

January 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 23RD TO JANUARY 29TH 2017 ***TWO CHUNKS OF LAND HANDED OVER TO CHINESE FIRM FOR POWER PROJECT***

Dawn, January 23rd, 2017

Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: The government has handed over the possession of two chunks of land to a Chinese company for launching the construction of converter stations of \$1.57 billion Matiari-Lahore 660kV High Voltage Direct Current transmission line.

The control of the pieces of land measuring 175 acres (each) was given to the China Electric Power Equipment and Technology Company Ltd (CET), a company owned by the State Grid Corporation of China, in recent days after the National Transmission Dispatch Company Limited (NTDCL) acquired these pieces of land from landowners.

One piece of land is situated near Balloki, Bhaipheru, (about 50km from Lahore) while the other is located within the jurisdiction of Matiari, a small town in Hyderabad district.

The Matiari-Lahore transmission line, a part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is the country's first mega project of its kind based on the DC (direct current). The line will have a capacity of transmitting about 4,000MW.

The government is likely to inaugurate the project's civil work in March this year, as the preparatory work on the part of the contractor, CET, and the client, NTDCL is under way these days.

“We have completed the land acquisition for two mega converter stations of the project that will be built near Balloki (Bhaipheru, Lahore). And we have also handed over control of the Lahore land to the Chinese firm. The possession of land in Hyderabad is under way these days, as it is likely to be completed soon,” an official of the ministry of water and power said.

Talking to Dawn on Sunday, the official said that the transmission line would have sufficient capacity of evacuating power generation by four coal-fired power projects/plants (1,300MW each) and the other in Sindh in future.

The convertor station to be built in Hyderabad will convert the alternate current (AC), received from the plants in AC mode, into DC (direct current) for the onward transmission in the same mode through the line.

The Lahore convertor station would receive the electricity in DC and then convert it into AC for its onward supply to consumers through other AC lines of 500kV and 220kV maintained by the NTDCL and 132kV operated by respective distribution companies (Discos), including Lesco, Fesco, Gepco and Iesco.

The official said that since agreements between Pakistan and China had almost finalised in the wake of respective memorandums of understandings, the land acquisition for passing of the transmission line through various areas on the way — such as Hyderabad, Rahim Yar Khan, Bahawalpur, Hasilpur, Vehari, Sahiwal, Kasur and Lahore — would start soon.

“This project will be completed on a fast track basis. And initiation of civil work of the two convertor stations in the days to come hints that the project will be completed in October, 2019, as per deadline,” the official claimed.

Talking about the transmission tariff, the official said that after detailed deliberations held between the Chinese company and the NTDC, rupee 0.74 per unit had been finalised.

Under the agreement, the company would execute the project on BOT (Build, Operate and Transfer) basis. After operating the project (AC-DC-AC conversion etc) for 25 years and the recovery of the total cost, the contractor would hand over the project to the government.

However, the task of the line’s operation and maintenance would be the NTDC’s responsibility.

“The contractor, under the agreement, is liable to pay lease/rent of the land to the government,” he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1310205>

DEBATE ON LAND ALLOTTED TO RAHEEL MAY UPSET COHESION
Dawn, January 27th, 2017

Azfar-Ul-Ashfaq

KARACHI: The Pakistan Army stated on Thursday that the ‘debate’ surrounding the allotment of 90-acre agriculture land to former army chief retired Gen Raheel Sharif had the “potential to create misunderstanding between state institutions”.

The official mouthpiece of the military — the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) — was reacting to a report which first appeared in a little known Urdu daily on Jan 20 and was then picked by all other media outlets. According to the report, the former army chief was allotted a piece of land worth over Rs1 billion in Lahore in December 2014.

On Thursday evening, ISPR chief Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor posted a statement on his official Twitter account, saying the issue of the allotment of agricultural land to army officers and soldiers was being debated and conjectured for the last few days. It may be known that such allotments are through constitutional provision.

The statement further said that the allotment to Gen Raheel was also made under the same constitutional provisions and government/army procedures through which the land was allotted to other army officers and soldiers.

The ISPR statement warned: “This debate [on allotment of agriculture land] with intent of maligning Army also has the potential to create misunderstandings between state institutions thus considered

detrimental to existing cohesion.” Gen Raheel is not the only army chief who came under the media spotlight after his retirement. Much has been said about former COAS Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani after his retirement.

The 90-acre land in the Bedian Road area in Lahore was said to be allotted to Gen Raheel over two years ago. When the news about the allotment became public this week, a security establishment official told Dawn that there was nothing unusual about it. “It is agricultural land, which cannot be transferred, and will be used for this purpose alone. It will not be used for commercial purpose as is the impression being created by some,” he said.

“Every army chief gets a similar volume of agricultural land on retirement,” the official said, adding the land allotted to Gen Raheel was located some 5km from Lahore’s border area.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1311024/debate-on-land-allotted-to-raheel-may-upset-cohesion>

SHEEP FARMING LAND REALLOCATED TO HOUSING SCHEME, MINISTER TELLS PA
Dawn, January 27th, 2017

Bhagwandas

KARACHI: Land allocated for sheep farming and research has been reallocated for Benazir Bhutto Town, said Livestock Minister Mohammad Ali Malkani on Thursday, but sensing the sensitivity of the issue refused to give further details to the Sindh Assembly, taking shelter behind “technical grounds”.

He was responding to legislators’ queries during the Question Hour — that pertained to the livestock department — during the assembly session.

Hardly 20 legislators from the treasury benches, including a couple of ministers, and none from the opposition benches were present in the legislature when the session began. It was noticed by the deputy speaker, who asked the members to come to the house on time.

None of the members (Nusrat Sahar Abbasi of the Pakistan Muslim-League-Functional; and Rehan Zafar and Heer Soho of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement), whose questions were mentioned in the order of the day, were present during the Question Hour. Therefore, two questions by the MQM members were asked on their behalf by Leader of the Opposition Khwaja Izharul Hassan, while three questions asked by Ms Abbasi lapsed as none of her party colleagues was present, nor did any other member ask questions on her behalf.

The Question Hour was completed within 15 minutes.

Responding to a question by Mr Hassan regarding a sheep farm, the minister said the scheme for the establishment of Kooka Sheep Farm in Rohri was approved at a cost of Rs52 million for the period between 2005 and 2009 and around Rs46.5m had been spent on it. The scheme was not completed due to incomplete civil works. During the 2010-11 floods internally displaced persons occupied the buildings of the farm and damaged them by removing windows and doors of the buildings.

The minister further said that on May 21, 2012, of the 93 acres reserved for the Kooka Sheep Farm, 30 acres were reallocated for Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Town by the revenue department and currently only around 100 Kooka sheep were at the Kundhi Farm in Rohri.

Transport Minister Nasir Shah, hailing from Sukkur, had asked how and why the research land had been reallocated and what were the findings/recommendations of an inquiry ordered into the issue and if anybody had been found responsible for it, or if any action had been taken against anybody.

Minister Malkani, after giving the initial information, and then sensing its sensitivity that the research land had been reallocated for a housing society/town named after the ruling party leader, refused to answer a question asked by minister Shah, saying that technically under the assembly rules a minister could not ask a question in the assembly from another minister during Question Hour.

Ms Raza on hearing the technical objection expunged minister Shah's question.

Responding to a question by Mr Hassan that who had given the research land for a town, the minister said it had been approved by the competent authority and the revenue department had allotted it.

Answering a question by MQM legislator Sardar Ahmed that since sheep breeding was not successful in Sindh, why was it being done here and why the breeding of the local red cow was not being done, minister Malkani said sheep breeding was successfully being done in Larkana, Dadu, Jacobabad and others districts.

Responding to a question by PPP legislator Khursheed Junejo regarding the number of sheep farms in the province, the minister said that this was the only farm.

In reply to a question by Mr Hassan that as over Rs46m had been spent on the scheme what was its current status, the minister said the scheme had been abandoned. Now efforts were being made to get more funds to revive the scheme.

A written answer to a question said that 113 veterinary officers had been appointed through the Sindh Public Service Commission in the animal husbandry and poultry wings of the livestock and fisheries department in the last 10 years. The SPSC had recommended another 12 veterinary officers for appointment and offer letters had also been issued to them, but due to litigation the process of appointment was temporarily halted.

PPP legislator Ghazala Siyal, MQM legislator Sumeta Syed and others also took part in the Question Hour.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1310906/sheep-farming-land-reallocated-to-housing-scheme-minister-tells-pa>

SUKKUR MAYOR WANTS NAB TO PROBE LAND SALES

Dawn, January 27th, 2017

SUKKUR: The mayor of Sukkur Municipal Corporation has decided to ask the National Accountability Bureau to investigate 'fraudulent' sale of municipal land and government residential quarters and bungalows to influential persons by the katchi abadi and other departments.

Mayor barrister Arsalan Islam Shaikh told a group of journalists at his residence on Wednesday that he had taken the decision in consultation with Sukkur Deputy Commissioner Dr Waheed Asghar Bhatti.

He said that municipal property had either been sold or rented on the basis of forged papers carrying past dates and signatures of former officers. "We have decided to get the municipal land vacated at any cost," he said.

He said that the in-charge of the katchi abadis' body and his staff had played a major role in the fraud. Therefore, he said, directives had been issued to place the officer under suspension immediately.

He said that it had been decided to contact NAB and other agencies concerned to carry out a thorough investigation into the scam so that action could be taken against all the officers and staff involved in it.

