2016

WESTERN ROUTE DEFINITELY PART OF CPEC, SAYS CHINESE ENVOY

Dawn, October 17th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador Sun Weidong said on Sunday that the passage going through the western part of Pakistan to Gwadar was definitely a part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Speaking at an event held at the Pak-China Friendship Centre to welcome the participants of a car rally arriving from the Chinese region of Ningxia, he said the CPEC was for Pakistan as a whole with multiple passages and it would bring benefits to all Pakistani people.

“As we see it, all the routes lead to development and prosperity. Under the ‘Belt and Road Initiatives’, CPEC will make its contribution to reviving the ‘Silk Road spirit’,” he added.

He said Chinese President Xi Jinping had proposed the initiatives in 2013, reviving the great Silk Road spirit.

As the major and pilot project of the initiatives, the CPEC had entered full implementation with remarkable progress, the ambassador said.

“Sixteen early harvest projects are under consideration, with total investment of \$13.6 billion and tens of thousands of new jobs have been created for local people.”

He explained that there were three key points of the spirit: openness, inclusiveness and mutual learning, and win-win cooperation. “We will always open our doors to the outside world.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1290497/western-route-definitely-part-of-cpec-says-chinese-envoy>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 10TH TO OCTOBER 16TH 2016

RAILWAYS’ LAND: ENCROACHERS OCCUPY PROPERTY WORTH RS 48.76B, SAYS AUDIT REPORT

The Express Tribune, October 10th, 2016.

Qadeer Tanoli

Islamabad: Parcels of land worth Rs48.76 billion are illegally occupied by encroachers all over the country, an audit report stated.

The report, compiled by Auditor General of Pakistan, maintains 153.26 acres of railways land valuing Rs1,839.36 million was encroached upon in Multan Division.

The railways' management was notified about the matter in September 2015. According to the report, a renowned textile mills in Karachi illegally occupied 43.11 acres of railways' land worth Rs2,008.28 million in Jumma Goth for a long time because of the negligence of authorities concerned. The matter was discussed with Deputy Director Property and Land (P&L) Karachi in March last year and he stated that an inquiry was conducted and the matter was referred to NAB Sindh for investigation.

The DAC believed that subordinate staff cannot be held solely responsible for such huge encroachment extending over two decades.

Moreover, 825 acres of land valued at Rs44,692.59 million, including 302 acres of residential, 10 acres commercial and 513 acres agricultural land of railways was also encroached upon in Lahore.

The matter was also taken up with the railways' management in February this year, but the auditors had yet to receive a response.

According to the audit report, the situation was alarming. The audit advised quick action for early retrieval of land.

In Dera Ghazi Khan of Multan Division, railways hold 4,147.846 acres of untitled land valuing Rs4,147.85 million.

The land's title possessed by the railways department was not in the name of Pakistan Railways.

The land plans maintained by the Division were even without signatures/attestations of authorities concerned. In the absence of valid legal ownership documents, the land was vulnerable to encroachment.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1196350/railways-land-encroachers-occupy-property-worth-rs48-76b-says-audit-report/>

NAB GETS 45 DAYS TO PROBE LAND ALLOTMENT TO BAHRIA TOWN

Dawn, October 14th, 2016

Tahir Sadiquee

KARACHI: The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to complete within 45 days its investigation into alleged illegal allotment of state land to Bahria Town, a leading real estate firm.

A two-judge bench comprising Justices Amir Hani Muslim and Khilji Arif Hussain also directed the NAB to file a reference against those involved in the matter before the administrative judge of the accountability courts after completing its investigation.

The bench was hearing a number of applications against illegal allotment of land and adjustment of land in 43 Dehs by the Malir Development Authority.

The counsel for the NAB filed an interim inquiry report in a sealed envelop and informed the judges that the inquiry into the matter had been concluded and converted into investigation.

He sought sufficient time for completing the investigation into the matter.

Justice Hani asked him as to why further time was required when the NAB had already concluded the inquiry. “The NAB is an independent institution, but that does not entitle it to keep on investigating matters for two or three years and cause harassment to people,” he remarked.

He observed that the NAB was bound to complete investigation within a stipulated time.

The NAB counsel said the matter was very important and the NAB’s investigators were working hard on it. He said the case investigation officer had to record the statements of witnesses, and acquire survey report from the Directorate of Survey of Pakistan, which would take time.

The counsel asked the court to give four more months to the NAB to complete the investigation.

At a previous hearing, the apex court had restrained Bahria Town from undertaking any development activity on the state land allotted to it by the Malir Development Authority illegally and directed the National Accountability Bureau to complete its investigation on the matter within two months.

The NAB prosecutor general had also filed an interim report in a sealed envelop along with a copy of the survey report prepared by the Directorate of Survey of Pakistan, the Ministry of Defence, which was taken on record.

According to the survey report, the total land consolidated by the MDA and handed over to the Bahria Town was 9,385.185 acres.

Bahria Town is developing 9, 385 acres of the land located about nine kilometres from Toll Plaza on the Karachi-Hyderabad superhighway.

A civil rights campaigner had moved the court against the MDA for making adjustment of the land for Bahria Town. It was alleged that the MDA was allotted land at low prices to launch schemes for the general public, but the MDA consolidated and gave land to Bahria Town.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1289864>

100 KATCHI ABADIS IN SINDH TO BE UPGRADED AS TOWNS

Dawn, October 14th, 2016

Habib Khan Ghori

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has decided to upgrade 100 katchi abadis to the level of township by providing them basic amenities, including road infrastructure, all over Sindh to improve quality of life of its residents.

He directed the Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority (SKAA) to prepare a plan of the abadis with notified boundaries and free of all kind of litigation.

The chief minister, who took this decision while presiding over a meeting on the issue katchi abadis at CM House on Thursday, directed the chief secretary to constitute a committee under senior member of the Board of Revenue Rizwan Memon and SKAA secretary Dr Nawaz Shaikh and secretary for local government Baqaullah Unnar as its members to examine the demarcation cases and finalise the matter within 30 days.

He also made it clear to all that any new settlements on government lands would be considered as encroachment and the SHO concerned would be held responsible for it.

Earlier, giving a presentation to the chief minister Dr Nawaz Shaikh said there were 1,409 katchi abadis stretching over 25,944 acres in the province, of which 948 were notified, 344 not notified, 117 are established on federal government land which had notified only 30 katchi abadis while joint demarcation of 227 abadis had been carried out so far.

In reply to a question, the SKAA secretary said Karachi had 564 katchi abadis, of which 56 were located on hazardous places such as streams and drains. Giving details of 129 katchi abadis established on federal government land, he said 80 abadis were on railways land, 10 on defence land, 10 on Pak PWD, eight on KLTP, 29 ETPB, one on T&T and another on Wapda's land while 82 other abadis were located on the land of different provincial departments, which included 29 KMC, eight on SITE, one on jail, 18 on irrigation, four on Auqaf, two on food, 18 on local councils and one on works and services department land.

Dr Nawaz Shaikh dilating on the katchi abadis in other divisions in the province said 417 were in Hyderabad division, including 203 in Hyderabad, 28 in Dadu, 45 in Badin 46 in Thatta, 15 in Tando Allahya, nine in Tando Mohammad Khan, 20 in Matyrai, 21 in Jamshoro, and 30 in Sujawal. Of 417 only 200 katchi abadis were notified while 217 were yet to be notified including 117 abadis which had been taken up for regularisation.

In Mirpurkhas division out of 81 katchi abadis, including 17 in Tharparkar and 23 in Umerkot, 47 were regularised while 30 others were under process.

In Sukkur division there were 91 katchi abadis, including 22 in Ghotki and 18 Khairpur. Of them 60 were notified, 43 others were under process while 31 were yet to be notified. In Larkana division, of 112, including 18 in Kamber/Shahdadkot, 14 Shikarpur, 29 in Jacobabd and 17 in Kashmore, 69 were notified, 38 under process and 43 were yet to be taken up.

Similarly, in Shaheed Benazirabad division there were 144 katchi abadis, including 60 in Sanghar, 31 in Naushahro Feroze and 53 in Benazirabad/Nawabshah. Only 90 abadis were notified, 60 others were under the process while 54 had not been taken up for notification.

SKAA secretary Dr Nawaz Shaikh said that criterion for regularisation of a katchi abadi was that the settlement should have been in existence on or before March 23, 1985. The settlement must have at least 40 dwelling units.

Replying to a question, he said the societies which were not taken up for regularisation had the issues of settlement of federal or KMC land while those located on Sindh government land were awaiting demarcation.

The chief minister also decided to nominate MPA Murtaza Baloch as member of the SKAA governing body which had fallen vacant with the resignation of MQM MPA Erum Khalid from the assembly.

Besides other officials concerned those present at the meeting included special assistant to CM on Katchi Abadis Murtaza Baloch, senior member of the Board of Revenue Rizwan Memon, SKAA secretary Dr Nawaz Shaikh and director general of katchi abadis Akhtar Bugti.

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Wednesday appreciated the untiring efforts and close coordination of police, Rangers and intelligence agencies to maintain law and order during Muharram Majalis and mourning processions.

“You have performed a wonderful job and owe me a word of thanks for your coordinated sincere efforts,” he said while addressing policemen at the CPO where he visited in the evening on the last leg of his daylong tour of three divisions — Karachi, Sukkur and Larkana.

100 KATCHI ABADIS IN SINDH TO BE UPGRADED AS TOWNS

Dawn, October 14th, 2016

Habib Khan Ghori

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has decided to upgrade 100 katchi abadis to the level of township by providing them basic amenities, including road infrastructure, all over Sindh to improve quality of life of its residents.

He directed the Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority (SKAA) to prepare a plan of the abadis with notified boundaries and free of all kind of litigation.

The chief minister, who took this decision while presiding over a meeting on the issue katchi abadis at CM House on Thursday, directed the chief secretary to constitute a committee under senior member of the Board of Revenue Rizwan Memon and SKAA secretary Dr Nawaz Shaikh and secretary for local government Baqaullah Unnar as its members to examine the demarcation cases and finalise the matter within 30 days.

He also made it clear to all that any new settlements on government lands would be considered as encroachment and the SHO concerned would be held responsible for it.

Earlier, giving a presentation to the chief minister Dr Nawaz Shaikh said there were 1,409 katchi abadis stretching over 25,944 acres in the province, of which 948 were notified, 344 not notified, 117 are established on federal government land which had notified only 30 katchi abadis while joint demarcation of 227 abadis had been carried out so far.

In reply to a question, the SKAA secretary said Karachi had 564 katchi abadis, of which 56 were located on hazardous places such as streams and drains. Giving details of 129 katchi abadis established on federal government land, he said 80 abadis were on railways land, 10 on defence land, 10 on Pak PWD, eight on KLTP, 29 ETPB, one on T&T and another on Wapda's land while 82 other abadis were located on the land of different provincial departments, which included 29 KMC, eight on SITE, one on jail, 18 on irrigation, four on Auqaf, two on food, 18 on local councils and one on works and services department land.

Dr Nawaz Shaikh dilating on the katchi abadis in other divisions in the province said 417 were in Hyderabad division, including 203 in Hyderabad, 28 in Dadu, 45 in Badin 46 in Thatta, 15 in Tando Allahya, nine in Tando Mohammad Khan, 20 in Matyrai, 21 in Jamshoro, and 30 in Sujawal. Of 417 only 200 katchi abadis were notified while 217 were yet to be notified including 117 abadis which had been taken up for regularisation.

In Mirpurkhas division out of 81 katchi abadis, including 17 in Tharparkar and 23 in Umerkot, 47 were regularised while 30 others were under process.

In Sukkur division there were 91 katchi abadis, including 22 in Ghotki and 18 Khairpur. Of them 60 were notified, 43 others were under process while 31 were yet to be notified. In Larkana division, of 112, including 18 in Kamber/Shahdadkot, 14 Shikarpur, 29 in Jacobabd and 17 in Kashmore, 69 were notified, 38 under process and 43 were yet to be taken up.

Similarly, in Shaheed Benazirabad division there were 144 katchi abadis, including 60 in Sanghar, 31 in Naushahro Feroze and 53 in Benazirabad/Nawabshah. Only 90 abadis were notified, 60 others were under the process while 54 had not been taken up for notification.

SKAA secretary Dr Nawaz Shaikh said that criterion for regularisation of a katchi abadi was that the settlement should have been in existence on or before March 23, 1985. The settlement must have at least 40 dwelling units.

Replying to a question, he said the societies which were not taken up for regularisation had the issues of settlement of federal or KMC land while those located on Sindh government land were awaiting demarcation.

The chief minister also decided to nominate MPA Murtaza Baloch as member of the SKAA governing body which had fallen vacant with the resignation of MQM MPA Erum Khalid from the assembly.

Besides other officials concerned those present at the meeting included special assistant to CM on Katchi Abadis Murtaza Baloch, senior member of the Board of Revenue Rizwan Memon, SKAA secretary Dr Nawaz Shaikh and director general of katchi abadis Akhtar Bugti.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1289848/100-katchi-abadis-in-sindh-to-be-upgraded-as-towns>

ENCROACHMENTS ON 10% OF LYARI EXPRESSWAY HINDER PROGRESS OF CONSTRUCTION

The Express Tribune, October 14th, 2016.

KARACHI: Lyari Expressway is perhaps the longest delayed project of Karachi – its construction was promised in 2002. As the project continues to hit snags, blame game goes on between the provincial government and the National Highway Authority (NHA).

In 2002, the federal government promised a wide, uninterrupted Lyari Expressway to ensure uninterrupted flow of traffic from Sohrab Goth to Mauripur and back. Almost 14 years later, this dream has yet to turn into reality. Encroachments on a portion of mere 1.6 kilometres (km) of the 16.5km stretch are apparently preventing authorities from completing the project and easing the city’s traffic flow. Removing the encroachments is the only role of the Sindh government in the project.

In February this year, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif while inaugurating the Green Line Bus Rapid Transit, promised that the remaining work on the Lyari Expressway will be started within 15 days. Unsurprisingly, this has yet to happen.

Before the prime minister, the Sindh government constituted a committee in September, 2015, under the supervision of the then commissioner, Shoaib Siddiqui, to remove the encroachments along the route. These half-hearted efforts also failed to yield results.

Lyari Expressway is the third mega-transport project introduced in Karachi after the revival of the Karachi Circular Railway and Bus Rapid Transit system. The southbound part of the expressway, which runs from Sohrab Goth to Mauripur Road, has been completed and has been in use for traffic since 2010. However, the northbound track, which starts at Mauripur and goes all the way to Sohrab Goth, is still incomplete. The part from Mauripur to Sir Shah Suleman Road, which is around 6km, needs construction while the remaining portion has been built. Within the incomplete portion, there is a mere 1.6km where the Sindh government has yet to clear encroachments.

According to NHA's project director for the Lyari Expressway, Javed Husain, they are just the executing body of the project. The real problem, he said, lies in the removal of encroachments, which the Sindh government is supposed to clear. He said that if they are provided with the vacated land, they will complete the project before June next year. A major portion of District West is still under encroachment, which includes Manghopir, where they need 588 metres for the carriageway and 434 metres for the ramp. Meanwhile, he said, the construction of the project at Sindhi Hotel and Teen Hatti in District Central, which are elevated portions of the expressway, is underway. "Pilling has been done at the Teen Hatti portion," he said.

On the other hand, NHA's resident engineer of the project, who has recently been transferred from the post, told The Express Tribune requesting anonymity that the Sindh government is not interested in removing the encroachment. He said that had they been slightly interested, the encroachments would have been completely removed by now. The pace of removing the encroachments, he said, is extremely slow, mainly due to political reasons.

Meanwhile, District West's deputy commissioner, Asif Jameel, denied all such allegations and said that the total encroached upon area in his district is 1.5km, out of which 1km has been cleared, adding that 580 metres is for the right of way of the Lyari Expressway while 435 metres will be for the ramp of the elevated portion of the expressway.

He said that the land acquisition proceedings for the leased units are underway. By the end of December, he assured that the entire land will be cleared of encroachments. On the other hand, District Central deputy commissioner Captain Fariduddin said that they have already cleared the encroachments in his district.

In the month of June, the Sindh High Court (SHC) had directed the set of petitioners, seeking orders for the director of the Lyari Expressway Rehabilitation Project, and other federal and local government authorities to give adequate compensation to 49 families, whose land had been acquired for the project – to vacate the land in one week so that the construction could resume on the remaining portion of the highway.

By June 8, the authorities will be at liberty to take action according to the law, the division bench headed by Justice Munib Akhtar had ruled.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1198434/petty-excuse-encroachments-10-lyari-expressway-hinder-progress-construction/>
WOMEN SEEK PROOF OF OWNERSHIP FOR LAND GIVEN TO THEM

Dawn, October 15th, 2016

Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: A seminar held to study the state of public land grantees comprising many previously landless peasant women, organised by the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) at their office here on Friday, brought up several issues faced by these women even after being awarded agriculture land.

"Thanks to the government, I now have two acres of land on which I grow rice," said Bhana of Thatta. "But I don't have the proof of ownership of this piece of land. I have no documents," she said.

Sahiba, also from Thatta, said she was given four acres of land. "I grow wheat and rice on my land and I plan to grow tomato, too. But I face plenty of hurdles from getting seed, insecticides and loans for all that as I have no documents to prove ownership of the land I need all this for," she said.

Meanwhile, Murad Khatoon from Badin said she was given 16 acres but she could not even step on the land as the zamindar won't allow it.

Tahir Iqbal of the Legal Rights Forum explained that a piece of land was given to a peasant woman for 15 years and she must pay Rs100 every year for those 15 years to make it Rs1,500 after which she was presented the documents of that

land she has been cultivating for 15 years. “But,” he said, “the flaw in this agreement is that there is no mechanism in place for the collection of this Rs100 per year. The women don’t know and are confused about where to make the payment or to whom,” he said.

“That could be very dangerous because not making regular payments means that the land they have now may be reverted to the government,” he said.

Iqbal also said though it was a great initiative on the part of the government to have distributed public land among peasant women, there were several cases of this having been done haphazardly. “Some households ended up with too much land as every woman in that family got a piece of land. So there is a need for proper research so that one piece of land goes to one household,” he said.

“Another issue is that when a peasant woman has land, she is not supplied water for irrigation through the tube well which is owned by the zamindar.”

Uroosa Khatti said many issues were being highlighted now after analysing the situation now following the giving of lands to the women. “At some places the land has not even been properly demarcated while at others there are issues coming up with the zamindar. These are illiterate women who, if they go into litigation, cannot really fight the cases on their own,” she said.

“There is also a need to look at the political will in carrying out the process. It should be a transparent procedure throughout,” she said, adding that decisions in several problematic cases were still pending with the government in the matter.

Babar Ayaz then pointed towards another aspect of the scheme like the importance of women’s economic empowerment. “When women start to earn, they also earn respect. Peasant women, who play a major role in our agriculture, deserve 50 per cent of the public land being distributed among the peasants,” he said.

“It is heart-warming to see all these women, who were never even included in major family decisions such as their own children’s marriages, being asked their opinion now after they have been given their own land,” he said.

Anis Haroon, NCHR’s member from Sindh, who was chairing the seminar, said that there was a need for an effective redress mechanism to be put in place by the government to resolve the issues of the public land grantees. She also said that the deserving peasants should be identified without any prejudices, keeping in view the poverty scorecard.

Finally, Erum Khalid, special assistant to the Chief Minister on Women’s Development, who was the guest of honour, said she and her party, the Pakistan People Party, carried a lot of respect for the peasants, especially women, as they were the ones doing most of the work. “They feed us through their agriculture. So land reforms were and still are the need of the times,” said.

About the Rs1,500 in 15 years payment after which comes the real ownership, she said that it was for the protection of the women themselves. “Here even if a woman owns a gold ring the men folk in her family want her to sell it. She won’t be able to sell this land if she doesn’t own it. And by the time she would have its ownership she would be too strong for anyone to push her in any direction,” she said.

“Of course, there will always be flaws whenever any new scheme is executed. We will resolve the issues as soon as we can.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1290054>

LAND WORTH RS 92.78 BILLION STILL UNDER UNLAWFUL ENCROACHMENT: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PANEL INFORMED BY RAILWAYS

Business Recorder, October 15, 2016

Pakistan Railways Friday admitted that over 4,229 acres of its land worth Rs 92.78 billion is still under encroachment. The Punjab tops the list where 2,170 acres of railway land is under encroachment followed by Sindh with 1,189 acres, Balochistan with 1,189 acres and Khyber Pakhtunkhawa with 250.9 acres. This was revealed by the Railways officials while briefing the National Assembly Standing Committee on Railways, which met with Syed Naveed Qamar in the chair.

Secretary Parveen Agha, Additional General Manager Humayun Rasheed, Director Land and Property Arshad Salam Khattak and Director General Technical Syed Munawar Shah briefed the committee members. Railways officials admitted that major portion of the encroached land is in the two provinces of Punjab and Sindh. However Balochistan tops the list with respect to value as Rs 50.9 billion followed by Punjab with Rs 22.58 billion, Sindh 11.5 billion and Khyber Pakhtunkhawa Rs 7.7 billion.

Railway land has three types of encroachment comprising commercial, residential and agriculture besides lands under unauthorised occupation of government departments, which accounts to 540.668 acres. Private individuals encroached 4338 acres and defense departments 251.23 acres. Of the 129 acres commercial land, 73 acres is in Balochistan, 48 acres in Sindh, 7 acres in Punjab; of the 1353 acres residential land, 442 acres in Balochistan, 448 acres in Sindh, and 463 acres in Punjab; of the 1956 acres agriculture land, 46 in Balochistan, 644 acres in Sindh, 11 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhawa and 1255 acres in Punjab has been encroached or occupied.

Giving briefing to the Committee on steps taken by the Ministry of Railways for the retrieval of Pakistan Railways' land from illegal occupants, Director Land and Property stated that 3550.974 acres of Pakistan Railways' land has been retrieved from illegal occupants since January 2012.

The committee was informed that Railways has a total of 167,690 acres land including 90,326 acres in Punjab, 39428 acres in Sindh, 28,228 acres in Balochistan and 9,707 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhawa. The committee was further informed that Railways Ministry has approached the Supreme Court of Pakistan against three provinces for not transferring the organisation land title into its favour.

The Committee was also given briefing on recent Railways accidents. It was informed that the 60% of the accidents were caused due to unmanned level crossing, unauthorized Railways crossing and manned level crossing. In order to ensure the safety of trains operations, Pakistan Railways had conducted a joint venture surveys for the up-gradations of existing unmanned level crossing in collaboration with Provincial and Local District Governments. The Committee recommended that proper steps should be taken by the Ministry to avoid these types of incidents in future.

It was further informed that 52 million passenger travel through Rail every year @ 142465 (average) passengers daily. In last 69 years over 6.2 billion (approx) passengers travelled with Pakistan Railways while in all known accidents total passengers casualties are less than 0.00023 percent. During last 11 years 129 people were killed in different accidents while 9265 injured. The committee was further informed that there are 1610 unmanned level crossing including 1147 on branch line and 463 mainline.

The committee was further informed that up gradation of Mainline (ML-1) has been included in the early harvest projects in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The Committee also decided to constitute a Sub-Committee under the convenership of Ramesh Lal, MNA to examine the encroachment of Railways' land in the Khyber Pakhtunkhawa province. MNAs Sardar Muhammad Irfan Dogar, Rasheed Ahmad Khan, Phyllis Azeem, Ramesh Lal, Engr Hamid-ul-Haq Khalil, and Naseema Hafeez Panezai attended the meeting.

<http://www.brecorder.com/business-and-economy/189:pakistan/93459:land-worth-rs-9278-billion-still-under-unlawful-encroachment-national-assembly-panel-informed-by-railways?date=2016-10-15>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 3RD TO OCTOBER 9TH 2016

DASU DAM DISPUTE: KOHISTAN LAND OWNERS THREATEN TO BLOCK KKH

The Express Tribune, October 3rd, 2016

Muhammad Sadaqat

Kohistan: Angry land owners in Kohistan on Sunday warned that they would not allow construction of the much trumpeted Dasu Hydro Power Project (DHPP) unless their demands were met by October 12.

If their demands remain unmet at the expiration of the deadline, the land owners threatened to march on the Parliament House and block the Karakorum Highway (KKH), the only land route between China and the rest of the country.

Shamsur Rehman, a member of the Dasu Dam Action Committee (DDAC), told The Express Tribune that the decision to continue impeding work on the project and to stage the protest was taken at a meeting of their 80-member committee. The meeting was held in Barseen village on Sunday with Maulana Sabr Jameel in chair.

He added that the committee had decided to suspend work on the land survey and construction of the 9,000 kanal dam's reservoir on July 12 after raising objections on the amount of money they were being paid for their lands.

The committee had on August 8 presented the government with a nine-point charter of demands in which they sought land settlement on the pattern and categorization in the Diamer-Bhasha Dam, compensation for structures built on land, payment for orchards on rates prevalent in Darail and Tangir valleys, hiring Kohistanis for building the project, payment on market rates for land forcibly occupied by the dam authorities among others.

But with the charter's deadline expiring on Sunday, DDAC members have given the government a fresh ultimatum.

"We will not allow Wapda officials to carry out [land] survey or construction work in the reservoir area and block the KKH besides marching on parliament for our rights," Maulana Jameel told The Express Tribune.

Furthermore, the committee said they had deployed eight members outside the Wapda office in Barseen to monitor movement of officials and contractors.

According to an official source, all three stakeholders in the DHPP, including the central government, provincial government and the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) have agreed to complete the acquisition of land as soon as possible and in this regard they were likely to settle with land owners in the affected area over the next couple of weeks.

The 4,320 megawatts DHPP is being built on the River Indus around seven kilometers upstream from Dasu, the district headquarters of Kohistan, at a cost of \$4.5 billion.

Its first stage is scheduled to be completed by 2019 and includes six units with total installed capacity of 2,160 MW. The second stage includes installing the remaining six units and is expected to be completed by 2022.

The government took a \$1.1 billion loan from the World Bank to procure over 80,000 kanal of land for the dam and the government is bound to complete the acquisition by October 31.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1192519/dasu-dam-dispute-kohistan-land-owners-threaten-block-kkh/>

HYDERABAD-SUKKUR SECTION COMMISSIONER FOR SPEEDING UP SURVEY OF LAND ACQUISITION
Business Recorder, October 07, 2016

The Commissioner Hyderabad, Qazi Shahid Pervez has asked the officers of departments concerned to speed up the survey of land acquisition for construction of the Peshawar-Karachi Motorway section from Hyderabad to Sukkur. The Commissioner issued such directives while reviewing the progress of land acquisition in a meeting here on Thursday.

The Deputy Commissioners of Hyderabad, Jamshoro and Matiari, representatives of National Highway Authority, officers of Land Record Board of Revenue and other lined departments also attended the meeting. The Commissioner said that the federal and provincial governments fully committed to provide standardised communication facilities to the people and the construction of Motorway right from Peshawar to Karachi is the key component of the governments' plan in this sector.