Action would also be taken against officials and staff of revenue, land grant, tax branch and other departments who were involved in manipulating the record on the pretext that a major chunk of it was burnt down by mobs during Dec 27 disturbances in the wake of assassination of Benazir Bhutto, he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1310893/sukkur-mayor-wants-nab-to-probe-land-sales>

SC IRKED OVER ILLEGAL ALLOTMENT OF LAND

The Express Tribune, January 28th, 2017.

KARACHI: The Supreme Court (SC) expressed on Friday its extreme displeasure over the illegal allotment of the Pakistan Railways Employees Cooperative Housing Society's land, where the builder had built a residential complex in the Gulshan-e-Iqbal neighbourhood.

Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar, who headed the two-judge bench, expressed dismay over the state of the relevant institutions that are themselves involved in illegal allotment of the land.

The top judge remarked that it was difficult to understand that which department should be assigned the responsibility of investigating the facts of the case.

The bench that also comprised Justice Amir Hani Muslim was hearing the matter relating to illegal allotment of the cooperative society's land to the builder, who had built the Moon Garden residential complex in violation of the relevant laws.

During the proceedings, the society's lawyer, Faisal Siddiqui, informed the judges that the society was allotted 63 acres of land but the revenue authorities had illegally cancelled allotment of four acres of such land without providing any reason.

He alleged that such land was illegally allotted to the private person, who had erected constructions in violation of the laws. Now, people are living there illegally, he added.

The bench members came down hard on the revenue officials over their failure to protect the government land, which had been encroached upon by individuals along the railway tracks within the city limits.

Justice Hani observed that hundreds of people were involved in land grabbing, adding that people were raising houses at the (state) lands, wherever those were found vacant.

He inquired from the revenue and railways officials that who was responsible for the construction of the thousands of houses on the land belonging to the railways on either side of the tracks.

The bench ordered the provincial Board of Revenue's senior member to submit the record relating to the allotment of the piece of the land in question to the court. The case was fixed at the SC's principal seat in Islamabad for further hearing.

Earlier, the apex court had, in November, 2015, suspended the operation of the Sindh High Court's order regarding demolition of the residential complex, Moon Garden, as it was found built illegally on land originally belonging to the cooperative housing society.

In September, 2015, an SHC bench had ordered the authorities to disconnect civic facilities to the building, which was also ordered to be vacated.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1308876/expressing-dismay-sc-irked-illegal-allotment-land/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 16TH TO JANUARY 22 ND 2017 GOVT MAY SELL LAND TO BUILD LOW-COST HOUSES

The Express Tribune, January 17th, 2017.

Lahore: Punjab government is planning to sell empty lands of three public buildings located in prime commercial areas of the Lahore to generate funds for low-cost housing schemes in the suburbs.

A meeting of the special cabinet committee on promotion of low-cost housing in joint ventures with private companies was held on Tuesday at the Lahore Civil Secretariat.

The meeting chaired by Punjab Additional Chief Secretary Shumail Ahmad Khawaja discussed the mode of public-private partnership transactions structure, financial viability, projects cash flow, key financial parameters options and evaluation criteria for pre-qualification of bids.

Urban Sector Planning & Management Services Unit CEO Dr Nasir Javed pointed out three parcels of land in Lahore – Omni Bus Service Depot on Ferozpur Road, Food Warehouse on Guru Mangat Road in Gulberg and the front area of the Road Research and Material Testing Institute adjacent to Jinnah Hospital on Canal Road – have been identified for the development of public-private partnership projects.

Apart from Dr Nasir, Planning and Development member on finance risk management unit of public-private partnership Agha Waqar, Lahore Development Authority Director-General Zahid Akhtar Zaman and Punjab Land Development Company Project Director Moazzam Iqbal Sipra were also present at the meeting.

The special committee constituted by Shehbaz Sharif has also decided to take advice from financial, legal and technical consultants apart from studying the real estate market before sending the recommendations to the chief minister for approval.

According to the master plan of the proposal, upfront land sale will be done on equity based investment.

The joint venture holding company to be engaged in this project will also incorporate a parallel construction project of low-cost housing for the poor people at large.

The expenditure will be incurred from the profitability of the three plots, where commercial plazas and residential apartments in the shape of towers will be sold to the interested well-to-do people on market rates.

The committee meeting accorded conceptual approval of the master plan and suggested that the Punjab Land Development Company and the Housing and Urban Development Department would also be incorporated in the project, basically meant for culmination into materialising low-cost housing schemes in Lahore and its suburbs.

This model would also be replicated in the other large cities of the province, the meeting was told.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1297208/public-private-partnership-govt-may-sell-land-build-low-cost-houses/>

FIVE PERSONS HELD IN LAND FRAUD CASE

Dawn, January 18th, 2017

Peshawar: The NAB has arrested five officials of Telephone Industries of Pakistan (TIP), Haripur, on corruption charges.

Those arrested include Syed Rizwan Mehmood company secretary, Tahir Jan general secretary, Mohammad Waseem deputy manager, Qazi Ibrar deputy manager and Zamruad Khan.

According to a statement issued here on Tuesday, the accused persons were involved in illegal allotment of plots in TIP housing scheme, causing a loss of Rs360 million to exchequer.

It said that the TIP cooperative housing society was built on around 1,025 kanal of land with approved master plan.

The plots were allotted to TIP employees from 1991-2001 through power of attorney awarded to chairman TIP housing scheme by the general manger of TIP.

It was stated that Syed Mohammad Hussain Shah, chairman TIP, in connivance with the committee members illegally changed the master plan without the approval of the competent authority, illegitimately converted amenity sites into residential plots of different sizes, and issued illegally 145 allotment letters.

It is to mention here that the main accused, Syed Mohammad Hussain Shah, has already been arrested in the case. The accused will be presented in the accountability court for obtaining their physical remand, said the statement.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1309205/five-persons-held-in-land-fraud-case>

LAND SCAM: NAB ARRESTS ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER

The Express Tribune, January 19th, 2017.

HYDERABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) arrested a second assistant commissioner in connection with a case of land scam in a housing colony in Hyderabad.

The NAB's spokesperson informed on Wednesday that the former assistant commissioner of Qasimabad, Shahnawaz Soomro, who was currently posted in Jati taluka of Thatta District, was arrested from Gulshan-e-Hadeed in Karachi.

The accused has been charged with verifying bogus revenue entries and issuing illegal documents for Memon Housing scheme in Qasimabad, in connivance with the real estate developers Abdul Ghaffar Dada and Rafique Solangi. The spokesperson said that the housing scheme, against which the NAB received over a hundred complaints, covered 24 acres.

Earlier on January 17, tapedar Imtiaz Solangi was also arrested in the same case. The NAB obtained his 14-day physical remand from the NAB court. Another assistant commissioner, Ali Zulfiqar Memon, was apprehended last month on December 23, who is currently in jail on judicial remand. He is also accused of collusion in the fraud when he was posted in Qasimabad. The spokesperson said that the revenue officials involved in the scam have been rounded up, however, the builders, Dada and Solangi, are still at large.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1299681/land-scam-nab-arrests-assistant-commissioner-2/>

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

PUNJAB EXTENDS SUPPORT TO SINDH ON TWO NFC ISSUES

Dawn, January 12th, 2017

Habib Khan Ghori

KARACHI: The Punjab government has agreed to fully support Sindh's stance at the next meeting of the National Finance Commission (NFC) against the federal government's proposal about the allocation of seven per cent funds from the divisible pool for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor security and development of Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir.

Also, the Punjab finance ministry has assured the Sindh authorities of its support to their demand for the provincial government's right to collect sales tax on goods and then deposit the same with the federal government for onward distribution among the provinces according to their agreed share.

The assurance was given by Finance Minister of Punjab Dr Ayesha Ghous who called on Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Wednesday at CM House where issues related to the NFC came under discussion.

Drawing her attention towards the federal government's proposal, the chief minister said the divisible pool was meant only for the distribution of collected funds among the provinces. He said it would be

unreasonable and against the Constitution if the federal government allocated three per cent fund from the divisible pool for CPEC security and another four per cent for development of Fata, GB and Azad Kashmir. He said the federal government had already allocated one per cent fund from the divisible pool for maintenance of law and order in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

All the provinces should oppose this ‘unconstitutional’ proposal, he said. “I would request the Punjab government, KP and Balochistan to develop consensus and oppose the proposal,” he added.

Besides, he said, the provincial governments should have the right to collect sales tax on goods and then deposit the same with the federal government for onward distribution among the provinces according to their agreed share. Unilateral deduction of wealth tax at source from provincial government’s share was another ‘illegal’ act, he added.

Dr Ayesha Ghous said the reservations and grievances of the Sindh government were genuine and assured the chief minister of her government’s support on both points.

Meanwhile, the chief minister approved Rs45 million for the feasibility study of Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) and ordered Commissioner Aijaz Khan to work out a plan in consultation with all deputy commissioners for the removal of encroachments from its route and submit its report within seven days.

While presiding over a meeting on KCR, the chief minister asked the finance secretary to release Rs45m for conducting KCR feasibility, which would have to be submitted before the JCC for the project’s inclusion in CPEC projects.

He also told the additional chief secretary for development to coordinate with the federal government for sovereign guarantee.

Sindh Transport Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah earlier informed the chief minister that the total length of KCR project was 43 kilometres including 13.43km of main railway line.

DS Railways Nisar Memon said the total land required for the KCR project was 360 acres, of which 260-acre land belonged to Pakistan Railways and 100 acres were on main line, while 67 acres had been encroached upon. A total of 4,653 houses and 2,997 other establishments had been built on the 67 acres, he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1307846/punjab-extends-support-to-sindh-on-two-nfc-issues>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 2ND TO JANUARY 8TH 2017
‘OVER 2,500 FAMILIES DISPLACED TO MAKE WAY FOR ECONOMIC CORRIDOR’
The Express Tribune, January 4th, 2017.