He said that both federal and provincial governments fully determined to complete this national project at the earliest therefore, all bottlenecks which delaying in completion of the project should be removed with immediate effect. He said that survey regarding land acquisition for this project should be completed at the earliest with submission of report so that the process of acquiring land could be started with payment of compensation amount to land affected people.

Due to delay in survey, he informed that the federal government has still not paid the grant to Sindh Government for payment of compensation for those people whose lands would be acquired for the project. The representative of National Highway Authority Abdullah Jan while addressing the participants of the meeting said that high rates has been fixed for land which required for construction of Hyderabad Sukkur section of Motorway which needs to justify so that the government could be able to pay compensation amount to owners of the land.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/91666/>

WWB DIRECTOR ARRESTED OVER LAND FRAUD

Dawn October 8th, 2016

PESHAWAR: The National Accountability Bureau, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Friday arrested Zahid Ali, director works of the Workers Welfare Board, for his alleged involvement in illegal acquisition of about 400 kanals of land in Nowshera in 2009-10.

A statement issued here on Friday said the NAB had already arrested two other accused in the same case.

It said that the accused was prima facie involved along with other accused persons in illegal acquisition of land measuring 400 kanals at Dag Ismail Khel, causing millions of rupees loss to public exchequer.

The statement said during the course of investigations, it was established that the accused Zahid Ali along with officials of land revenue department, Nowshera, acquired land consisting of 'shamilat deh' in sheer violation of the directions of the board. It had also been established that the actual rate of the acquired land was very nominal and he knowingly and with mala fide intentions, in order to fulfill his ulterior motives, did not obtain the certificate from DOR Nowshera regarding the nature of the land.

The bureau said that the accused being the director works, WWB, willingly and knowingly failed to safeguard the interest of the government, obtained illegal gratifications, huge kickbacks and caused loss of millions of rupees to the government kitty.

The statement said that Almagir, a tehsildar, and Jalil, a private person, had already been arrested by NAB in the case and more arrests were on the cards.

The accused will be presented before the accountability court for obtaining his physical remand.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1288778/wwb-director-arrested-over-land-fraud>

SC TO CONSIDER IF STATE LAND CAN BE USED FOR PRIVATE PURPOSES

Dawn, October 9th, 2016

Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court seems keen to lay down a new legal principle by interpreting Articles 23 and 24 to determine whether a private company — even if it is a charitable trust — can acquire state land for anything other than public purposes, i.e. to build a housing society or a residential township.

Articles 23 and 24 of the Constitution, which deal with property rights, ensure an individual's right to acquire or dispose of property in any part of Pakistan. The articles also provide protection from compulsory acquisition or taking possession of a piece of land for anything other than a public purpose.

The legal question arose after a three-judge Supreme Court bench, headed by Justice Mian Saqib Nisar, took up an appeal moved by the Ahbab Cooperative Housing Society Limited.

The controversy at hand revolves around the allotment of land to the housing society, which applied to the Lahore district collector in September 1970 for the acquisition of land in the Hanjerwal and Thokar Niaz Baig localities on the outskirts of Lahore. The society wanted to establish boys and girls colleges on the land, in collaboration with the Quranic Education Society, as well as a small township appurtenant to these institutions.

On Feb 1971, a notification under Section 4 of the Land Acquisition Act 1894 was issued in respect of the land, measuring 209 kanals and seven marlas. But in November that year, through a corrigendum, the purpose of the acquisition was shown to be for a 'private purpose'.

In the meantime, Martial Law Regulation 118 was issued on Apr 1972, under which it was no longer possible to establish privately-managed schools and colleges. Thus, on March 29, 1973, the objective of the acquisition of the land was changed to the establishment of a Quranic Research Centre and a residential colony.

However, the validity of the acquisition proceedings was challenged by Noor Muhammad and former Punjab governor Sadiq Hussain Qureshi. As a result, the Lahore division commissioner cancelled all notifications of the said piece of land through an order issued in July 1975.

This order was then challenged before the Lahore High Court by the housing society. The court set aside the land acquisition for a number of reasons, such as whether the land can be acquired at all for the purposes of a company, following the enforcement of the Constitution, particularly in the light of Articles 23 and 24.

Later, when the Supreme Court took up the matter, it framed four questions. Firstly, whether land can be acquired for a company's private purposes after the enforcement of the Constitution, particularly when such an acquisition falls under the concept of 'undue enrichment'.

Here, the concept of undue enrichment refers loosely to the principle that state land should not be used for the benefit or enrichment of private parties and can only be used for the public good.

Secondly, whether the acquisition of land can be tested on the touchstone of the Constitution when the matter at hand pertains to a period prior to the enforcement of the Constitution.

Thirdly, whether the controversy raised in the case was a ‘past and closed transaction’; and lastly, whether the first question is relevant for the purpose of a resolution or a decision on the case at hand, even though it has remained pending all this time.

Representing the petitioner, Abid Hassan Minto highlighted that no objection was ever raised by the respondents to the acquisition of the property, therefore they were not competent to agitate the matter before the court through a writ petition.

He also argued that the transaction had become ‘past and closed’ and that the high court had exceeded its jurisdiction by setting aside the allotment.

However, the bench has decided to refer the matter back to Chief Justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali, asking him to consider constituting a larger bench – preferably a five-member one – to hear and decide the constitutional questions that have been raised regarding the protection of property rights.

The matter was referred to the chief justice when Punjab Assistant Advocate General Mudassir Khalid Abbasi highlighted that similar petitions entailing the right of acquisition of properties by a company were pending before the Supreme Court. Now, all cases of a similar nature will be clubbed and heard together.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1289005/sc-to-consider-if-state-land-can-be-used-for-private-purposes>

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November 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 28 TH TO DECEMBER 4TH 2016

DRONES TO BE USED FOR LAND MEASUREMENT

Dawn December 1st, 2016

LAHORE: The Punjab government has decided to use drone technology for correct measurement of land with a view to modernise land record management system.

A pilot project has been prepared for the purpose with the technical assistance of the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB), a handout said on Wednesday.

It quoted a Punjab government spokesman as saying that use of information technology would help accelerate computerisation of land record.

He said the use of drone technology would also accelerate the land mapping process and ensure provision of better service delivery to the masses.

He said the project reflected chief minister's vision to use modern technology to achieve the goal of good governance.

The technology would also be used to eliminate encroachments and for earlier disposal of revenue cases, the spokesman added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1299743/drones-to-be-used-for-land-measurement>

LCCI DEMANDS LAND FOR COTTAGE CITY

Business Recorder, 1 December 2016

LAHORE: The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) has demanded of the government to allocate land for setting up of Cottage City; as the cottage industry is not only building block of economy but also of utmost importance for alleviation of poverty and unemployment.

The LCCI President Abdul stated this while addressing a 100-member delegation of All Pakistan Cottage Industry led by its Chairman Ghulam Sarwar Malik here Wednesday. The economic revival would remain a dream until and unless the government redesigns its policies and divert resources towards the cottage industry, he said. He said the early establishment of a well equipped cottage city on the pattern of industrial zones in the country should be made part of the economic agenda of the government.

He cited the example of China, Korea and United States where an equal importance is being given to the small business.

They are treated at par with the large scale manufacturing sector. Despite having all the resources, the economic downturn being witnessed by the country is an eye-opener for the people sitting at the helm of the affairs, he added.

He called for a two-pronged strategy to cope with economic meltdown. He suggested to the government to evolve short-term sector-specific policies to break the economic logjam as it has proved that the longer term policies generally fall prey to political uncertainties.

Secondly, he said the government should expedite process of consultation with private sector as the business community is the real stakeholders and no policy should be announced without due consultation with the businessmen.

Speaking on the occasion, Ghulam Sarwar Malik sought the help of Lahore Chamber for the revival of cottage industry and said that some well-equipped space must be allocated by the government for the cottage industry so that the people attached with cottage industry could be able to do their businesses with peace of mind.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/12/01/9-page/824343-news.html>

LIFE ALONG CHAMAN-KALAT PORTION OF NATIONAL HIGHWAY

Dawn, December 2nd, 2016

Maliha Safiullah

ISLAMABAD: A photo exhibition of the recently reconstructed section of the National Highway (N-25), which connects Chaman to Kalat via Quetta, was inaugurated by American Ambassador David Hale on Thursday at the Aqs Gallery.

National Highway Authority (NHA) Chairman Shahid Ashraf Tarar and Frontier Works Organisation Director Maj Gen Mohammad Afzal were also present on the occasion.

The photos in the exhibition portray various scenes from life on and around the new American funded highway.

The primary contractor for the project, Frontier Works Organisation started work on the highway in October 2014 with a funding of \$63 million from USAID.

For years, the road originating from Chaman and ending in Karachi was obstructed, hence restricting trade and severing the rural population from necessary services.

With its completion and renovation, the road will now rehabilitate the lives of the people of Balochistan by increasing access to basic healthcare, education and other social services.

“This road is a concrete demonstration of America’s commitment to help bring peace, stability and prosperity to Pakistan. It is a testament to the far-reaching benefits of our partnership, as it will serve the people of Pakistan for generations to come,” the American ambassador said at the inauguration.

USAID’s Pakistan Mission Director John Groarke spoke about the importance of relations between the US and Pakistan.

One of the pictures on display at the event. — Photos by Tanveer Shahzad

“USAID’s program in Pakistan is one of the agency’s largest in the world and that is a reflection on the importance that the US government and USID place on its relationship with Pakistan,” he said.

In reference to whether global political situations or the terrorist tension may cause hindrance in the US’ commitment to help bring peace, stability and prosperity to Pakistan, Mr Groarke said that irrespective of the character of government in either of the countries, the recognition of the importance of the relationship between Pakistan and the US shall remain.

“Despite all the progress that we have made, when we look towards the future we recognise that a lot needs to be done. The US is going to be here, working together with Pakistanis as friends and as partners till we reach our common objective; that is the day that Pakistan will need no economic assistance,” he said.

He appreciated the cooperation of the government, the Frontier Works Organisation and the NHA in meeting security and logistical challenges and overcoming them in the rural areas of Balochistan.

The successful completion of projects like these instils hope for the development of the country, he said, adding that the highway will connect Pakistan with Afghanistan and its central Asian neighbours. He said an additional fund of \$27 million was allocated for further improvement.

To date, USAID has funded the construction and rehabilitation of more than 1,100 kilometres of roads in Pakistan, including the four major trade routes between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1299994/life-along-chaman-kalat-portion-of-national-highway>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 21ST TO NOVEMBER 27TH 2016

COMPUTERISATION OF LAND RECORD STILL A FAR CRY

Dawn, November 22nd, 2016

Mohammad Ashfaq

PESHAWAR: The project of computerisation of land record and establishment of service delivery centres across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is in doldrums as only Rs427.367 million out of the estimated cost of Rs6.8 billion could be spent on the execution of the plan during the previous few years, according to sources.

They said that the utilised amount was only 6.2 per cent of the total estimated cost. The provincial revenue department had planned computerisation of land record and establishment of service delivery centres in two phases but the plan could not be executed within the schedule time due to meagre spending.

Sources said that computerisation of land record was the brainchild of the previous provincial government as a decision in that regard was taken in 2012. Initially it was planned for seven districts including Peshawar, Mardan, Abbottabad, Buner, Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan, they said.

Sources said that estimated cost of the first phase of the project, meant for seven districts, was Rs1.245 billion that and it was scheduled to be completed in 2016-17. They said that utilisation of funds on the first phase of the project started in 2013-14.

With a few months left to the deadline, the revenue department has so far spent only Rs346.484 million, which is 27.8 per cent of the estimated cost of the first phase of the scheme.

“Computerisation of land record is in progress in the seven districts while the PTI-led provincial government has decided to extend it to 12 more districts of the province,” said sources.

The new districts where the plan will be implanted include Charsadda, Nowshera, Swabi, Haripur, Mansehra, Battagram, Swat, Shangla, Karak, Hangu, Lakki Marwat and Tank.

“The government has also decided to establish services delivery centres across the province for the convenience of the people and elimination of patwarkhanas where patwaris take bribe from people,” sources said. The extension of the plan to 12 more districts and establishment of services delivery centres have been described as second phase of the project.

Sources said that estimated cost of the second phase of the scheme was Rs5.561 billion and its completion time was 2017-18. However, due to meagre releases of funds, the revenue department could only spent Rs80.883 million, which was 1.454 per cent of the total allocation, they added.

Sources said that in 2014, the government amended Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Land Revenue Act, 1967 to allow computerisation of land record. Beside meagre allocation of funds, the non-cooperation of patwaris was also one of the reasons of delay in the execution of the plan, they added.

They said that patwaris took a lot of time in verification of documents related to land record, sent by the officials involved in the computerisation process. “So far only two services delivery centres including that of Peshawar and Mardan have started functioning partially,” they said.

Sources said that according to PC-I for the first phase, it was planned to establish a project management unit for the execution of the project but it couldn't be set up during the last three years.

A senior official in the provincial revenue department, when contacted, said that newly appointed Senior Member of Revenue Afzal Latif was making efforts to execute the project.

He said that efforts were also underway to establish project management unit and remove flaws from the system.

SC SEEKS REPORT ON MISUSE OF LAND, FUNDS DONATED FOR PEOPLE'S WELFARE

Dawn, November 25th, 2016

Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday rejected a report of the District Coordination Officer, Muzaffargarh, who was assigned to ascertain the status of a chunk of land measuring 10,000 acres donated by its owner for the welfare of people but currently being ill-managed with funds being misappropriated.