KARACHI: A total of 2,578 families have been displaced in order to make way for the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), claimed Baloch Human Rights Organisation (BHRO) on Tuesday.

These people have been forced to leave their homes in Hoshab, Awaran, Jhalawan and Koh-e-Suleman and move to Karachi, Turbat, Hub Chowki and other areas, said BHRO chairperson Bibi Gul Baloch as she addressed a press conference at Karachi Press Club.

She demanded the media and other stakeholders join hands with them together to highlight the issues that the people of Balochistan are facing. She urged the media to report the number of people killed, abducted and forcefully detained in the province, before adding that new development projects are hardly of any benefit to the local population.

According to her, a total of 607 people have been killed in Balochistan in 2016 and 113 of these were unidentified bodies. In the same year, thousands of people have been abducted and have gone missing and BHRO has managed to collect details of only 1,809 of them. “The families of the missing persons are tired of seeking help from the civil society and other forums,” she said, complaining that no one speaks up for their rights.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1283421/2500-families-displaced-make-way-economic-corridor/>

ILLEGAL STRUCTURES DEMOLISHED IN PESHAWAR

Dawn, January 6th, 2017

PESHAWAR: In a major action against encroachers, the district administration on Thursday demolished over 60 cemented structures in the area from Gulbahar to Tarnab Farm by using heavy machinery.

According to a statement, the structures were constructed illegally along both sides of the road which had created hurdles to movement of the traffic and pedestrians. In many areas the encroachers had occupied the footpath.

In some areas of Gulbahar the encroachers had constructed shops and markets and even residential quarters in violation of rules. The people were issued notices repeatedly to remove the structures by themselves, but instead they had started influencing the officials concerned.

The operation was carried out by the administration following instructions of the acting deputy commissioner Shahid Mehmood. Besides officials of various departments, additional assistant commissioner Suhail Aziz and Najeeb Afridi of PDA led the anti-encroachment team.

Heavy contingent of law enforcers were also deployed in the area to avert any untoward incident. Four people were arrested for offering resistance on the occasion.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1306691/illegal-structures-demolished-in-peshawar>

February 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 20TH TO FEBRUARY 26TH 2017 *CHINESE INVESTMENT TRIGGERS LAND RUSH AROUND GWADAR PORT*

Dawn, Feb 23, 2017

Pakistani real estate giant Rafi Group made a ten-fold profit last year from its sale of hundreds of acres of land in the remote fishing town of Gwadar, acquired soon after the government announced plans for a deep-sea port there.

The windfall came after 12 years of waiting patiently for the Gwadar port to emerge as the centrepiece of China's ambitious plans for a trade and energy corridor stretching from the Persian Gulf, across Pakistan, into western Xinjiang.

"We had anticipated the Chinese would need a route to the Arabian Sea," Rafi Group Chief Executive Shehriar Rafi told Reuters. "And today, all routes lead back to Gwadar."

Gwadar forms the southern Pakistan hub of a \$57-billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) of infrastructure and energy projects Beijing announced in 2014.

Since then, land prices have skyrocketed as property demand has spiked, and dozens of real estate firms want to cash in.

"Gwadar is a 'Made in China' brand and everyone wants a piece," said realtor Afzal Adil, one of several who shifted operations from the eastern city of Lahore in 2015.

Last year, Pakistan welcomed the first large shipment of Chinese goods at Gwadar, where the China Overseas Ports Holding Company Ltd took over operations in 2013. It plans to eventually handle 300 million to 400 million tons of cargo a year.

It also aims to develop seafood processing plants in a nearby free trade zone sprawled over 923 hectares (2,281 acres).

The route through Gwadar offers China its shortest path to the oil-rich Middle East, Africa, and most of the Western hemisphere, besides promising to open up remote, landlocked Xinjiang.

Last year, the Applied Economics Research Centre estimated the corridor would create 700,000 jobs in Pakistan and a Chinese newspaper recently put the number at more than 2 million.

Authorities have completed an expressway through Gwadar, which has a 350-km (218-mile) road network. A new international airport kicks off next year, to handle an influx of hundreds of Chinese traders and officials expected to live near the port.

The volume of Gwadar property searches surged 14-fold on Pakistan's largest real estate database, Zameen.com, between 2014 and 2016, up from a prior rate of a few hundred a month.

"It's like a gold rush," said Chief Executive Zeeshan Ali Khan. "Anyone who is interested in real estate, be it an investor or a developer, is eyeing Gwadar."

Prices, which have risen two- to four-fold on average, are climbing "on a weekly basis," said Saad Arshed, the Pakistan managing director of online real estate marketplace Lamudi.pk.

Regional fishermen have held strikes during the last two years, to protest against being displaced by the port.

To keep pace with the interest, urban officials are struggling to computerise land management and record-keeping. "We are trying to upgrade as fast as we can," said Zakir Majeed, an official of the Gwadar Development Authority (GDA).

But Gwadar lacks basic education and health facilities, in contrast to the gleaming towers and piped drinking water of the “smart city” envisioned by the GDA.

“For commercial projects, things are moving fast,” Lamudi’s Arshed said. “But people actually living there, that will take a long time.”

Port officials expect the population to hit 2 million over the next two decades, from about 185,000 now.

The government commissioned work on the Gwadar port in 2002, but development was held up by chronic instability in the surrounding resource-rich province of Baluchistan, where ethnic separatist rebels have chafed against a military crackdown.

Since China announced the corridor plan in 2014, security has improved, with Pakistan setting up a new army division to ensure protection, while hundreds of rebels surrendered arms.

Real estate firms dismiss fears the “Gwadar bubble” might still burst, pointing to China’s enduring interest.

“The risk is always there,” Rafi said. “But our confidence comes from knowing this is not a Pakistani initiative, but a Chinese city on the Arabian Sea coast. And the Chinese will see that it is built.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1316538/chinese-investment-triggers-land-rush-around-gwadar-port>

MINISTRY DIRECTED TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST ILLEGAL OCCUPANTS OF GOVT RESIDENCES

Business Recorder , 25 February 2017

Abdul Rasheed Azad

ISLAMABAD: A parliamentary panel on Friday directed Ministry of Housing & Works and other quarters concerned to take stern action against illegal occupants of government residences recover full dues from them and get the buildings vacated at the earliest.

A subcommittee of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Housing and Works met here under the chairmanship Rajab Ali Khan Baloch and was also attended by Ghulam Sarwar Khan, Tahira Aurangzeb and Zahid Hussian Khan. The subcommittee has asked the Estate Office of Ministry of Housing to clear all the designated houses from occupants.

The subcommittee expressed its displeasure over constant occupation of flats by the officials of police and other government departments. Officials from the Ministry of Housing told the committee that at present a total of 412 government accommodations are under illegal occupation in the federal capital. They said that a number of police officials had filed cases with the courts to get legal cover to their occupations, but now the Supreme Court of Pakistan has ordered to get all such houses/flats vacated.

Responding to the committee directions, Estate Officer Sohail Sarwar Jura said that role of Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Pakistan Public Works Department (PWD) will be brought to an

end to make allotment process transparent in future. Jura further said it is a difficult task to get government houses vacated from the trespassers and illegal occupants, but following the Supreme Court's decision, the department is making all-out efforts to do it.

The committee was informed that illegal occupants include officials from judiciary, police, CDA and other departments who are hand in glove with one another.

The estate officer said that after the Supreme Court's directions, a total of 305 accommodations have been got vacated from the un-authorized /illegal occupants, adding that 60 such accommodations are still under illegal occupants.

According to a document submitted to the subcommittee by the CDA, out of total 200 flats in G-6, 130 are occupied by the capital police, 31 by the CDA officials and 39 by other government employees, including some private families.

According to the document, houses designated for the CDA chairman and for two board members are in illegal occupation of the Estate Office which never paid rent for them.

A house in Islamabad's sector F-7/3 was allotted to former chairman CDA Nadeem Hassan Asif, but after his repatriation Asif did not vacate the house as it was again allotted to him by the Estate Office. The Estate Office, according to the CDA document, allotted two other houses designated for the board members in sector F-7 to bureaucrats in 90s who had not paid the rents.

The subcommittee directed the CDA to hold a meeting with the Estate Office to settle the issue with the Ministry of Housing.

The members were surprised to know how CDA would get control of these flats as it had promised to hand them over to the Ministry of Housing on the direction of a former prime minister.

The committee said that without the approval of the prime minister, the CDA cannot undo the decision of a former prime minister.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/02/25/5-page/853297-news.html>

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

THE PROBLEM WITH LAND GRANTS

Dawn February 14th, 2017

Anjum Altaf

IS there any other country that rewards government employees with grants of land? The issue is not whether the grants comply with existing rules or follow precedent but whether the practice makes sense in the modern age.

We are no longer living in the age of monarchy or colonial rule when land was gifted at will by the rulers to whomsoever pleased them — just think of the landed gentry we inherited as a result. We are now in the era of democracy in which public resources belong to citizens and are to be used in accordance with their sanction.

In our system, these decisions are made by their representatives in appropriate legislative forums. If citizens are not satisfied with the decisions of their representatives they have the well-known triad of 'exit, voice, and loyalty' to fall back on which itself is a democratic choice. In short, they can ignore, oppose, or support the representatives depending on whether their preferences are being respected or not.

We are also living in the age of science where all authority can be questioned as long as the mode of inquiry itself adheres to a set of acceptable rules. In this case the rules of inquiry are enshrined in the right to information. Since there are no conceivable issues of national security involved in matters pertaining to in-service and retirement benefits of state servants, citizens are quite justified to inquire into the rules applicable to such benefits especially when they involve allocation of public resources.

Therefore, it seems quite reasonable to ask for a transparent disclosure of the rules applicable to land grants at this time. A number of questions are very relevant to the review: Who made these rules? When were they made? Have they been debated and approved by the legislature? How do they vary across services? How do they compare across countries? Etc., etc.

Such a review might yield a number of advantages: A reformulation of benefits in accordance with modern bureaucratic practices, a more equitable distribution across services, and a legitimised dispensation more acceptable to citizens.

At first blush, it does seem that grants in terms of land are an anachronistic practice dating, as mentioned before, to the age of monarchy and colonial rule when jagirs were assigned at will. Some might be aware of the Homestead Acts of the mid-19th century in the US when, for a nominal sum, grants of 160 acres (64.7 hectares) of land were made to any citizen migrating West and willing to settle on and farm the land for at least five years. In all over 270 million acres of public land was given away under these acts.

One should not forget that in the US all this land was stolen from native inhabitants. It is interesting that similar acts were passed in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, all settler colonies with small immigrant populations in which land was also appropriated from native inhabitants. In this day and age, one would want to avoid the impression that land is being appropriated from the citizens of Pakistan and distributed to members of a conquering population.

It also does appear from casual observation that the benefits presently assigned to the armed forces in Pakistan are disproportionate to those for other services and to global norms. The people's representatives might well decide there are sufficient reasons for the discrimination but it would be good to gain the understanding and acceptance of the citizens to avoid controversies in the future.

A flavour of the pros and cons was conveyed in a recent discussion where it was mentioned that since members of the armed forces risked their lives in the service of their country they were entitled to disproportionate benefits. This point was conceded but it was mentioned that those working in coal mines and stone-crushing factories exposed themselves to greater risk of death. Not only that, they faced the certainty of shortened life spans because of lung diseases caused by inhaling the coal and silica dust. These workers were not even compensated for work-related mortality or morbidity. The conclusion was that there was a justification for compensatory awards in the event of death or

disability at work but not really for the normal execution of duties for which one received adequate emoluments.

It was also mentioned that since our armed forces were the best in the world they were entitled to benefits exceeding global norms. It is indeed quite acceptable to have higher rewards for services over and above expectations but again it would eliminate areas of contention if the global norms are made part of the public disclosure.

An indirect disadvantage of rewarding government employees in this manner is that still far too many aspire for government service without really wanting to serve in the interest of the public. This may be one reason why there is so little innovative activity in Pakistan.

Given that such civil servants have been complicit in the mismanagement of public enterprises, a particularly just solution might be to substitute the allocation of scarce land with shares in bankrupt state-owned enterprises like the steel mill or the national airline. This might create some self-interest to improve the profitability of these assets for the shares to yield value. In a capitalist economy there is no quarrel with becoming rich but it is socially beneficial if fortunes are made by entrepreneurial and managerial ability rather than through capturing rents.

No patriotic Pakistani wishes to malign the institutions of the state but citizens do wish to avoid tarnishing the image of the country by conveying the impression that it is governed by a kleptocratic and authoritarian clique that assigns resources to itself and stifles discussion through intimidation. A little bit of transparency should dispel all such doubts.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1314626>

AFFECTED PEOPLE OF KKH EXPANSION PROJECT SEEK COMPENSATION

Dawn, 15 December 2017

GILGIT: The landowners affected by Karakoram Highway expansion project have not been paid compensation even seven years after its completion.

They threatened to start a protest movement and block the KKH for an indefinite period against the Planning Commission and the National Highway Authority for not paying them compensation.

The affected people alleged that the Chinese government had provided 80 per cent funding of the project to the federal finance division, including the land compensation, but the Planning Commission was withholding the land compensation.

Talking to journalists in Gilgit on Tuesday, members of the action committee of KKH affected people said over 1,500 families from China border to Diamer district had been affected by the road expansion project, which was started in 2007 and completed in 2010.

They said their fertile lands and commercial buildings along the KKH were acquired for the road expansion, but they were yet to be compensated.

The landowners said the NHA was deliberately delaying payment of compensation to them.

They said many times they went on strike and protested on roads to seek compensation, but to no avail.

NHA authorities have been making false promises with us on compensation. Now we have no option but to block the KKH for indefinite period, they threatened.

The affected people appealed to the federal government to take steps to address grievances of the landowners.

Amjad Hussain, who is representing the affected people in court in the case, said that KKH was part of the all important CPEC, but the poor landowners in GB were deprived of compensation.

He said Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ihsan Iqbal had failed to pay heed to the cries of the affected people.

He said the GB Supreme Appellate Court had also directed the authorities for payment of compensation to landowners last year, but the court order was not implemented.

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=15_02_2017_007_002

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 6TH TO FEBRUARY 12TH 2017
LACK OF VALUE ADDITION: AGRICULTURAL LAND SHRINKING IN PUNJAB
The Express Tribune, February 7th, 2017.

FAISALABAD: Focused credit policies for promoting value addition coupled with maximisation of per acre yield for small landholders were imperative to make farming profitable, particularly in the backdrop of fast shrinking cultivable land around main cities of Punjab, said Engineer Ahmed Hassan, Vice President of the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI).

He stated this at a review meeting of the Agriculture Credit Advisory Committee of the State Bank of Pakistan in Multan recently.

Hassan pointed out that Pakistan was predominantly an agrarian economy and was listed among top 10 producers of cotton, rice, sugarcane, maize, milk, fresh vegetables and many exotic varieties of fruits.

Despite the ecological diversity, he said, “we bitterly failed to add value to these important crops, which has led to the erosion of financial viability of small landholders in addition to encouraging migration from the rural to urban centres”.

Though the agriculture sector had great economic importance, it continued to face scores of problems including low crop yields, heavy wastage and low value addition due to the use of primitive technology and farming methods.

“Our banking sector needs to frame agriculture finance policies with the aim of achieving higher value addition and increased use of modern technology and practices,” he suggested.

Hassan called for providing special financial services and incentives for those farmers and entrepreneurs who were striving to adopt state-of-the-art technology and improve efficiency.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1318787/lack-value-addition-agricultural-land-shrinking-punjab/>

REJECTS DEVELOPER’S PLEA: COMPULSORY LAND ACQUISITION FOR PRIVATE SCHEME IS ILLEGAL: LHC

Dawn, February 10th, 2017

LAHORE: A Lahore High Court judgment has ruled that compulsory acquisition of land cannot be made for the establishment of a private housing scheme.

“The requisition for compulsory acquisition of the property for the benefit of one or more private individuals has no backing of law,” the court observed.

Through the ruling, Justice Chaudhry Muhammad Iqbal dismissed a petition of Eden M/S Developers challenging an order of Board of Revenue (BoR). The revenue officer had rejected an application of the developers for acquisition of land to establish a housing scheme.

The petitioner-company argued that a notification under section 4 of the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 was issued in its favour for acquisition of the required land. However, the BoR in 2011 cancelled the notification on the complaint of one of the owners of the property intended to be acquired and the developers challenged the same before the court.

Justice Iqbal in his verdict observes, “It is the eminent domain of every government to appropriate the property of any citizen for necessities of the State, however, it entails to the constitutional requirement that the acquisition or dispossession must be for public purpose.”

The ruling states that in the instant case neither the land was acquired for public purpose nor the government was satisfied, which is mandatory under the acquisition laws.

“Undoubtedly, the sanctity of the public purpose gathers supremacy over the individual interest,” it maintains adding that the acquisition of land other than for public purposes will be ultra vires of provision of Article 24 of the Constitution as well as the Land Acquisition Act, 1894.

“In this case, it is admitted fact that the petitioner is establishing a private housing scheme for business purpose and doing sale and purchase i.e. real estate business is private purpose which cannot be termed a public purpose,” the judge holds dismissing the petition.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/131392>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 30TH TO FEBRUARY 5TH 2017
GOD’S NOT-TOO-LITTLE ACRE

Shabir Ahmed

Pakistan’s land mass is finite – limited by geographical boundaries, until climate change throws up a few islands or dredging the sea gets a technological boost. State land, on the other hand, seems to be infinite; an in-exhaustible stock. Somehow we always manage to unearth those not-so-little acres to palm off to functionaries of state, camp followers, social entrepreneurs, industrialists, developers, what have you.

Our lust for land is universal, and a function of power – the higher up on the power ladder the greater the sense of entitlement. The cynics may well ask what distinguishes grantees from grabbers – one category has the force of law behind them and the other the indulgence of law-enforcers!

‘Land grant’ is not our invention. Kings did it. Imperial powers did it. ‘Missions to civilize’ did it. To this day, our land grant policies are driven by the Colonization of Government Lands Act of 1912, which empowered the colonial masters to grant land as reward for services rendered, for horse breeding (that helped breed some of our leading families), common lands, cantonments, railways, and public welfare projects.

We enlarged the scope through a slew of new grant policies: Prime Minister and Chief Minister’s schemes, Resettlement schemes, Tube well scheme, Border Area scheme etc., and all those development authorities that announced the ‘coming of age’ of every major town.

The 1912 Act sought to capitalize on investments in new canals and earn more land revenue for the state; our embellishments sought to benefit individuals at the cost of the state. The Act made the administrative ‘steel frame’ more sturdy, our refinements made it more pliable. The carrot of the Act came with the stick – grantees were ‘tenants’ and lands could be resumed for bad behavior; our amendments facilitated proprietary rights.