A two-judge bench headed by Justice Ejaz Afzal Khan had taken up a 1993 complaint of Muzaffar Hussain Khan Magsi alleging that neither the land nor its accounts were being properly managed and maintained as a result of which the valuable property was being wasted and even its funds to the tune of Rs500 million were embezzled.

The court ordered the Punjab government to submit a comprehensive reply in a month encompassing measures for retrieving the trust land from illegal occupation, recovery of rent from different users as well as demarcation of the land.

The court also directed the anti-corruption court, Muzaffargarh, to decide a case with which it was seized for six months.

The late Sardar Kaura Khan, the chief of the Jatoli tribe of Baloch origin, owned a landed property in 32 Mauzas of four tehsils — Jatoli, Alipur, Jampur and Rajanpur — in Muzaffargarh and Rajanpur districts.

Before his death, Sardar Khan — who was issueless — made a will in October 1894, according to which one-third of his land was to be donated to the District Council Muzaffargarh for people's welfare.

When the case was taken up in 2013, it was revealed that no rules existed and no regulator was available to manage the land. Subsequently, a superintendent of land was appointed to supervise the trust land. But allegations subsequently surfaced that a hefty amount of Rs500m had been misappropriated from the funds.

During the proceedings, Additional Advocate General for Punjab Razzaq A. Mirza informed the court about the March 4, 2016, notification under which the Sardar Kaura Khan (Management, Supervision and Protection of Land) Rules, 2016, were framed.

The rules asked for the constitution of a 12-member management committee headed by the commissioner of Dera Ghazi Khan to ensure better management and protection of the land and maximum income from it, supervise auction of lots, recovery of dues and maintenance of record of income from the land, arrange re-assessment of lease rates before auction of lots, ensure that income from the land is used in education and health sectors, prevent illegal occupation and take effective measures to retrieve the land from illegal occupation.

The court appointed a commission under District Coordination Officer Shahzad Ahmed to verify the status of nature and character of soil and determine reasons for the low income being generated from the land.

The report pointed out that about 4,142 kanals had been encroached upon by different government departments by raising infrastructure like commercial buildings on the trust land.

It was revealed during the inspection that certain chunks of the land were also being utilised by criminals from whom it was not possible to retrieve the land.

But the court wondered whether the writ of the state was so weak that the administration could not take back the occupied land.

The case was adjourned to Jan 5 next year.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1298498/sc-seeks-report-on-misuse-of-land-funds-donated-for-peoples-welfare>

SETTING UP OF NEW SUGAR MILLS: LAND AREA OF COTTON CULTIVATION CUT BY 22PC IN 10 YEARS
Business Recorder, 24 November 2016

Fazal Sher

ISLAMABAD: The increase in number of sugar mills with enhancement in crushing capacity of existing mills in major cotton growing areas has resulted into 22 per cent reduction in cotton areas of the country over the last 10 years.

The total land area of cotton cultivation reduced by 22 per cent in Pakistan over the last 10 years and this major reduction in cotton area is only contributed by Punjab province, which has reduced its area under cotton by 26 per cent over the same period, said a report titled 'Declining Trend of Cotton Cultivation, Causes and the Way Forward' prepared by Dr Khalid Abdullah, Cotton Commissioner of Ministry of Textile Industry.

It is pertinent to mention here that the country witnessed 30 per cent decline in cotton production during the year 2015-16 due to abnormal weather conditions, seed quality, pests, diseases and low prices. Cotton is grown mostly in Punjab and Sindh provinces, with the former accounting for 79 per cent and the latter 20 per cent of the nation's land area of cotton cultivation.

Dr Khalid Abdullah placed the report before the Senate Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research, which met here on Wednesday with Senator Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah in the chair.

The report said that growing number of sugar mills and increase in the crushing capacity in the existing sugar mills resulted in reduction of cotton area in Rahim Yar Khan, Muzaffargarh etc. The cotton production in Mianwali will also be affected by installation of new sugar mills in that area, it added.

It said that cotton area also has been squeezed due to popularisation of maize and potato in the districts of Sahiwal, Faisalabad and Khanewal. The report further said that lower cotton price and damage to cotton production due to heavy rains and floods have compelled cotton farmers to shift to other crops like rice, maize, sugarcane and potatoes.

According to the report, the country has witnessed 24 per cent increase in acreage of maize, seven per cent in rice and 14 per cent increase in sugarcane acreage over the last 10 years.

Abdullah in its report suggested that provinces may be asked to refrain from issuance of No Objection Certificate (NOC) for installation of new sugar mills and increase in capacity of mills in the cotton growing areas. The trend of installation of sugar mills increased from 56 (1995 to 96) to 82 (2015-16), which must be checked to save the previous resources of irrigation water, and cultivating the cotton crop, it added.

To a question about the import of duty-free cotton from India, Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan, Federal Minister for Ministry of National Food Security and Research said the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) had rejected the demand of textile mills for allowing duty-free import of cotton. The government will not allow import of duty-free cotton from India, until and unless all the locally produced cotton is sold completely, he added.

Abdullah told the committee that there is no ban on the import of cotton through sea route; however, limited import of cotton is allowed from India via Wagah Border. The government has estimated cotton crop output 11.039 million bales for 2016-17, he added.

Senator Muhammad Mohsin Khan Leghari said that out of 79 per cent cotton grown in Punjab, 26 per cent is grown in southern Punjab and majority of the population of the area depends on cotton crop for their livelihood. “Verdict of Lahore High Court (LHC) with respect to ban on shifting of sugar mills should be implemented and sugar mills should not be installed in southern Punjab,” he said, adding that a letter should be written to the Prime Minister in this regard.

Senator Muhammad Azam Khan Swati, Muhammad Zafarullah Khan Dhandla, Gul Bashra and senior officials of MNFS&R also attended the meeting.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/11/24/12-page/821007-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 14TH TO NOVEMBER 20TH 2016

FOOD SECURITY: CULTIVATING DESERTS AND ARID LANDS

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, November 14th, 2016

Aslam Jarwar

Arid lands cover more than one-fifth of the earth’s surface and are found on every continent.

According to the World Meteorological Organisation, climate change and desertification are expected to lead to increasing levels of salinisation and desertification of agricultural lands.

These dry-lands are characterised by inhospitable temperatures, inaccessible terrain and scarcity of sweet water which makes inhabiting such areas difficult. Nonetheless, it is generally recognised that arid lands have a great potential for development.

According to the United Nations Office to Combat Desertification / United Nations Development Programme (UNCCD/ UNDP) these areas are home to about 50pc of the world’s livestock. About 13pc of the total world population (approximately 313m) live in arid zones with 92m alone residing in hyper-arid deserts.

Scarcity of freshwater is the major limiting factor. These areas largely depend on rainfall and/or groundwater for human needs, livestock consumption and sustaining scant agriculture.

However, recent scientific advancement and research have enhanced knowledge, providing a basis for humans to turn seemingly impossible situations into productive opportunities.

The desert aquaculture technology does not necessarily require significant investment and can be used for commercial, as well as small-scale affordable aquaculture initiatives

One option to utilise arid land and saline groundwater sources not fit for human consumption, or agriculture, is by cultivating organisms that can withstand the high content of salt prevalent there.

Seawater is being used to farm marine fish and plants all over the world. Similarly, the initiative of utilising desert saline or brackish water for fish farming was launched in 1963-1965 and tested experimentally, showing that it was possible to use such water to rear fish successfully.

The high mineral content in these waters, along with high ambient temperatures and solar radiation, in fact support high primary productivity; forming a suitable and favourable food-base for fish.

Since then scientists have been working on developing technologies suitable for fish farming and, as of today, many countries have developed successful models for fish production in brackish or saline water available underneath deserts and arid lands.

These systems, however, need good water management — which include saving and recycling — and the introduction of modern aquaculture technologies such as ‘recirculation aquaculture systems’.

These systems usually occupy a relatively small area and are extremely efficient, with water usage for fish production of up to 50 kg/m³.

The desert aquaculture technology does not necessarily require significant investment and can be used for commercial, as well as small-scale affordable aquaculture initiatives.

Apart from the farming of table fish, other commercially important and valuable organisms, tolerant to high salt concentrations and high temperatures, can also be produced in arid areas. Small brine shrimp, seaweed and the unicellular green algae are a few examples.

Currently, Australia farms supply over 60pc of the world’s natural b-carotene extracted from *Dunaliella salina*; which is mainly produced in large ponds of saline water extracted by tube-wells in South and Western Australia.

Innovative fish/vegetable co-culture systems are another option, which use the nutrient by-products of fish culture as a direct input for vegetable production; constantly recycling the same water in aquaponics systems.

Fish farming in desert and arid land is considered a fertile and lucrative enterprise these days.

Many countries have developed such fish farming thus making their lands arable and productive. US, South Africa, Mexico, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Israel are some examples.

Israel is one of the leading countries which have developed important innovations in arid and desert aquaculture by using saline ground water. It is exporting fish, vegetables and other agri-products produced in these desert systems. Such systems are more efficient in producing quality fish, vegetables and fruits, than conventional systems.

Climatically, except for the northern part, most of Pakistan is arid or semi-arid; however by virtue of a well-developed irrigation system, the problem is confined to deserts and hilly areas that do not receive irrigated water.

These areas include the Cholistan, Thal and Pothwar region in Punjab; Thar, Kachho and Kohistan in Sindh; the Kharan desert and hilly parts of Balochistan. Generally there, poverty is high and resources are scarce. The development and communication infrastructure is also very poor.

The current situation in the country’s arid areas demands immediate food security measures, particularly in Thar, Kachho and Kohistan in Sindh, where droughts have created acute food security issues.

There is an urgent need for utilising saline or brackish water resources available there to produce marine fish and shrimp, along with certain vegetables (in integrated fish-vegetable) in aquaponics systems. This will serve the purpose of securing food supply in areas where conventional agriculture is not an option.

The cultivation of fish with this new technology could create business opportunities, generate jobs and improve livelihoods in both deserts and arid lands.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1296076>

PLAN TO SET UP CHINA-PAKISTAN INDUSTRIAL ZONE IN DHABEJI FINALISED

Dawn, November 16th, 2016

Habib Khan Ghori

KARACHI: The Sindh government has finalised a plan to establish a China-Pakistan Industrial Zone (CPIZ) in Dhabeji and to develop the Keti Bunder port project to attract Chinese investors and promote trade through sea and land routes.

The Keti Bunder project would be taken up for its inclusion in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor's projects at the next meeting of the joint cooperation committee (JCC) scheduled to be held next month in China.

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah told a Chinese delegation, led by Ambassador Sun Weidong, on Tuesday that he had allocated land at Dhabeji to establish the industrial zone.

The area was close to Karachi as well as the proposed project of Keti Bunder and would make trade through sea and land routes easy, he added.

The Chinese envoy assured the CM of his support and asked him to provide details of the project beforehand, saying he would support him because "you are dynamic, hardworking and visionary".

Explaining the measures so far taken to include the Keti Bunder project as part of the CPEC projects, the CM said that his team had recently visited China to attend an important transport-related meeting.

They pleaded the case of Keti Bunder in the follow-up meetings and now it had been included in the minutes of the meeting which meant the proposal of the project had been made official, he added.

"I have already directed my team to prepare a detailed feasibility report of Keti Bunder and prepare it as a commercial project to present it at the CPEC's joint cooperation committee meeting next month in China," he said, hoping that with the support of the Chinese ambassador the project would be included in the CPEC.

Giving details of the Keti Bunder project, the chief minister said there would be a jetty to export coal and in the first phase coal-fired power plant(s) would also be installed there.

"A power plant needs fresh water which is not available at the Thar coalfield. Fresh water is available at Keti Bunder and power generation would not be a problem there," he said. "A railway line from Keti Bunder to the Thar coalfield would be laid to transport coal from Thar for power plant and export."

The chief minister also briefed the delegation on the second phase of the project in which a fully fledged seaport would be established to trade with other countries.

Talking about the China-Pakistan Industrial Zone, he said that he was keen to take it up in the CPEC so that its infrastructure could be developed. "The areas between Gharo and Dhabeji are an ideal place for industrial development as it connects through road network and sea routes."

Chinese Consul General Wang Yu, Deputy Consul General Mu Yongpend, Ministers Nisar Ahmed Khuhro, Mir Hazar Khan Bijarani, acting Chief Secretary Rizwan Memon, Energy Secretary Agha Wasif and others were also present.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1296554/plan-to-set-up-china-pakistan-industrial-zone-in-dhabeji-finalised>

RAILWAYS ACQUIRES 71 ACRES OF LAND IN GWADAR TO EXPAND OPERATIONS

Dawn, November 18th, 2016

Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Railways has acquired 71 acres of land in Gwadar from the Balochistan government to expand its operations to the port city with emphasis on projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Minister for Railways Saad Rafiq informed the Senate Standing Committee on Railways on Thursday that arrangements were being made to pay Rs130 million dues to the Balochistan government for the purchase of 71 acres of land.

He said the government was expanding Pakistan Railways' operations under the CPEC and more land was being acquired in Gwadar for setting up railway terminals, yards and tracks.

Mr Rafiq said the railways ministry would not take decisions in haste on railways projects under the CPEC and they would be implemented after a thorough scrutiny.

The government will seek loan from the Asian Development Bank for the Main Line-1 (ML-1) project which would convert the Lahore-Peshawar Main Line -1 (ML-1) into double-track.

The project is one of the early harvest projects under the CPEC.

He said that in order to upgrade the railways system from Peshawar to Karachi, preliminary estimate showed that the project would cost at least \$8.2 billion, and in this regard negotiations were under way for investment by the Chinese.