It is interesting that government’s purchases of even thousands are subject to tender requirements and the entire paraphernalia of the procurement law, but land worth billions can be given away at will. The Public Accounts Committee loves to grill departments, sometimes unnecessarily, for impropriety of expenditure but rarely questions improper land disposals. Whatever happened to CDA allotting that generous plot to the Foreign Office Wives Association, for instance?

For sure, there are rules governing grant of land. Unsurprisingly, it gives the government a lot of leeway, with the omnibus clause “the competent authority may relax these rules....” adding pudding to the icing. One wonders if our whimsical land grant policies are meant to provide for social mobility – making anybody somebody, if he belongs. It shouldn’t come as a surprise that the Boards of Revenue are hard pressed to give you the total acreage that has been given away.

State land is a tangible asset bearing a monetary value. What gives the government the right to squander it and virtually give it away in a highly discriminatory manner? It cannot be treated as a huge slush fund.

If a state functionary has to be rewarded for meritorious services why can’t the state give him a cash reward equivalent to the market value of the residential plot or farmland that it proposes to give? This will be a more efficient disposition and most certainly more transparent as it would require merit criteria to be well-defined.

If not reward but compensation (for abominably low salaries) is the primary motivation then by all means make the government salaries compatible, to the extent possible, with those in the private sector that require equivalent skills or levels of responsibility. The resultant burden on the budget can be met through the sale of the very same lands that are gifted away or doled out at highly subsidized rates.

Besides being transparent and fair to the entire class of servants paid for from the budget it will reduce the ‘intermediation costs’ and add to tax buoyancy. Why the government does not do so defies logic, besides raising questions of intent and probity.

This line of questioning can be extended to the social sectors as well, or for that matter manufacturing or other enterprises, whether for profit or not. If someone wants to set up an educational facility why should she expect free land? If funds can be found for all else – cement and steel, furniture and furnishings – how can it be presumed that the noble venture can only take off on the wings of free land? If government's financial contribution is critical to the viability of the venture why not tap the government's private-public-partnership window? Too bad if the government is a monster of a partner; if you take someone's money (and land is money), whether bank or venture capital or angel fund, you have to put up with his idiosyncrasies as well.

Many a tax-lite fortune has been made in the urban housing sector. Speculators couldn't have asked for more. With everyone, from the industrialist to the housewife piling up, an unending pyramid of wealth has been foisted on state land. This has also put reasonable housing beyond the reach of those who depend on an honest living.

Karachi, with the housing crisis ushered in by the partition and sustained by fortune hunters from the North, provided the model. PECHS parented all kinds of societies. KDA came into being and the mafia followed with the KatchiAbaadis. The model was replicated with great gusto elsewhere. CDA in Islamabad and the cantonments, large swathes of which were converted into Housing Authorities, scaled up the model to new heights.

But the land rush had little for the wretched of the earth, the landless hari. Policies for landless farmers, often well intended, failed due to design defects: lack of finances for inputs and uncertain water supply. Invariably, state land granted to the hari ended up with the neighbouring land lord.

If there is one category that deserves state land it is the peasant; if there is one cause worthy of Human Rights Commission's espousal it is the plight of the hari.

The State is still sitting on a lot of land. The barracks-infested not-too-little acres spanning the back of the Sindh High Court and the old Victoria Road is illustrative. In economic terms, it is a deadweight loss. The governments should unload state land, at market prices, before we have more of the jackals circling an accommodating regimen to grab God's little acre. shabirahmed@yahoo.com

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/02/01/21-page/846077-news.html>

CHINESE COS EYE MORE LAND, BUSINESSES

Business Recorder, 4 February 2017

KARACHI: Chinese companies are in talks to snap up more businesses and land in Pakistan after sealing two major deals in recent months, a sign of deepening ties after Beijing vowed to plough \$57 billion into a new trade route across the South Asian nation.

A dozen executives from some of Pakistan's biggest firms told Reuters that Chinese companies were looking mainly at the cement, steel, energy and textile sectors, the backbone of Pakistan's \$270 billion economy.

Analysts say the interest shows Chinese firms are using Beijing's "One Belt, One Road" project – a global trade network of which Pakistan is a key part – to help expand abroad at a time when growth has slowed at home.

A Chinese-led consortium recently took a strategic stake in the Pakistan Stock Exchange, and Shanghai Electric Power acquired one of Pakistan's biggest energy producers, K-Electric, for \$1.8 billion.

"The Chinese have got deep pockets and they are looking for major investment in Pakistan," said Muhammad Ali Tabbu, chief executive of two companies in the Yunus Brothers Group cement-to-chemicals conglomerate.

Tabbu said Yunus Brothers, partnering with a Chinese company, lost out in the battle for K-Electric, but the group is eyeing up other joint ventures as part of a \$2 billion expansion plan over the coming years.

Mohammad Zubair, Pakistan's privatisation minister until a few days ago, told Reuters China's steel giant Baosteel Group is in talks over a 30-year lease for state-run Pakistan Steel Mills. Baosteel did not respond to a request for comment.

The negotiations come as Pakistani business sentiment turns, with companies betting that Beijing's splurge on road, rail and energy infrastructure under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will boost the economy.

The Chinese charge is in contrast to Western investors, who have largely avoided Pakistan in recent years despite fewer militant attacks and economic growth near 5 percent.

It is welcomed by many in Pakistan: foreign direct investment was \$1.9 billion in 2015/2016, far below the 2007/2008 peak of \$5.4 billion.

At the stock exchange signing ceremony, Sun Weidong, China's ambassador to Pakistan, said the deal "embodies the ongoing financial integration" between Chinese and Pakistani markets.

"This will facilitate more financial support for our enterprises," Sun said.

CPEC will connect China's Western region with Pakistan's Arabian Sea port of Gwadar through a network of rail, road and pipeline projects.

That will be funded by loans from China, and much of the business will go to Chinese enterprises.

The scale of Chinese corporate interest beyond that is difficult to gauge, but in Karachi, Pakistan's financial centre, sharply-dressed Chinese appear to outnumber Westerners in hotels, restaurants and the city's airport.

Rising skyscrapers testify to a construction boom in the city, businesses are printing Chinese-language brochures and salaries demanded by Pakistanis who speak Chinese have shot up.

Miftah Ismail, chairman of Board of Investment, said Chinese companies were interested in investing in the telecoms and auto sectors, with FAW Group and Foton Motor Group planning to enter Pakistan.

FAW said the Pakistan "project is going through internal approvals", but did not offer more details. Foton declined to comment.

But not everyone is excited by China's growing role in the Pakistan economy, including trade unions, who said Chinese companies' alleged mistreatment of local workers in Africa in the past had alarmed them.

"We have concern and reservations that the Chinese might use the same methods in Pakistan," said Nasir Mansoor, deputy general secretary of National Trade Union Federation, Pakistan, the national trade union body.

The Chinese government and Chinese companies have dismissed such accusations in the past.

And doing business may not be easy for newcomers. Security remains a concern despite a drop in Islamist militant violence, and in the World Bank's ease of doing business index, Pakistan ranks 144 out of 190 countries.

The Chinese interest comes as Islamabad and Beijing discuss the next phase of CPEC: how to build Pakistan's industry with the help of Chinese state-owned industrial giants.

Pakistani officials are drafting plans for special economic zones which would offer tax breaks and other benefits to Chinese businesses.

But even before zones are established, Chinese investors are scoping out land deals.

"A lot of companies don't care about CPEC. They just want 500 acres of land to set up shop," said Naheed Memon, head of the Sindh province's Board of Investment.

Faisal Aftab, manager of private investment firm Oxon Partners, said Oxon was in talks with two state-run Chinese companies and a wealthy Chinese businessman to purchase and develop land for high-end residential and commercial properties.

"They are seeking land in prime markets such as Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad," Aftab said.

Yunus Brothers' Tabba urged Western investors to overcome their "phobia" of Pakistan.

"If they came here, they would see the momentum, the buzz of growth."—Reuters

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/02/04/1-page/846597-news.html>

March 2017

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

ADB TO PROVIDE RS100M LOAN TO ACQUIRE LAND FOR NEW RING ROAD

The Express Tribune, March 28th, 2017.

Mudassir Raja

RAWALPINDI: The Asian Development Bank has said that it was ready to provide a loan to the Punjab government to procure land for a new ring road in Rawalpindi, linking the GT Road from Rawat with Motorway in Thaliam.

This was disclosed in a meeting between representatives of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Monday in meeting with the Rawalpindi Commissioner Azmat Saeed and the Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA). The officials said that they would provide around Rs100 million for acquiring the land as soon as design work for the project was completed.

The meeting was chaired by the commissioner and was attended by NesPak General Manager Danish Raza, RDA Chief Engineer Syed Akhtar Bukhari, and three representatives of ADB besides other relevant officials on Monday at commissioner's office.

The commissioner asked NesPak, the consultant hired by RDA to finalise the design of the 38-kilometers-long ring road from Channi Alam Sher in Rawat to Thalian on the Motorway as soon as possible.

The road project, first conceived in 1992, would provide a 300-foot-wide dual carriageway for traffic between Peshawar and Lahore on the GT Road.

Each lane of the road would be 3.6 metres wide and is expected to help ease traffic congestion on all roads in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

The road would also provide a fast and easy route to people living around the new Islamabad Airport in Fateh Jang. The project is expected to cost around Rs31 billion. The government would need to acquire around 9,894 kanals of land for the project.