A framework agreement was also discussed during his recent visit to China, he said.

The minister said that multiple financing was allowed under the CPEC framework, and the railways ministry was currently preparing a feasibility study for the Main Line-2 (ML-2) project which would be ready in three months.

The project would be under the CPEC and a contract for the project would be awarded on the basis of international tendering.

He said the project would either be completed on the basis of build, operate and transfer or would be a joint venture.

He informed the committee that the feasibility study on laying tracks between Gwadar and Bisma would be finalised by February next year when a technical report on the alignment of tracks would be ready.

On the issue of illegal use of railways land by the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) and a private hospital in Bahawalpur, the minister informed the committee that the Punjab chief minister had issued orders to resolve the matter.

The Bahawalpur DCO and the Punjab Revenue Board had accepted their mistake for illegally allotting the land to the DHA and the private hospital, he said.

The chairman of the standing committee, Sardar Fateh Mohammad Hasni, directed the railways ministry to ascertain from the provincial governments as to where and in which location the railway land had been encroached.

He suggested that the railways improve its system through commercialisation of its land.

Agreeing to the proposal, Mr Rafiq suggested a joint meeting of the parliament's standing committees on railways to take a decision in this regard and it would be implemented by the railways ministry.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1297049/railways-acquires-71-acres-of-land-in-gwadar-to-expand-operations>

SC MODIFIES ORDER IN STATE LAND ALLOTMENT CASE

Dawn, November 18th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday modified its earlier directive for the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to submit a reference after completing investigation within 45 days into alleged illegal allotment of state land in Karachi to real estate developer Bahria Town.

A two-judge bench consisting of Chief Justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali and Justice Amir Hani Muslim modified the Aug 13 directive with "to act in accordance with law" when senior counsel Barrister Aitzaz Ahsan, appearing on behalf of Bahria Town, contended that the order was not dictated in the open court. And to substantiate his claim, he referred to senior counsel Ali Zafar and Farooq Naek who had also agreed that the order was not dictated in the court.

But Justice Muslim, the author of the order, regretted the way the judges were being maligned and also disputed the claim that the order was not dictated in the court.

On Thursday, NAB Chairman Qamar Zaman Chaudhry informed the bench that the bureau was trying its best to implement the court orders and had made changes in its policy over the past two-and-a-half years to make the investigation process more transparent and fair.

The court ordered NAB to submit a comprehensive report on investigations in the first week of December.

The apex court had issued the Aug 13 order during the hearing of a number of applications against illegal allotment and adjustment of land in 43 Dehs by the Malir Development Authority (MDA) in Karachi.

It had directed NAB to submit a reference to the accountability court concerned in 45 days.

During the hearing in Karachi, the court had asked why NAB being an independent institution kept investigations to linger on for two or three years and cause harassment to people when it was bound to complete probe within a stipulated time.

Earlier, the Supreme Court had refrained Bahria Town from undertaking any development activity on the state land allotted to it by the MDA illegally.

According to a NAB report, the total land consolidated by the MDA and handed over to Bahria Town was 9,385 acres. The land is located about 9km from Toll Plaza on the Karachi-Hyderabad superhighway.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1297051/sc-modifies-order-in-state-land-allotment-case>

HAS THE ECONOMY IMPROVED?

Dawn, November 18th, 2016

Rashid Amjad

THIRTY-FIVE years ago, when Ziaul Haq's military regime started claiming major improvements in the economy, I coined what I called Pakistan's first economic law: 'All good that happens in the economy is due to the government's efforts. All that is bad is due to the last government. What still remains unexplained, blame it on the weather.' To my pleasant surprise, this law was subsequently picked up by the Far Eastern Economic Review.

I was reminded of this as we witness the contentious debate between the present government — backing similar claims with reports (selectively read) by the IMF and World Bank on substantial improvements in Pakistan's economy under its watch — and, in the opposite camp, prominent economists backed by a large section of the media and an informed public, as always sceptical of any positive claims made by any government.

The government is correct in claiming that a semblance of macroeconomic stability has been restored and the economy can be viewed as poised for higher growth. For this turnaround, credit must go to the economic managers who have navigated an IMF programme without any contraction in the GDP. In contrast, the last government agreed to such a sharp decline in the fiscal deficit that the growth rate fell dramatically from five to 0.4 per cent in the first year of the IMF programme and the economy never quite recovered.

There are, however, caveats to the present government's achievement. The high level of foreign exchange reserves has been built solely on foreign loans. The government's case can be that such an action is justified on the grounds that an increase in reserves, whatever the source, takes pressure off the exchange rate and circumvents the resulting fall in value of the rupee.

This avoids higher debt repayment and lowers imported inflation, which would have otherwise followed a decline in the exchange rate. This measure must, however, be weighed against lower exports to which an overvalued exchange rate certainly contributes. Also, once loan repayments start, the pressure will again be built up and therefore this can best be viewed as a stop-gap arrangement in the hope that net foreign inflows will improve.

Whether or not one acknowledges the current economic team for restoring macroeconomic stability with finesse, for it to make the larger claim that the economy has turned around is certainly not justified.

The simple truth is that Pakistan's economic problems are predominantly structural and not just cyclical, for which macroeconomic stability may be a necessary, but by no means sufficient, condition. We must, therefore, face the fact that, unless fundamental economic reforms are undertaken and the political dominance of an 'elite'-vested class that reaps the major gains from the economy is blunted, real economic progress will remain a mirage.

In correcting these structural imbalances — from abysmally low levels of investment and domestic savings, a low tax-to-GDP ratio and stagnant, if not declining, exports, to increasing debt, untargeted subsidies for loss-making public enterprises and poor service delivery — the government has made very little progress. True, there is only so much one can show in three years, but in this case the will and commitment to undertake reforms has been sorely lacking.

Let me now turn to the government's claim that it has raised the growth rate from around 3.7pc to 4.7pc. This is really not much to boast about. The minimum growth rate required to absorb the increase in Pakistan's labour force is 6.5pc. Anything below this can raise unemployment and make it very difficult to achieve a real improvement in living standards.

It is not surprising that, till the 1990s, the 'norm' or 'Pakistani growth rate' was on average at 6pc and any achievement below this was either a sign of economic mismanagement or the result of an adverse external shock or natural disaster. To

claim credit for having increased economic growth from 3.7pc to 4.7pc shows just how far we have lowered our earlier performance targets.

That said however, there are some ‘green shoots’ emerging that can help raise the economy’s performance. The improvement in the security situation, especially in Karachi, should bolster investor confidence.

The easing of the energy crisis will certainly help. The Planning Commission is performing better in coordinating and monitoring development expenditures. The youth bulge, now somewhat better educated, awaits decent jobs and if these are created, could help reap the ‘demographic dividend’.

Yet there is an overhanging dark cloud. The rural economy, where poverty is most concentrated, is in deep recession due to poor harvests and collapse in global prices. An ill-conceived support package has not worked. The manufacturing sector shows little sign of recovery. Banks are reeling and having their worst year as the government attempts to expand its tax base. Remittances that have helped keep the economy afloat are under pressure due to low oil prices.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor certainly offers a strong ray of hope for breaking out of the low-level growth equilibrium. But has such ‘manna from heaven’ not taken place in the past? The aid and foreign loan-led economic booms of the Ayub, Zia and Musharraf eras were relatively short-lived, losing momentum soon after the concessional aid flows tapered off.

CPEC must be accompanied by much-needed economic reforms and the political will (including in the fight against corruption) to take advantage of the opportunities it offers and move the economy onto a higher, sustainable growth path. This is an opportunity we cannot afford to lose.

Let me end as I started, by postulating Pakistan’s second economic law: ‘No sustainable, equitable and higher growth is possible without the determination and political will to undertake far-reaching structural reforms.’ Since the government has, so far, shown little success on this count, one cannot blame the sceptics who play down — or run down — its economic achievements.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1297004>

LAND FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Dawn November 19th, 2016

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Pervez Khattak has directed the concerned authorities to speed up the land acquisition process for the waste management project at Mauza Saran Azakhel area of the provincial capital. He issued the directives during a visit to the area on Friday. Minister Shah Farman also accompanied him, according to a statement.

Atta-ur-Rehman, General Manager of Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar, briefed the CM that the land to be acquired for the project was 540 kanals. He said the waste management project would produce 12 megawatt of electricity.

On the occasion, Mr Khattak directed that an industrial unit should also be planned at the site.

Mr Khattak also talked to the people who had gathered on the occasion, and urged them to keep a vigil over all the development activities initiated for their welfare. He said that people should ensure that the public money was spent

judiciously and in a transparent manner, adding his government was accountable to the people and it wished the people were represented in the way they wished to be presented.

The chief minister claimed that his government was well-connected to the people and that all decisions would reflect the people's aspirations.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1297254/land-for-waste-management-project>

IN EXCHANGE: IRATE LAND OWNERS DEMAND COMPENSATION

The Express Tribune, November 20th, 2016.

MINGORA: Dozens of people staged a protest in front of the Saidu Teaching Hospital (STH) on Saturday after their demand for compensation in exchange for land taken away from them fell on deaf ears.

The protesters chanted slogans and carried placards inscribed with words against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) and its allies in the K-P government.

Addressing the protesters, tehsil-councillor Dr Khalid Mehmood said, "The PTI-led provincial government is paying no heed to the demands of the public for the payment of compensation in return for the land grabbed from them." He added that some land owners had to give their agricultural land, some had to vacate their houses and some were even forced by the government to withdraw their land's ownership in favour of the proposed plan.

Khalid highlighted that the government back in 2003 initiated the expansion plan of STH and for that purpose it asked the people living in the surrounding area to give their land. Fourteen years have been passed and people have still not been given any compensation.

"It is so distressing to see that these families had to go through so much suffering. The government must listen to their demands and solve the issue," he said.

Ahmad Ali, a member of the affected family, told The Express Tribune, "I was not willing to give my land to the government but they forced me to." Ali said that he neither had home, nor any piece of land to construct a home for his children, he was left homeless.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1237108/exchange-irate-land-owners-demand-compensation/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 7TH TO NOVEMBER 13TH 2016

CALL FOR SHIFTING OF WASTEWATER RESERVOIR AWAY FROM THAR VILLAGES

Dawn, November 8th, 2016

Saher Baloch

KARACHI: Protesting the construction of a wastewater reservoir under the Thar Coal Project Block II on a 2,700-acre land in Islamkot taluka, a group of Tharparkar residents demanded that the reservoir be moved to another location under the Thar Coal Project's proposed development blocks.

Sitting on the pavement outside the Karachi Press Club on Monday, Advocate Leela Ram and his companions from Gorano village in Islamkot said they "do not represent a political party or any other organisation, but we are speaking on behalf of the 15,000 residents of 12 villages.

“They will face the impact of the hazardous water of the reservoir, which is being built without permission of the residents.”

Advocate Leela said: “Gorano and the surrounding 12 villages located some 45 kilometres away from the Sihiri Dars site in Islamkot do not come under the Thar Coal Project Block II. Work on the project’s block II has been under way for the past two years.”

He said: “We cannot accommodate the reservoir, as it will affect our livestock, graveyards, mosques and temples. Water in the reservoir is saline that will impact the land, and to accommodate it, around 1,200 trees have been chopped down. Most of the grassland, where our livestock graze, has been encroached upon.”

Gorano and surrounding villages had a diverse population which demanded shifting of the construction of the reservoir to an area that came under project’s block II.

Advocate Leela had recently filed a petition in the Hyderabad High Court followed by a 17-day protest outside Islamkot Press Club. In the petition, he said the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company and Sindh Coal Authority acquired the land under the urgency clause Section 4, 6 and 17 of Land Acquisition Act of 1894. According to Section 6 and 17, the mining authority can acquire land but after seeking permission of the land owner which the petitioner, Advocate Leela stated was not sought.

At the same time, he said work on Block II and V was currently under progress. Both the blocks came under the 12 blocks which were part of the Thar Coal Project.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294958/call-for-shifting-of-wastewater-reservoir-away-from-thar-villages>

PROBE INITIATED AGAINST SHARJEEL FOR ILLEGAL FOREST LAND LEASE, SHC TOLD
Dawn, November 8th, 2016

Tahir Siddiqui

KARACHI: Self-exiled leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party and former provincial information minister Sharjeel Inam Memon may be booked in another corruption reference as the National Accountability Bureau informed the Sindh High Court on Monday that a complaint against him for unlawfully leasing out forest land was at an initial stage of verification.

The disclosure came in the comments filed by NAB before a division bench headed by Justice Naimatullah Phulpoto that was hearing Mr Memon’ constitutional petitions seeking to restrain NAB from initiating more inquiries against him and from arresting him in other corruption cases on his arrival in the country.

The NAB in its comments, filed in response to the court notice, submitted that a corruption reference against the former provincial minister and others for causing over Rs5 billion losses to the exchequer in the award of advertisements had already been filed.

It was submitted in the comments that Mr Memon was also involved in two more corruption cases, including the unlawful allotment and adjustment of state land in 43 Dehs of Malir and illegal lease of forest land to private persons in Hyderabad from 2009 to 2014. The comments said that the matter involving illegal lease of the forest land was at an initial stage of complaint verification.

The NAB prosecutor told the judges that the accused was involved in corruption cases and he was not entitled to any relief as sought by the petitioner’s counsel.

He asked the court to dismiss his petition.

Mr Memon has been granted pre-arrest bail in two cases, one pertaining to illegal allotment of state land and the other with regard to illegal award of advertisement.

Memon, stated to have been living in self-exile in London, moved the court through his counsel seeking pre-arrest bail in connection with an investigation launched by NAB into illegal allotment and adjustment of land in 43 Dehs of Malir in favour of Bahria Town.

His counsel submitted that NAB had issued a call-up notice to his client on Oct 18, asking him to appear before it in connection with the investigation into the state land matter. He said Mr Memon wanted to appear before it and face the investigation but he was apprehensive about his unlawful arrest.

In the second petition of Mr Memon, his lawyer submitted that his client was granted interim bail by the high court on Oct 10 to surrender before the trial court and face charges of corruption in the award of advertisements.

But, he said, due to his illness and subsequent appointments with doctors he could not return to the country.

The counsel submitted that Mr Memon intended to surrender before the trial court but he was apprehensive of his arrest in the NAB reference since the bail would cease to have effect on Nov 7 and he was scheduled to fly back home on Nov 29. The same bench was informed on Monday that Sohail Akbar Shah, former principal secretary to the chief minister, had played a vital role in giving permission to a coal-mining company to excavate and sell coal in open market that caused a loss of Rs2.241 billion to the national exchequer.

The bench was hearing his bail application.

In its comments, NAB said the Sindh Coal Authority had leased out 8,626 acres for mining at Lakhra in Jamshoro to M/s Fateh Textile Mills Ltd (FTML) to install a 200-MW power plant within a five-year period, but it failed to establish the power plant within the stipulated period and subsequently the lease was cancelled.

NAB said the FTML did not make any investment to set up power plants but illegally sold out tonnes of coal in open market.

It said that as per terms of the MoU signed between the FTML and the provincial authorities, the mining firm was required to determine whether suitable quality and quantity of coal could be mined, handled, washed and transported to the site of power plants to produce 200 megawatt electricity.

NAB said that Syed Abbas Ali Shah, then director general of the SCA, had inspected the site where the washing plant was to be installed. He had observed that the FTML was not serious at all to establish a modern or semi-modern coal washing plant and a coal-fired power plant. He, therefore, had recommended the cancellation of the agreement.

“However, Sohail Akbar Shah, the former principal secretary to the Sindh chief minister, had communicated to the SCA’s DG that he had received verbal directions from the chief minister to allow the FTML to excavate coal for washing plant and sell surplus until the plants are set up,” NAB said.

It was further alleged that Sohail Akbar, an additional secretary in BS-21 at present, played a vital role by communicating the verbal orders of the chief minister and allowing the sale of coal in open market, thereby causing a loss of Rs2.241bn to the national exchequer.

The hearing was adjourned to Nov 14.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294955/probe-initiated-against-sharjeel-for-illegal-forest-land-lease-shc-told>

SAVE OUR HOMES! PROTESTERS DECRY LOSS OF LIVELIHOOD DUE TO DAM CONSTRUCTION

The Express Tribune, November 8th, 2016.

KARACHI: The Sindh government and Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company's (SECMC) plan to construct a dam on agricultural land drove residents of Ghorani village in Islamkot Tehsil to tears on Monday.

Protesters such as Sita Bai pleaded to the government not to take away their livelihoods during a demonstration outside the Karachi Press Club. She said that she and her fellow villagers had been on the road, fighting for their rights for 17 consecutive days.

Leela Ram and Ravi Shankar, who have been leading the protest in Islamkot and Karachi, told The Express Tribune, "We don't have any political agenda, rather it's a question of our children and that our coming generations are going to be affected by this toxic water dam."

Ram explained that the toxic water from the Thar coalfields will be amassed in the dam being built by the government on private and cultivable landholdings rather than on deserted ones in the same area.

The resident alleged that the proposed 2,700-acre dam will harm their pattern of living and damage the local ecosystem of the area.

According to other protesters, who were shouting slogans, the toxic water dam being constructed in Thar Block-II by SECMC is a grave injustice to the people of the area.

Fifteen villages with a population of 15,000 people will be affected by the construction of the dam, as the area of some of the villages will be submerged once the dam is constructed while others will have to deal with seepage, claimed the villagers. Agricultural land and around 20,000 livestock will also suffer.

They asserted that unlike most villages in Tharparkar desert, theirs is rich, with about 200,000 trees, 20 potable water wells, natural ponds and five historical graveyards – all of which will be affected by the dam.

Junaid Kumar said that their elected representatives do not care about their plight or their future. "This is the first time we celebrated Diwali while protesting on the road," he lamented.

Another protester, Lakho Bheel, said they do not want to halt construction of the dam but they are demanding the authorities change the location of the dam to an area where there is no cultivatable land or population.

"We are patriotic and must not be considered to be against the development of our area by coal exploration," maintained Shankar. He added that his people were certainly not against the prosperity of the area.

He demanded the Chief Justice of Pakistan, the chief minister of Sindh and the chairperson of Pakistan Peoples Party to take notice of the dam. Otherwise, he warned, they will continue to protest indefinitely.

The SECMC, a joint venture of the Sindh government and Engro Powergen Limited, plans to produce 3,960 megawatts (MW) of electricity through four 330MW and four 660MW plants.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1223702/save-homes-protesters-decry-loss-livelihood-due-dam-construction/>

PUNJAB TO IMPOSE PROPERTY TAX ON ALL VACANT PLOTS

The Express Tribune, November 12th, 2016.

Imran Adnan

Lahore: The government of Punjab has decided to enforce property tax on all vacant plots across the province, officials say.

The Punjab Excise and Taxation (E&T) Department has already completed surveys in major cities including Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan and Gujranwala and identified about 250,000 vacant plots that will come under the property tax net.

Estimates suggest the government will collect a revenue of at least Rs150 million from owners of these plots in the current fiscal year.

The tax will be imposed on all residential and commercial plots lying vacant for the past two years. Property owners will have to pay annually Rs1,500 on five-marla (125-square-yard) plots, Rs3,100 on 10-marla (250-square-yard) plots and Rs7,000 on one-kanal (500-square-yard) plots.

Plots located in all government and private housing societies and areas falling within the jurisdiction of the E&T Department, except for cantonment areas, will come under the tax net.

E&T Department Director General Akram Ashraf Gondal said it was not a new tax, but was an extension of the existing property tax regime.

“The Punjab government has introduced this tax through the Punjab Finance Act 2016 in the current fiscal year’s budget but the department wants to enforce it after a comprehensive survey,” he said, adding now the survey had been completed in most areas and the department was ready to initiate revenue collection.

Though the law had a provision for the imposition of property tax on vacant plots, it was the government’s policy decision earlier not to collect the tax, he said. However, now the province has decided to collect the tax from vacant plots.

Punjab E&T Minister Mian Mujtaba Shujaar Rehman told The Express Tribune that the tax on vacant plots would discourage investors in the realty market and encourage genuine buyers to build houses on their plots.

In the current fiscal year, he said, the provincial government would collect over Rs9.6 billion in property tax through all sources, including Rs150 million from vacant plots. In the previous year, it had collected Rs8.1 billion.

Rehman insisted that the tax would not impact the common man as it would be collected from investors who had invested in the realty market and were making money.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1228367/punjab-impose-property-tax-vacant-plots/>

ONLINE VERIFICATION OF LAND RECORD PLANNED

Dawn, November 13th, 2016

Muzaffar Qureshi

KARACHI: The Sindh Board of Revenue (BoR) is set to sign an agreement with commercial banks to provide an online service for verification of land ownership for sanctioning agricultural loans.

Sindh will be the first province in the country to provide the banks online access to its computerised farmland data to facilitate credit.

Sindh BoR Reforms Member Zulfiqar Shah said in a meeting that the facility would drastically cut time for sanctioning of loans to the farmers as it took up to three months for the banks to verify the land ownership record of the applicants.

The online system will eliminate the lengthy and cumbersome process of verification by the banks which had to undergo a detailed procedure of correspondence with the revenue officers of the BoR.

Mr Shah said the online verification would also help increase the size of agricultural lending. According to official data, the share of the province in total farm lending has gradually declined from 12 per cent in 2012 to 8.3pc last year.

The BoR has completed its project of computerising the ownership record of rural and urban immovable properties and set up service centres in several cities, including Karachi.

An ownership certificate of any piece of land in the province can be obtained from the centres after paying a service charge of Rs150.

The board held several meetings with the information technology staff of the banks and briefed them in detail on the online service for verification of land ownership.

The provincial BoR member said in reply to a question that a nominal fee would be charged from banks for using the online service.

He said the facility would boost the value of collateral required for sanctioning farm loans and also enhance trust in land transactions.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1296025/online-verification-of-land-record-planned>

SHADY LAND DEALS

Dawn November 13th, 2016

WE have been told time and again that CPEC is our passport to progress and prosperity. Yet some of what is transpiring in the planning stages of this \$51 billion project is straight out of the old playbook, and it will reinforce traditional resentment of power elites who exploit their political connections for personal gain.

Several individuals in Mianwali tehsil in Punjab have been left seething after learning recently that the land they had sold at market or slightly higher rates in the last few months is to be part of CPEC, as a result of which its value has shot up overnight. The realisation that they had been deprived of a fair price came about after a compulsory land acquisition award notification was issued in connection with CPEC for nine revenue estates in the tehsil.

The buyers, who reportedly include business tycoons and politicians, had evidently taken advantage of advance information — although some have denied this — they had gleaned about the forthcoming development to position themselves to reap huge profits from their new, value-added investment.

Even those who still have ownership of the land slated to be acquired by the government are complaining about land value assessments that are not only discriminatory but also based on unfair and unrealistic parameters.

Local revenue authorities involved in land acquisition and price assessment are notoriously corrupt, and provincial governments must ensure that transparent systems of land transaction are adopted and compensation fairly decided. To

allow some individuals to profit at the cost of others by virtue of their being privy to confidential information is no different from the crime of insider trading.

There are a number of instances where this is believed to have happened before, such as the land along the route of the Islamabad-Lahore motorway. Individuals have also made overnight fortunes on the backs of small landowners and farmers in Pakistan by using their connections within the establishment to get the local bureaucracy to manipulate land records and, where necessary, law-enforcement agencies to strong-arm rightful owners into giving up their property.

The government has played the CPEC cards very close to its chest, and the suspicions of other provinces — especially KP — that they are being short-changed by the centre are growing stronger. The example of Mianwali illustrates how the damaging perception of discrimination in the fruits of CPEC is beginning to make itself felt at the micro level.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1295969/shady-land-deals>

A LEAF FROM HISTORY: SHARIAT COURT STRIKES DOWN LAND REFORMS AS ‘UN-ISLAMIC’
Dawn, Sunday Magazine, November 13th, 2016

Shaikh Aziz

In the annals of Pakistani history, August 10, 1989 is remembered as the day when the Shariat Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court declared land reforms in Pakistan as un-Islamic. The verdict was delivered nine years after it was first filed by the Qazalbash Waqf, a religious charity based nearby Lahore. It was a 3-2 split decision and was made effective from March 23, 1990.

Indeed, the question of land holdings even had the founding fathers perplexed. Soon after independence, a question that drew the attention of our lawmakers was whether land holdings could be restricted to a certain level or if no ceilings should be imposed. An attempt to legislate a law was made but subsequently failed. Meanwhile, on the other side of the border, India had begun abolishing the zamindari system (large landholdings) as early as 1948.

A law on land reforms was finally instituted by Ayub Khan in 1958 and his successor, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, followed suit in 1972. Ayub eliminated big landholdings in 1959 and allowed a maximum land holding of 500 acres of irrigated and 1,000 acres of unirrigated land. His efforts came to naught as large landholders in cahoots with the bureaucracy managed to hoodwink the law and transferred land that was surplus under the new law to their heirs, some of whom were not even born.

Bhutto, who had attained power by popular vote on the slogan of roti, kapra aur makan announced land reforms on March 1, 1972 through Martial Law Regulation No.115. Land ceilings were further reduced to 150 acres of irrigated land and 300 acres of un-irrigated land. No compensation was paid for the recovered extra land. Orchards and stud farms were exempted, which in turn, left great room for the bureaucracy to manipulate land records for the benefit of large landholders.

But Bhutto believed with great conviction that his populist programme would leave a lasting legacy and hand his party a massive vote bank for times to come. He was mistaken. When he decided to opt for mid-term polls in early 1977, his delusion was that exploiting the government’s land policy would guarantee him success.

On January 5, 1977, he promulgated a new law, Land Reforms Ordinance, 1977, which further reduced the land ceiling to 100 acres of irrigated land and 300 acres for unirrigated land. During the mid-term electioneering of 1977, he claimed to have become a great reformer and a friend of landless and poor peasants. Ironically, the whole exercise proved a fiasco and Bhutto lost both power and his life.

In 1980, Gen Zia introduced the Federal Shariat Court (FSC) with the aim of reviewing all existing laws and to bring them in conformity with Islamic injunctions. In all, 67 petitions were filed against land reforms alone.

After 16 months, the FSC began hearing these cases. On Dec 13, 1980, in a petition filed by a man named Mohammad Ameen, the court held that it did not have the power to declare anything declared valid by the constitution as invalid or repugnant to the injunctions of Islam. Even then the majority judgment held that fixing a ceiling on land holdings was not contrary to Islamic law. Earlier, the Peshawar High Court while hearing a similar petition filed by Haji Naimatullah had declared ceilings on landholdings as un-Islamic.

Amidst this backdrop, an appeal was filed in the Shariat Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court by the Qazalbash Waqf, a clientele religious institution, pleading that its possession of land was merely to serve humanity according to divine laws. The bench delivered its verdict after nine years, on August 10, 1989, and made it effective from March 23, 1990. The verdict was written by Mufti Taqi Usmani. From now on, land reforms were deemed “un-Islamic.”