The project would take around two years to complete. It would include five interchanges, a 12 kilometer-long new link road from Rawat junction to GT Road through DHA while converting a 6.5 kilometer-long link road from Fateh Jang to Rawat into a dual track carriageway.

NesPak is expected to complete its paperwork and submit a complete design plan in May. The project would be completed on private-public partnership basis on a build-operate-transfer method.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1367228/new-ring-road-adb-provide-rs100m-loan-acquire-land/>

EVACUEE TRUST TO SEEK RANGERS' HELP FOR LAND RETRIEVAL

KARACHI: The Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) will seek the Pakistan Rangers' help to recover their land from encroachers in Sindh.

Addressing a press conference at Punjab House on Monday after presiding over ETPB's 310th board meeting, ETPB Chairperson Siddiqui Farooq said that around 2,000 acres of land belonging to the board in Sindh has been encroached upon by different government departments, individuals and the land mafia.

He accused the Sindh government of turning a blind eye while the land mafia continued to encroach upon land worth billions of rupees. Farooq was accompanied by board members Ramesh Singh Arora and Alexander John.

The land mafia did not spare our land from their china cutting and we have had no cooperation from the provincial government to recover the land, the board members claimed. Farooq added that he has

written multiple letters to the Sindh IG and chief secretary regarding the recovery of the land but there has been no response.

The Karachi Development Authority and other government departments are also involved in the land grabbing and the Sindh government should cooperate in recovering our land, alleged Farooq.

He said the land owned by the trust is property that belonged mostly to Sikhs and Hindus who migrated to India after Partition and only the ETPB has authority over the land. The chairperson added that the trust has been maintaining many temples and other religious sites but criminal groups have always exploited an opportunity to encroach upon these historical properties.

Sharing the details of the meeting, Farooq said they have decided to auction off the properties owned by ETPB in Punjab and soon their details will be shared.

Responding to a question about seeking the Rangers' help to recover the land, Farooq said that just like provincial government is seeking the Rangers' help in maintaining law and order, they will also seek their help recovering their land from encroachers.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1367113/evacuee-trust-seek-rangers-help-land-retrieval/>

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

SIGHTING LAND

Dawn, March 23rd, 2017

Khurram Husain

Two weeks ago, I wrote a piece about the special economic zones planned under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in which I drew attention to a news item that had come and gone largely unnoticed in which officials of the Planning Commission were quoted telling the Senate Committee on Planning and Development that “only Chinese investors will be allowed to invest in these SEZs”.

That article drew a sharp response from the Planning Commission and Miftah Ismael, special assistant to the prime minister who is heading the Joint Working Group on Industrial Cooperation, called me to give a lengthy and detailed rebuttal, saying no such exclusivity will be allowed. As a journalist I feel duty-bound to convey the contents of the responses I received, but must also add that these were not the only people who got in touch with me after that article appeared.

So let's start with the government version. The Planning Commission sent a written response saying the article was “concocted and baseless, reported to mislead the masses”. They “condemned such distorted stories, appeared to be part of a campaign to malign the government efforts for development and economic prosperity of Pakistan”.

They claimed that a process to establish SEZs under CPEC had only just begun, and “[i]t is nowhere explicitly stated that only Chinese companies can invest in all SEZ”. Miftah Ismael went a step further, saying he would never acquiesce to such a request if the Chinese ever put one up, emphasising that even the Chinese side has not requested exclusive access.

Fair enough. If the government side wants to stake out such a strong and unequivocal position on such an important matter, their view deserves to be known. But the chairman of the committee, Senator Tahir Mashaddi, continues to strongly say that the government delegation before his committee did indeed say what was attributed to them in the news report, adding that there was even a lengthy discussion on the matter after their remarks. "They often do this," he tells me. "They often back away from things they say during these hearings afterwards". The reporter who covered the hearing also strongly stands by what he reported, saying that he definitely heard the delegation say what was attributed to them.

So let's get past this verbal impasse. If the government wants to today strongly emphasise that they will not negotiate exclusivity for Chinese investors in these SEZs, let's take them at their word. After all, with time all will become clear, although hopefully by then it will not be too late.

The thing is, this is Pakistan, and the age-old adage that used to be said about the game of poker applies very well here: look around the table, if you can't figure out who the sucker is, it's you. In this country, the rules of the game are rigged long before they have been written down. Winners and losers are preselected before the game even begins. So what will really happen once these SEZs are ready is something that will only be known by its effects, not by the rules negotiated by any working group.

The point to note is this: thus far the country's CPEC conversation has revolved around the question of routes, which province is receiving the largest share of the investment, and the financial terms on which this investment is coming in. But now it is moving into a new area: land.

Land is what this country is fundamentally about. Land is where the rubber meets the road. In my last column I gave the example of Sri Lanka, where things went wrong in a couple of large projects and their debts proved too burdensome for that country's economy to manage. The penalty that Sri Lanka had to pay was land, swapped along with operational control of the port, in exchange for the debt that they could no longer service.

Since then I have learned that such examples are numerous. Tajikistan gorged itself on Chinese investment with much fanfare more than a decade ago. There too the arrival of the Chinese was hailed as a 'game changer' when the enterprise got under way. By 2009 or so, they had difficulty meeting their debt-service obligations. So they asked for some relief from the burdensome terms.

And you know what they had to give up in exchange for this relief? Land.

In 2011, the government of Tajikistan announced that they had just concluded a deal with the government of China, ceding control of 1,100 square kilometres of mountainous land to the Chinese under the garb of settling a centuries-old border dispute. The agreement had been reached in 1999, but finalised precisely at a time when Tajikistan's debt difficulties began. The territory represents one per cent of the country's total land area.

At the time, more than a third of the country's total external debt was owed to China. By 2010, the year before the land deal, some 82,000 Chinese were working in Tajikistan, up from less than half that in 2007. The land that was ceded is now being tilled by Chinese farmers.

We have much to learn from Central Asia's experience where Chinese investment has played a very positive role in building infrastructure. But the authoritarian nature of the regimes there meant very

little of the growing collaboration was done with any transparency, and once the costs of the deals began to assert themselves, one of the instruments of settlement was land.

So now that Pakistan and China are at the ‘inception stage’ of a process to negotiate the creation of SEZs, and their associated infrastructure and raw material requirements, it is worth bearing in mind that the game is becoming very serious indeed. Nothing summons up the animal instincts of our economy quite like land does, and now that a party as large as the Chinese government is poised to enter that field, extreme care must be taken. Let nothing be agreed to in the dark.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322243>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 13TH TO MARCH 19TH 2017
GOVT RETRIEVED 60,000 ACRES FROM LAND GRABBERS, SAYS IMRAN
Dawn, March 16th, 2017

BANNU/LAKKI MARWAT: Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chairman Imran Khan has said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has planted 800 million saplings as part of the billion tree tsunami project launched in the province last year to counter the threats of global warming and promote local economy through preservation of forests.

“Our government has retrieved 60,000 acres of official land from the illegal occupants and has preserved forests. We have also rid the forests of the timber mafia the benefits of which will go to our next generations,” Imran told reporters at Bharti Machankhel area of Bannu and Tortala village in Lakki Marwat on Wednesday. He was there in connection with launch of tree plantation drives.

Mr Khan said the tree plantation programme would make the environment clean and ensure better health of people. He said the provincial government had been taking to task those who tried to cut forests illegally to preserve trees for the safe future of people.

It was the biggest ever programme in the country which seeks to plant one billion trees in the province, he claimed.

“The project also employed 500,000 people, thus contributing to economic revival and development of the province,” Imran said.

The PTI chairman asked for immediate merger of Fata with KP and said the latter lagged behind from other provinces in development. The tribal population has suffered in the past because they lacked voice in the KP Assembly, he added.

Our party fully supports merger of Fata with KP, he said, and added: “Our struggle for making Fata part of KP will continue because we believe it would lead to prosperity of the tribesmen who have suffered in the past.”

After merger, the tribal people will get representation also in the KP assembly where they could highlight their problems, Imran said.

He said politics of Maulana Fazl Rehman had become story of the past and said he couldn't befool the tribal people anymore.

The PTI government, he said had brought improvement in police, health and education sectors.

The PTI chief was given briefing about the plantation sites established under the billion tree project in Lakki Marwat district.

Imran said Pakistan ranked 7th among the world countries vulnerable to climate change and global warming as a result of rapid melting of glaciers, and called for efforts to make the environment free from pollution.

“Our prime focus is to increase timberlands under the project as our future is linked to it and it will help reduce global warming,” he stressed.

He said Shaikh Badin (a mountainous top located on the border between Lakki Marwat and DI Khan districts) had been declared a national park and it would be converted into a holiday resort to promote tourism in southern districts.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1320819>

LAND DISPUTE CLAIMS WOMAN'S LIFE

Dawn, March 19th, 2017

MANSEHRA: A woman was killed and another sustained critical injuries when two tribes exchanged fire in Harban area of Upper Kohistan district on Saturday.

The firing incident took place between Sheen and Kameen tribes over a land dispute. The dead and injured woman, according to locals, belonged to Kameen tribe.

The police after lodging FIR started investigation to arrest the accused who managed to escape following the incident.

Meanwhile, seven people sustained injuries when a passenger van collided head-on with an oil tanker in Gandian area of the district.

The injured were taken to the King Abdullah Teaching Hospital.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1321475>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 27TH TO MARCH 5TH 2017

PSM LAND ALLOCATED FOR INDUSTRIAL PARK UNDER CPEC

Dawn, February 27th, 2017

Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: Pending a strategic decision on its privatisation, Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) continues to lose its land — this time to an industrial park to be set up under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

A government official told Dawn that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had approved allocation of 1,500 acres of PSM land for the industrial park. The prime minister has “desired that it (matter) may be taken up with the Privatisation Commission and Board of Directors of PSM,” said an order issued by the industries and production ministry.