The constitution of the Shariat Bench is such that it has five judges — three from the Supreme Court and two ulema judges from the Federal Shariat Court (or as nominated by the President). The three SC judges on the bench were Justice Nasim Hassan Shah, Justice Shafiur Rahman and Justice Afzal Zullah. Mufti Taqi Usmani and Pir Karam Shah arrived from the FSC.

The two ulema judges were of the opinion that the said reforms were un-Islamic. In his verdict, Mufti Usmani’s main thrust was on the argument that individual property rights in Islam are the same as rights over other categories such as goods. He wrote that everything belongs to Allah and he has granted humans the right to utilise them within the limits of divine laws. Limits have been detailed both on the acquisition and use of property. There are certain obligations on the person who uses the land but the right to property in Islam is absolute and even the state cannot interfere with it.

In Mufti Usmani’s opinion, Shariah law has imposed no quantitative limits on legitimate ownership, including land. On the contrary, claimed the mufti, Shariah law allows individuals to acquire as much property as they can as long as it is acquired through legitimate means. An Islamic state does not have the right to prohibit something permanently which has been expressly allowed by the Shariah.

The two dissenting judges, Nasim Hassan Shah and Shafiur Rahman, recorded their arguments based their conception of social welfare and equality in an Islamic state. They argued that a limit on land holdings was necessary to reform society and alleviate poverty.

Historically, the landed aristocracy has played a decisive role in making major political decisions. The FSC’s verdict reinforced their position as a powerful political player which continues to derive power from land. The issue of land holdings appears to be a closed chapter until an attempt is made to reopen it with the aim of creating a just and equitable society.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1295555>

PROPERTY ISSUE : LAND UTILISATION DEPT MEMBER TO RESOLVE DISPUTE

The Express Tribune, November 13th, 2016.

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) has directed a member of the land utilisation department of the provincial Board of Revenue to decide a dispute between the Rangers and a private person regarding the allotment of land in the Karachi Development Authority (KDA) Officers Cooperative Housing Society.

This direction came on a petition filed by KDA officer Abida Tarannum, who had taken the provincial director-general of the paramilitary force, the KDA Officers Cooperative Housing Society and senior member of the provincial board of revenue to court over the alleged illegal occupation of her land by the Rangers.

The petitioner claimed to be the owner of a 200-square-yard plot, No A-27, in Block B of the KDA Officers Cooperative Housing Society. According to her, the plot falls in the 84.11 acres of land in the Naclass 177, Survey No 19 and 21, Deh Okewari, Gulshan-e-Iqbal.

Her lawyers, Syed Zaki Muhammad and S Wajahat Abbas, informed the court that the land was allotted by the provincial Board of Revenue to the KDA Officers Cooperative Housing Society. They recalled that in 2006, the society's management had allowed the paramilitary force to reside in an Inspection Bungalow on COD Hills, as temporary arrangement to maintain the law and order situation in the city.

However, to the great shock of the petitioner and others, the Rangers had illegally and unlawfully occupied their lands in connivance with the society's management and revenue authorities, they added.

The court was told that the society and Board of Revenue's authorities had failed to hand over possession of the plot to the petitioner, even though she had paid all the requisite charges and despite her making several requests to do so. Therefore, the court was pleaded to declare that the paramilitary force had no lawful right over the plots of the petitioner and other allottees under the relevant by-laws. It was further requested to direct them to vacate the land immediately.

Taking up the matter on Tuesday, the judges observed that a statement dated November 4, 2015, was filed by the secretary of the provincial government's relevant department on behalf of the Board of Revenue's senior member, which is available on the court's record. As per the statement, the entry was available in favour of the KDA Officers Cooperative Housing Society but no record regarding allotment of the land in favour of the society was traceable.

They further observed that along with the said statement, a copy of the letter dated October 29, 2015, addressed to the relevant mukhtiarkar is also attached, in which it is stated that suo motu case No 03/2015 is pending before the competent authority in view of the reference made by the District East deputy commissioner regarding allotment of the land to the society. Additional advocate-general Miran Muhammad Shah and assistant mukhtiarkar Abdul Rasheed stated that the above-named suo motu proceedings are still pending.

"All the parties agree that this petition may be disposed of by directing Revisional Authority and Member Land Utilisation to decide the suo motu proceedings latest by January 14, 2017, strictly in accordance with the law and after providing full opportunity of hearing to the petitioner as well as the stakeholders," read the court order.

Therefore, the court ordered that by consent, the petition and the listed applications are disposed of in the terms, with further direction to Revisional Authority and Member Land Utilisation to file compliance report to the MIT of this court latest by January 21, 2017.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1229100/property-issue-land-utilisation-dept-member-resolve-dispute/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 31ST TO NOVEMBER 6TH 2016

LAST-DITCH APPEAL: TOP QAU OFFICIAL WRITES TO CABINET ABOUT 'LAND-GRABBING'

The Express Tribune, November 2nd, 2016.

Asma Ghani

Islamabad: The Vice Chancellor of Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) has written an open letter to all members of the Federal Cabinet to draw attention to the illegal occupation of varsity land and the shrinking of its estate on all sides by land-grabbing elements, including a former Senate chairman.

Sources said that a complete dossier is being prepared and a separate confidential letter will be sent to the prime minister within the next two days.

On Sunday, QAU spokesperson Dr Ilhan Niaz shared with the media that former Senate chairman Nayyar Bukhari had allegedly furthered his encroachment of QAU land.

A road of slightly over two kilometres is being constructed behind a forested area within the university. The road starts from the senator's house and links it to the main road. Sources said the house itself is built on university land, and now, further encroachments have been recorded. The university will be registering formal complaints with the ICT Administration and other authorities.

On Monday, Vice-Chancellor Dr Javed Ashraf wrote a letter to the cabinet, says that QAU is being contracted on multiple fronts by land grabbers.

“CDA Land adjacent to QAU, along 3rd Avenue and Diplomatic Enclave, has been illegally occupied, and, despite QAU repeatedly requesting action against these elements, which also pose a risk to the enclave, no effective action has been forthcoming,” it reads.

Further, within QAU estate, it says, there are small illegal settlements that are slowly growing. QAU simply does not have the capacity to remove these elements and “our appeals to the ICT and CDA, while politely entertained, are invariably ignored”.

The letter claims that Bukhari has also encroached on QAU land from the Bhara Kahu side, and on October 30, 2016, fresh encroachments were discovered and verified. Although estimates vary, in 2014, the Prime Minister's office believed that some 200 acres of QAU land were under the occupation of various land grabbers. The value of that land, at market rates, would run into hundreds of millions, if not billions of rupees.

The tragedy is compounded by the fact that this happens to be the 50th Year of QAU (1967-2017) and rather than requesting the Government for a special package for QAU, all that we ask is that the Government help QAU retain possession of that which by law and right belongs to it anyway, the VC appealed.

The university has paid for 1,709 acres of land, but only 1,507 have been handed over to the varsity, said Dr Ilhan.

For the last 26 years, the CDA and ICT have refused to demarcate varsity land. “QAU is in a fight for its life. Another five to 10 years and you will not have a university campus. Rather, there will be a university within a sprawling slum”.

CDA officials however, in a response said that the authority will take action against the encroachers to help vacate the varsity land.

Bukhari refutes allegations

After reading the letter, The Express Tribune got in touch with Bukhari, who strongly refuted the allegations of the varsity. “This was my land and was transferred to my son's name. Why don't they go to revenue authorities and check the records before leveling such allegations,” he said.

In 2006, he said, when “I started construction on my house, the university leveled the same allegations. After examining the area, representatives of Bhara Kahu Police Station, the university, the CDA, and the ICT Administration decided in a combined meeting that the land belonged to us. “I have all the papers and documentary proof with me and I am also ready to confront the university and CADD Minister Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhary at any forum to prove this”.

He added that there are eight other houses in the area and the university is only targeting him because he is “a prominent political personality”. He claimed that he would sue the varsity.

The QAU Academic Staff Association and the Employees Welfare Association have also been preparing to protest against the illegal occupation of QAU land.

Meanwhile, the Quaid-e-Azam University Alumni Association has also decided to form a delegation of its senior members in order to meet members of the federal cabinet, parliamentarians, and senior government officials to draw attention to increasing encroachment of university land.

QAU Alumni Association Secretary General Murtaza Noor said on Tuesday that QAU alumni have unanimous views that any encroachment would be unacceptable.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1217983/last-ditch-appeal-top-qau-official-writes-cabinet-land-grabbing/>

LANDOWNERS BLOCK DASU DAM SURVEY

Dawn, November 4th, 2016

MANSEHRA: The landowners affected by the 4,200MW Dasu hydropower project have stopped survey teams of revenue department from work, saying they would not allow any sort of work on the dam until their demands are met.

Deputy commissioner, Kohistan, had ordered the revenue department to complete the survey of land being acquired for the dam, but members of the Action Committee of affected people didn't allow them to even start their work.

Haji Ghulam Said told mediapersons in Dasu on Thursday that the affected families in their recent meeting had decided that they would not allow any sort of work on the dam-related schemes and roads before getting proper price of their land.

Maulana Abdul Waris, Mohammad Arif and other members of the committee also spoke on the occasion. Meanwhile the spokesperson for the construction company told reporters in Dasu that the Wapda should show seriousness in addressing genuine issues of landowners.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294163/landowners-block-dasu-dam-survey>

SWATIS UP AGAINST DEMOLITION OF HISTORICAL SCHOOL BUILDING

The Express Tribune, November 6th, 2016.

Shehzad Khan

Mingora: Widespread protests were held in Swat on Saturday against orders to demolish a historical building – the Govt High School Balagram. The building, built in 1940 by Mian Gul Abdul Wadood, the last Wali of the former Swat state, was initially used as a hunting camp.

In 1951, the building was converted into a primary school. Ten years later, the building hosted Queen Elizabeth II of England during her visit to the former princely state.

“The historical building has hosted many guests of the former royal family of Swat. The guests also used to hunt here. Queen Elizabeth stayed in this building during her Swat visit,” Sher Muhammad Khan, the principal of the school, said.

“Several other dignitaries, including former prime minister of Pakistan Liaquat Ali Khan and former president Muhammad Ayub Khan also stayed in this building where they met the local leadership.”

He also said that the building “despite being decades-old was still in pretty sound condition”. Agreeing with the demand, local people called for sparing it from demolition.

“We have emotional attachment with the building as we all acquired our primary education in this building,” said Rizwanullah, one of the school teachers.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1222072/swatis-demolition-historical-school-building/>

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December 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 26 TH TO JANUARY 1ST 2016

ACCORD SIGNED ON LAND ACQUISITION FOR POWER PROJECT

Dawn, December 29th, 2016

ABBOTTABAD: On behalf of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, Commissioner Hazara division Mohammad Akbar Khan on Wednesday signed an agreement with a private company for land acquisition for the construction of 870 megawatt Suki Kinari hydropower project here.

On the occasion, commissioner Akbar Khan said that the power project was part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

The project would be completed in six years, he said, adding that the provincial government would start welfare schemes to compensate the affected landowners. He maintained that water supply schemes, roads, schools, and health facilities would be built in the affected areas.

The commissioner said that the work on the power project would commence soon, which would help address the issue of loadshedding in Pakistan.

Project Director Suki Kinari hydropower project Mian Shahabullah Kakakhel was also present on the occasion.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1305133>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 19 TH TO DECEMBER 25TH 2016

COMPUTERISATION: PUNJAB’S LAND RECORDS GO DIGITAL

The Express Tribune, December 23rd, 2016.

LAHORE: The Punjab Land Record Authority was formally inaugurated on Thursday with the launch of a tier-3 data centre for computerised land records at the Arfa Kareem Technology Park in Lahore.

Under this project, land record centres are operational in 143 tehsils of the province where record of 55 million rural properties has been secured by computerisation.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the digitalisation of land records would help abolish the ‘patwari culture’. “This system will address all land-related problems under one roof,” he believed.

He added the PML-N government laid the foundation of this system back in 1997 but the military coup in 1999 halted the project.

The computerisation of land records aims to put an end to land-related feuds, forgery of documents to claim ownership of someone else's property and corruption. A backup system has been established in Rawalpindi to ensure the protection of land record files.

Shehbaz said the digital records would be properly secured and no corrupt patwari would be able to steal them or make any changes. "The patwari culture, where files moved with money will end," he vowed.

The CM said the government had to face a lot of hindrances from patwaris and tehsildars. Just for this project, an independent authority by the name of 'Punjab Land Record Authority' has been established.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1272168/computerisation-punjab-land-records-go-digital/>

TRANSFER OF LAND IN GWADAR BANNED

Dawn December 24th, 2016

Behram Baloch

Gwadar: the balochistan government has imposed with immediate effect a ban on transfer of land in the port city of gwadar for three months.

The provincial revenue department has issued an official notification in this regard.

Gwadar deputy commissioner dr tufail ahmed baloch said on friday that the ban had been imposed on transfer of all kinds of lands.

He said the decision had been taken in view of the re-planning of the gwadar master plan. The plan would be reviewed according to the proposed mega city and smart city projects in gwadar by foreign firms, he added.

A memorandum of understanding for the plan was signed between the gwadar development authority and a foreign firm six months ago.

Earlier in july, the provincial government had lifted the ban on allotment of plots in the industrial estate of gwadar. The ban at that time had been imposed after irregularities were found in the allotment process.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1304155/transfer-of-land-in-gwadar-banned>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 12 TH TO DECEMBER 18TH 2016

BULLDOZERS NEEDED FOR GREENER PASTURES

Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, December 12th, 2016

Faisal Ali Ghumman

THE Punjab government has given the field wing of the provincial agriculture department a target of 50,000 acres for horizontal land levelling for current fiscal year 2016-17 while the wing lacks required gadgetry capacity and pro-farmer approach to perform.

The field formations have got first and second quarter target of 10,000 acres each and 15,000 acres each for third and fourth quarters to convert cultivable waste land into cropping land. Up to 65pc target has so far reported to have been achieved in the first quarter.

Officials cite a couple of reasons — rainy spell, malfunctioning of decades-old bulldozers, non-availability of subsidized diesel and bulldozers to deserving farmers — behind the non-achievement of target in the first quarter. The picture of second ongoing quarter is not too different.

As per the department's figures, up to 3.8m acres in the province was cultivable wasteland and the field wing was able to make only 1.5m acres cultivable since its inception in 1970s.

The biggest wasteland area falls in Muzaffargarh district with 500,000 acres of land while Faisalabad district has minimum waste land area of 2,270 acres. Other hotspots are districts of Layyah, Bahawalpur and Rahim Yar Khan besides Pothohar region.

A summary moved to the Chief Minister Secretariat around three and half months ago to get funds for the repairs and replacements of engines in obsolete bulldozers is pending.

Currently there are 306 bulldozers (bought in 1990s) with the field wing and almost all have lost their efficacy. Each working bulldozer takes five hours break after four hours field work.

Interestingly the government is providing free diesel to small farmers who have to pay Rs560 rent per hour while progressive farmers with large holdings pay for diesel and Rs100 rent per hour for tractor.

“The department has auctioned 44 bulldozers to earn Rs200m to provide new bulldozers or rehabilitation of existing ones”, said a senior department official.

Unfortunately, the promise was not fulfilled by the government.

The official recalls the field wing had achieved close to 50,000 acres per year in 2009/10 when around 60 bulldozers got brand new engines and some others were overhauled to give extra output.

He says bulldozers in use have already completed its 11,000 hours age-limit and need urgent replacement, adding a new bulldozer will cost in around Rs30m which is not a big issue for the government.

He says the bulldozers also face dearth of diesel in some districts.

The official further says the department has enhanced annual target of revenue from Rs179 million in fiscal 2015-16 to Rs182 million in fiscal 2016-17 from rent outing bulldozers without realising the ground realities.

A field officer of the field wing cautions that Punjab on the one hand is fast losing the cropping area because of increasing urbanization, industrialization, salinity, sodicity and infrastructure building along fertile land, and on the other hand non-availability of bulldozers to deserving and small farmers is also restricting the wing to achieve the annual target.

He says currently powerful serving and retired military and civil bureaucrats and politically implemented landlords occupy a good number of bulldozers most of the time, a problem which is beyond the control of the department officials.

“I hired costly private bulldozers in FY2011-12 to make 25 acres sandy land cultivable”, said Rao Kaleem Khan of Nawazabad village of Bahawalpur district.

He said private service had cost him in approximately Rs2.8m with Rs2,400 per hour at the time when diesel rate was high, adding deserving farmers hardly can avail the subsidized service being provided by the agriculture department.

Khan says farmers are still forced to get bulldozers from the private sector in Rs1700/1800 per hour rent.

Outgoing Punjab Agriculture Minister Dr Farrukh Javed says a steering committee headed by him has approved overhauling of 150 bulldozers 10 days ago, but adds he is not aware of its approval by the Chief Minister's Secretariat and the Chief Secretary Office. He realizes the need to buy new bulldozers for better output in the fields.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1301832>

‘60PC KHAIRPUR SEZ PLOTS SOLD TO CHINESE’

Dawn, December 14th, 2016

Parvaiz Ishfaq Rana

KARACHI: Sixty per cent of industrial plots at the Khairpur Special Economic Zone (SEZ), now said to be a part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), have been sold to Chinese investors, Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce Manzoor Hussain Wassan disclosed on Tuesday.

Speaking at a meeting organised by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), the minister said the special industrial zones in Larkana and Mohanjedaro are expected to be inaugurated in January 2017. The two zones, spread over 500 acres, have also been linked to the CPEC, he added.

Similarly, Dhabejee, Karachi Circular Railways, Zulfikarabad Industrial Estate and Marble City have become part of the CPEC, he added.

He acknowledged that some industrial zones in interior Sindh collapsed. He proposed to set up a committee to monitor the rehabilitation of five industrial areas of the city.

The minister said the Sindh government was ready to cooperate with business community to promote industrialisation.

Referring to his recent visit to Korangi Industrial Area, he said he pressed Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah to use funds one billion rupees allocated for the purpose.

He sought FPCCI's help in completing documents to access the said amount for the uplift of industrial areas before June 2017.

He further said the Sindh government has already allocated funds in its Annual Development Plan (ADP) for the SITE Superhighway and assured that all encroachments along the route would be removed.

The provincial minister went on to warn the business community to bring back funds parked in Middle East banks, stressing that there was a danger of accounts getting blocked.

The emerging conditions in US and Europe for Muslims might prompt Pakistanis to return to Karachi that offers many opportunities, Mr Wassan claimed.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1302172/60pc-khairpur-sez-plots-sold-to-chinese>

BANK BRANCHES TO AID LAND RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Business Recorder, 15 December 2016

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif has said that land record management information system is a milestone towards immediate provision of ownership deeds to the people and 144 service centers are operating in the province under this programme.

He said that bank counters will also be set up at these service centers due to which all necessary facilities will become available to the citizens under one roof.

The CM was addressing a meeting through video link at Civil Secretariat which reviewed various matters regarding land record management information system.

He said that land record management system is fully active in all tehsils of Punjab and best services are being providing to the people through this system.

The chief minister directed to set up Land Record Authority as early as possible and said that it will help in forwarding this programme through institutional mechanism.

He said that restriction has been imposed on the posting of revenue officers at service centers.

The CM directed that special committees should be set up at these centers for addressing complaints of the citizens and extension programme of these centers under joint venture should be considered.

He said that corrupt officers and staff will be held accountable while those showing good performance will be encouraged.

Shahbaz further directed that officers concerned should take decisions on their own power and give results with regard to implementation of this programme of public welfare.

The chief minister also gave approval to the setting up of autonomous intelligence wing and vigilance wing. Project Director Land Record Management Information System Capt Zafar (retd) gave a briefing on progress of the project and future strategy. Provincial Ministers Rana Sanaullah, Ata Maneka, Yawar Zaman, Additional Chief Secretary, Senior Member Board of Revenue and concerned officials attended the meeting through video link.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/12/15/13-page/827937-news.html>

NEARLY A DECADE ON: DIGITISATION OF LAND RECORDS STILL A DISTANT DREAM

The Express Tribune, December 17th, 2016.

Shahzad Anwar

Islamabad: With land revenue management considered to be the one of the most corruption prone department, a project to computerise all land records in the capital has been stalled for nearly a decade.

The project has been unable to even get its plans cleared, even though the interior ministry had taken it over from the National Information Technology Board (IT Board) last year.

To rid the land revenue department in Islamabad of corruption, the ‘Establishment of Land Revenue Records Management Infrastructure System (LRRMIS)’ for Rural Areas of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), was conceived in 2006-07. It was estimated to cost Rs88.65 million.

In 2009, the district administration and Ministry of Information Technology (IT) had started work on computerisation of land records in Islamabad formally and the project was supposed to have been completed in four years.

The project was subsequently handed over to the National IT Board. However, nearly a decade later and with little progress, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in November 2015 directed the project be handed over to the Islamabad Capital Territory Administration (ICTA) under the Interior Ministry.

After taking over the project, the ICTA revised the project concept (PC-I), changing the project scope by increasing the number of land owners from 39.5 million to 60 million while enhancing the number of proposed services centres from three to four. The project cost, subsequently, nearly doubled from Rs88.65 million to Rs151.65 million.

The revised project was submitted to the Planning Commission.

A source in the interior ministry told The Express Tribune on the condition of anonymity that a PC-I was had failed to get a nod from the Planning Commission since successive meetings of the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) did not approve the project.

The official said that the land records in the capital can be computerised within two years of securing approval from the CDWP.

Even though the project has been pending, the interior ministry official said they were already building a digital database of associated documents of land ownership.

In this regard proprietary software developed had so far scanned documents for 48 of the 112 revenue estates in the capital, while work on digitising records of 33 other estates was almost complete. The official added that these documents included periodical records (jamabandiyan) and ownership documents.

“There is also requirement to amend the Land Revenue Act 1967 so that the computerised records (fard) can be admissible in courts,” the source in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) revenue department told The Express Tribune on the condition of anonymity.

But despite several deadlines extensions, the project remains incomplete and its completion is still a distant dream.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1265789/nearly-decade-digitisation-land-records-still-distant-dream/>

PROTEST AGAINST HUNTING OF HOUBARA BUSTARDS

Dawn, December 18th, 2016

QUETTA: A large number of farmers and tribesmen protested in Gandawah tehsil of Jhal Magsi district on Saturday against the reported allotment of an area in Kachhi district to a Qatari prince for the hunting of the houbara bustard.

The protesters blocked the main highway between Gandawah and Shoran because of which traffic on the highway remained suspended for several hours.

They were of the opinion that it was harvesting season in the Sani Shoran tehsil and the hunting activity would damage their crops and deprive them of their livelihood. They said they would not allow Qatari guests to hunt the endangered migratory birds in their area.

District chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf Sardar Khan Rind was leading the protesters.

Addressing the protesters, Mr Rind claimed that the government had allotted the whole Sani Shoran tehsil to the Qatari prince for the hunting of houbara bustards.

He criticised the federal government and said the people of the area would not accept such decisions.

He accused the government of using security forces for the protection Qatari guests' hunting activity.

Meanwhile, Mr Rind has written a letter to the Qatari ambassador to Pakistan, informing him about the negative impact of hunting in the area.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1303024/protest-against-hunting-of-houbara-bustards>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 5 TH TO DECEMBER 11TH 2016
LAND ACQUISITION FOR DIAMER-BHASHA DAM AWAITS FINALISATION
Dawn, December 5th, 2016

Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: Despite disbursement of maximum funds, more than 9,000 acres of land have yet to be acquired for the \$14 billion Diamer-Bhasha dam project. The delay threatens to put back its take-off.

The government and the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) had set a target for completion of land acquisition by June this year before moving on to the next stage of project implementation — arrangement for funds and award of contracts for construction.

This is all the more surprising because the federal government has already made a full disbursement of Rs14 billion in the first three months of the current fiscal year — nine months before the stipulated date of June next year — according to a Planning Commission official.

He said the government was fully committed to the multipurpose project and was going out of the way in disbursement of the funds. He said the government had so far disbursed about Rs72bn, adding that the National Economic Council (NEC) had allocated Rs14bn for the project this year and “we have disbursed this Rs14bn within the first quarter”.

The water and power ministry informed parliament last week that 28,247 acres of land had been acquired so far against a total requirement of 37,419 acres. About 9,172 acres (25 per cent of the total land) has yet to be acquired.

The project on completion would have an installed capacity of 4,500MW, with annual power generation of about 19,208 gigawatt hour (Gwh).

The official said that most of the land needed for the project had already been acquired and land titles transferred/registered, adding that the remaining work was expected to be completed shortly. He said it was for the first time that matters relating to acquisition of land and resettlement of people to be displaced were being resolved before the start of work on the project.

This will avoid usual project delays and cost overruns that occur in most major development projects because of litigation and land registration. For example, the cost of the Mangla dam raising project had increased from Rs62bn to Rs105bn mainly because of litigations relating to land acquisition and resettlement.

The construction of Diamer-Bhasha dam has already been delayed. The project was originally scheduled for completion in 2016, and then 2019, when a decision about its construction was taken by the military government of Gen Pervez Musharraf, but it could not move an inch during his rule.

Officials explained that land acquisition was the first requirement for raising local and international financing for the project. About 37,500 acres have to be acquired, including about 18,500 acres of private land. All paperwork has been completed to formally seek financing from international agencies and bilateral lenders.

Multilateral institutions, primarily the Asian Development Bank, have advised the government to adopt a professional approach for building the big dam as no single institution, country or group can finance it given its mammoth funding requirements and the risks involved.

About 80pc of the required financing — more than \$10bn (Rs1.1 trillion) — will have to be raised through external sources and the remaining through domestic arrangements. Therefore, authorities have now decided to divide the project into two components — construction of the dam and power project. The government now intends to seek financing for the power project in the independent power project (IPP) mode and raise funds for the dam through institutional lending and international bonds.

While a part of the external financing can be arranged by a few institutional lenders, the major financing will have to be received from the international capital market as a specific infrastructure bond in the name of Diamer-Bhasha Dam Company (DBDC) — a special purpose vehicle.

Based on market and domestic circumstances, the DBDC can be offered to international investors next fiscal year with a targeted completion date of June 2026. To meet the deadline, the DBDC will be built on the pattern of the Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project through transfer of cost of land of the dam and operating assets of the 1,450MW Ghazi Barotha hydropower project (GBHP).

The GBHP's revenue surplus of about Rs9bn per annum and net worth of about \$500 million is not sufficient to meet local financing requirements. Therefore, a special cess on the pattern of Neelum-Jhelum surcharge on electricity tariff will be imposed on GBHP's tariff which can range between Rs10 and Rs15 per unit to make the Diamer-Bhasha dam project attractive for investors.

There is a move to increase GBHP's tariff to Rs23 per unit by loading on the project cost of DBDC because a combination of operation and development activities will not be attractive for short-term investors. The official estimate put return on equity at 17pc based on a 30-year average tariff of about Rs7.75 per unit. The project will also have a usable water storage capacity of about 6.4 million acre feet.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300579>

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