The ministry said the land was originally meant for investment as per PSM book of accounts and could be utilised for development of an industrial park under the CPEC. “In order to finalise the

modalities regarding establishment of the industrial park, the matter may please be placed before the (PSM) board,” the order said. The Privatisation Commission was asked to work out to facilitate the earmarked piece of land for setting up the industrial park.

Interestingly, the PSM board has been incomplete and without a chairman since the PML-N came to power in 2013.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar had given an undertaking to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Aug 19, 2013, that the government would appoint a professional board immediately with inductions from the private sector.

But the board was never reconstituted with 12 members and instead it continued to have two members from the industries and production ministry and one each from the Privatisation Commission and the finance ministry. The only private sector member on the board is a former executive of the PSM.

Partly because of its incompleteness, neither the PSM board nor its parent industries and production ministry has so far proposed privatisation of the country’s largest industrial unit, where the rot set in after 2007, taking it from a profit of Rs10.4 billion on June 30, 2008, to a loss of Rs26bn on June 30, 2009.

Then prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani had ordered sacking of the PSM chief on the floor of the National Assembly over allegations of corruption. He ordered an investigation by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA).

Nevertheless, the total losses and liabilities of the unit reached Rs200bn by the time the Pakistan Peoples Party government completed its five-year term in 2013.

The PML-N dissolved the PSM board and promised to restructure and revive the mill for ultimate privatisation.

This never happened, but the total losses and liabilities reached Rs415bn by December last year and are still counting.

The PSM has been continuously losing its land to various institutions, private investors and politically backed encroachers. The Sindh Board of Revenue is reported to have reclaimed about 1,770 acres of land from encroachers during the PPP tenure, but leased out a major part to investors at times at a rate as low as Re1 per square yard a year for 99 years, while some other parts were again encroached upon by land mafia and sold out to individuals.

Another 157 acres of land was recently leased out to the Port Qasim Authority for Rs9.3 million per acre, even though the Privatisation Commission had estimated the rate at Rs30m per acre. This piece of land is to be used for handling imported coal for the Sahiwal power project.

The Shaukat Aziz government failed to privatise the PSM in 2005-06 due to intervention by the Supreme Court. However, Mr Aziz approved allocation of about 930 acres of land for the National Industrial Park on lease, but the PSM could not recover the lease amount.

Another 220-acre plot was given to Al Tuwairqi Steel, which pledged it with the National Bank of Pakistan and subsequently left the scene.

Dissatisfied with the FIA investigation, the SC transferred the case to the National Accountability Bureau in May 2012 with a deadline to complete the probe in three months, but its progress is still unknown.

Parliamentary committees, government stakeholders and investigation agencies have been discussing the PSM mismanagement and corruption during all this period.

Interestingly, the PSM was given a target for revival with Rs18.5bn fresh public money to achieve 70 per cent capacity utilisation in about a year, but was deprived of full gas pressure when capacity utilisation reached 65pc with a gap of a few months in June 2015 and has been on zero production since.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1317283>

THARI VILLAGERS FIGHT TO PREVENT STATE ACQUISITION OF ANCESTRAL LAND
Dawn, February 28th, 2017

Zofeen T. Ebrahim

KARACHI: Amid the din of the excavating machines and the rumble of dumpers removing and hauling tonnes of earth, the voice of indigenous communities in Sindh has been drowned out.

Nabi Bux, a resident of Sehri Dars in the province's Thar desert, can attest as much.

His village, roughly 400km from Karachi, has been acquired by the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) and, as a result, he and about 1,800 fellow residents are to be relocated 25km away.

“Engro is making brand new homes for us, but the spiritual attachment we have to our ancestral land is lost to them,” he says. “Nor can you put a price tag to it.”

The Sindh government is backing the project, under which the villagers were coerced into selling their land in the “greater national interest”. Official estimates suggest there are 175bn tonnes of lignite coal reserves beneath the 9,000 sq km stretch of land — enough to last “400 years”, according to Federal Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal — and the villagers were promised that the sale would bring personal as well as national prosperity.

“Our elders had predicted the day would come when we'd be asked to move out,” says Dars. Serious power shortages have crippled industry — in summer, Pakistan faces a shortfall of more than 6,000MW — and many see coal as the only resource that can save the country from total darkness.

Last month, during the signing of an agreement with China for a power generation project, the electricity went off twice, plunging the conference hall into darkness for a few minutes.

The agreement papers were reviewed using mobile phone torches.

Many are alarmed by Pakistan's insistence on turning to coal, however. Among them is Dr Abid Suleri, executive director of the Islamabad-based Sustainable Development Policy Institute, who likens the approach to “investing in an old gramophone”.

Suleri believes coal cannot be exploited if the global temperature rise is to remain below two degrees Celsius. “Pakistan had signed and ratified climate declarations in Paris and Morocco — what of them?” he asks.

If Pakistan has to invest in coal, says Suleri, it must also invest in renewables. “We should not put ourselves in the absolute either/or situation, but adopt a more flexible one, dabbling in a good mix.”

Suleri feels that, were there a need for Pakistan to stop using coal overnight, the country should be able to cope without difficulty.

Yet for people living close to the dumping site in Sehri Dars, it is living with coal rather than living without it that is the problem.

“The entire village ... our homes, utensils, clothes, trees, you name it ... everything is covered with a thick sheet of dust due to the digging and the dumping of soil,” says Bux.

“I shudder to think what will happen in June when strong gusts blow.”
The relocation will not start before 2018, says SECMC.

The villagers of Sehri Dars may have acquiesced, but people in the 12 villages around Gorano have not; they feel cheated. They have been holding a sit-in outside the press club in Islamkot, an adjoining town, for more than 100 days in protest at the construction of a reservoir in Gorano which began in May last year.

The reservoir will store about 30 to 35 cusecs [a unit of flow equal to one cubic foot per second] of effluent from the coal mine over the next three years.

“When we found out that the water will carry 5,000 ppm [parts per million] for the total dissolved solids (TDS) we got really worried,” says Lakshman Dharmu.

“In less than three years, our sweet water wells will become poisonous, rendering our land unfit either for cultivation or grazing because this water will seep and affect the groundwater,” says Dharmu. There are 30 such wells.

A spokesman from the mining company says it would take 14 years for any damage to occur to land within a 1km radius. The company will not use the reservoir for more than three years.

The villagers also filed a complaint in the high court in June saying that the company acquired land invoking certain sections of the Land Acquisition Act of 1894, which allows the mining authority to acquire land but only after seeking permission from the landowner.

“But we never granted them permission,” says Leela Ram Manjiani, a local resident who is a lawyer and is representing the villagers. He said they were not even told.

While the protest continues, the coal company is busy buying land from villagers who are willing to sell. The rest, says Mohsin Babbar of the SECMC, is government land for which they already have permission.

“Of the total 532 acres, we have bought 250 acres of land from the locals; 700 acres is government land that we have permission to use. That just leaves 282 or so acres that remains disputed. We have offered them about 300 acres of pasture land not very far from where they are right now but they are not accepting this compensation,” says Babbar.

The villagers do not have papers to prove it's their land. “And those who do still have it in the names of their forefathers. To get the land transferred to their name requires a lot of money which they don't have,” says Manjiani.

“On the one side the locals are uneducated, belong to a religious minority and do not really have a voice and on the other side is a powerful entity,” says Suleri, who fears this will give the state an upper hand and the infractions of the mining company will be ignored by the state which is fully supporting the project and marginalise the indigenous people.

“We will not back off, we will go to the Supreme Court,” says Manjiani, adding: “We have full faith in the courts.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1317373>

CIVIL SOCIETY CONCERNED ABOUT URBAN EXPANSION ON AGRICULTURAL LAND The Express Tribune, 5 March 2017

HYDERABAD: Civil society organisations engaged in urban and rural development projects have warned of food insecurity as more and more farmland comes under industrial, commercial and residential use.

At a consultative workshop at the Strengthening Participatory Organisation's (SPO) office in Hyderabad, the participants emphasised on preparing a holistic urbanisation policy to reduce effects of the process on agriculture.

Organised by the Sindh Community Foundation, the workshop also highlighted the pitfalls of unplanned urbanisation with reference to Hyderabad.

“An effective land use policy [at the government level] to regulate the unplanned conversion of land is required,” said Prof Ismail Kumbhar of Sindh Agriculture University, Tandojam, who has contributed research on water, food sources, disaster risk reduction and impacts of climate change.

He and other participants pointed out that Hyderabad is among the cities in Sindh where rural agricultural land is continuously being converted for other purposes, thereby reducing the city's agricultural production.

The city is located on the left bank of the Indus river and three canals springing from the Kotri Barrage pass through it. Yet among four talukas in the district, three have become almost non-agricultural.

The participants also underlined the problem of food safety and demanded that the government establish food safety authorities at federal, provincial and district levels. “Up to now there is

practically no government regulatory authority to maintain a check on what the people are being given to eat,” observed Prof Kumbar.

SPO’s regional head Mustafa Baloch spoke about a lack of monitoring of high-rises and the housing industry in Hyderabad. “The result may be disastrous,” he warned, referring to the environmental and disaster risk mitigation factors.

“Builders and developers do not include as essentials in housing projects such as the basic facilities of water supply, sanitation, electricity and waste disposal,” remarked Mustafa Meerani of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum. He said the economy of Sindh depends on agriculture.

Representatives of the Health and Nutrition Development Society, Sindh Hari Porhyat Council, Fast Rural Development Programme, Indus Rural Development Organisation, Sindh Agricultural and Forestry Workers Coordinating Organisation, Sindh Development Society, Society for Protection of Rights of Child, Management Development Foundation, Institute of Social Change and others took part in the discussion.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1346179/voicing-concerns-civil-society-concerned-urban-expansion-agricultural-land/>

April 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 17TH TO APRIL 23RD 2017

KARACHI’S 13M PEOPLE LIVE ON 23PC OF RESIDENTIAL LAND, MOOT TOLD

Dawn, April 17th, 2017

Hasan Mansoor

KARACHI: Participants in a meeting on urban narrative — Karachi calling — were on Sunday informed that Karachi was among the three cities of South Asian with Mumbai and Dhaka regarded as the dense cities of the world where 62 per cent (about 13 million) of its citizens lived in informal settlements on 23pc of the city’s residential land.

“Karachi is among the dense cities where urban issues are ever increasing,” said architect and planner Arif Hasan while speaking at the two-day programme organised by the IBA Literary Society at the Arts Council.

He said 36pc (about 7.5 million) of Karachiites lived in ‘planned’ settlements on 77pc of the city’s residential plots. “At present Karachi has over 250,000 vacant developed plots and over 68,000 apartments. An additional 600,000 plots are being developed and/or constructed by the formal sector. None of this new development is for low income groups.”

Mr Hasan said 71.32pc people lived on less than 100 square yard plots; 24.27pc on 100-120 sq yds; three per cent on 120-240 sq yds, and 1.47pc lived above 240 square yard plots.

He said people invariably preferred houses to apartments and would like their settlements to be upgraded. This was acceptable to the state till the early part of 2000. However, governments wished to

bulldoze the settlements and create medium-size apartment blocks by providing land to developers. “The government’s reasoning is that in apartments you can get higher densities and that they give the city a ‘modern look’. Communities view is that they cannot carry out any economic activity in apartments and have problems in organising and financing collective management.”

He said individual house option could provide higher densities than permitted (1,625 persons per hectare) by the Karachi building bylaws and zoning regulations.

Regarding the world class city agenda and evictions, Mr Hasan said evictions had increased substantially. Between 1998 and 2008, 18.59 million persons had been evicted; and currently, 15 million annually.

The causes of evictions included gentrification, mega projects (mainly roads), mega events, and discrimination. “All studies show that as a result of eviction and relocation the affected population became poorer in social, political and economic terms with a negative impact on their future generations. The global slum population was 863 million in 2010 as compared to 650m in 1990.

He spoke at length on the city’s transport problems, saying some 35.3pc commuters spent 41 to 60 minutes on way while commuting to work; 13.3pc 18 to 19 minutes and waiting time at bus stops was five to 20 minutes.

Besides, 54pc said they regularly had disputes on fares; 60pc blamed it on the footrest; 60pc claimed they had been robbed once or more during travel; 79.3pc considered the CNG cylinder within the bus as a safety hazard; 82pc believed a better transport system would increase their options for job opportunities; 86pc felt that there was a need to increase seating for women as a number of them walked long distances to save on bus fare; when they were late due to delays in catching a bus they got scolded and there were salary deductions; transport availability and not job appropriateness determined job preference and they felt insecure while travelling and regularly faced some form of sexual harassment.

“Inadequate and unreliable transport and housing locations are a major source of poverty. Despite investment in expensive mass transit projects, these cater to only 4.8pc of commuting public in Delhi, six per cent in Bangkok and 8.7pc in Karachi.”

Writer, and researcher Akhtar Balouch spoke on the communities, Jews in particular, who migrated from Karachi because of decreasing space for them after Partition.

He said the newly formed nation decided to change names of buildings and streets named after the people who participated in development of Karachi city. Same happened with the monuments and streets related to prominent people from non-Muslim communities.

He said there was a roundabout named Abraham Chowk, which was renamed Ibrahim Chowk, and later Cheel Chowk, in Lyari. “Interestingly, when the roundabout was developed by the authorities they placed a monumental ‘Shaheen’ of Allama Iqbal at the centre, which was recognised as cheel [kite] by common citizens.”

Similarly, in Ranchhore Line there was a Synagogue Street, which was ‘converted’ to Sharif Shaheed Street.

“Feeling the space in society shrinking for them, the Jews started to migrate to other countries, especially to Israel.”

He gave various references terming the community a peaceful educated and professional. He said there was a (Bani Israil Trust) Magain Shalom Synagogue, a famous building, still remembered by old residents of the area. Now, he added, the building was replaced by a shopping centre.

“The last trustee of the building was a Jew woman, Reshel Joseph, who agreed for construction of a new building with a shopping centre on its ground floor and a new Jew temple on the upper floors. However, later the upper floors were converted into residential area. We found that Reshel had been in contact with a few journalists and lawyers till 2007. According to our information, she also left the country.”

Amir Farooqi, deputy inspector general of the counterterrorism department of Sindh, spoke on the policing extremism in which he took the example of Saad Aziz, who is convicted for attacking a bus in Safoora Chowrangi and the murder of Sabeen Mahmud.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1327444/karachis-13m-people-live-on-23pc-of-residential-land-moot-told>

SIX-MONTH BAN ON LAND ALLOTMENT IN G-B

The Express Tribune, April 19th, 2017.

Noting that establishing industries was key for burgeoning economic activity in the region, Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman on Wednesday announced special incentives for investors.

A six-month ban on allotment of land in the region was also announced.

Rehman said this while chairing a meeting of the G-B Board of Investment (BoI) in Gilgit on Wednesday.

With one eye on the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor(CPEC), Rehman explained that the BoI had been established to project opportunities to investors in the region.

The G-B chief minister, who also heads the investment body, said that once industries are set up in the region it would bring with it an increased demand for power and hence a need for setting up more independent power producers (IPPs) in the region.

Noting that the region had vast opportunities for investment and business, he said the newly formed BoI would help facilitate exploit these opportunities.

Apart from fostering industrial and business opportunities, Rehman said that G-B residents would be sent abroad so that they can earn foreign exchange. Once remitted, this money would help develop the region.

The G-B chief minister lamented that previous governments had spent millions on organising investment conferences but these had yielded few results. However, Rehman stated that the government was devising a new, more effective investment policy.

In this regard, he said that the G-B BoI would take the local chamber of commerce on board to formulate this policy.

Curiously, the chief minister stated that the board would be an independent institution even though he is the chairman of the body and it would remain tied to the Chief Minister's Secretariat.

Rehman said that the first ever Land Reforms Commission of the region had been established which had recommended a temporary ban on allotment of land in the region. Following the commission's recommendations, a six-month ban had been imposed.

He added that the first industrial zone of G-B would be made functional while they would inject Rs13 billion into the agricultural sector.

To encourage youngsters to start their own businesses, Rehman said they would offer interest-free loans under the CM's loan scheme. Moreover, the youth would be offered loans of up to Rs800,000 would be offered under the PM's loan scheme.

The BoI chairman also announced to develop the tourist-oriented infrastructure in the region to help increase revenue from that sector.

"The G-B government wants to make the region independent and self-sufficient," the CM added.

Meanwhile, in a meeting of the board of directors of the G-B Rural Sports Programme (GBRSP), Rehman announced that an agreement would be signed with the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) for rehabilitating people affected by the Diamer-Bhasha Dam.

The meeting also decided to include G-B Legislative Assembly Member Imran Nadeem on GBRSP's board.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1388474/six-month-ban-land-allotment-g-b/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 10TH TO APRIL 16TH 2017

PROTESTING VILLAGERS REJECT FRESH OLIVE BRANCH OFFERED TO AGREE ON
GORANO RESERVOIR

Dawn, April 11th, 2017

Hanif Samoon

Mithi: Residents of Gorano and about a dozen other Thar villages protesting against the construction of a reservoir meant for temporarily storing mine effluent have rejected the fresh move to conduct a survey of the site and an offer to pay compensation to the people who had not been paid due compensation for their lands earlier.

The reservoir — to be spread over an area of 1,500 acres — had become controversial ever since the construction work on its site was started several months ago, with the residents of Gorano and other villages expressing their fear that the effluent to be stored in it would destroy their arable lands and

the environment, besides causing heavy damage to the desert region's ecology. The villagers also fear the spread of diseases badly affecting human and animal health.

After many abortive attempts over the past five months to allay the villagers' apprehensions, the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) that is executing the project, on Monday came out with an offer to pay suitable compensation to those who had not been paid the cost of their lands, to be used in the project, for not having proper documents.

Top executives of the firm, along with Tharparkar district revenue officials, told villagers present on Monday at the site that they were starting a survey of the lands to be used for the construction of the reservoir and that the leftover landowners would also get suitable compensation.

The survey team comprised Islamkot Assistant Commissioner Shakeel Khan along with his subordinate officials and SECMC executives Fayyaz Soomro, Mohsin Babar, Haris Siddiqui and others.

They held a meeting with the residents of Gorano and other villages including petitioner Lakho Bheel who has filed a suit in the Sindh High Court against the reservoir. Local government representatives of the area were also present.

A press statement issued by the firm said that experts from the revenue department at Mirpurkhas including Aijaz Leghari and Haris Khan would encamp in Gorano village to help allay apprehensions of the villagers and facilitate the process of compensation. It said the affected villagers would be able to visit and file claims for compensation at the two-week camp.

However, advocate Bheemraj, Lakho Bheel, Abdul Hameed and other activists spearheading a campaign against the project for more than five months told Dawn that the fresh move by the revenue officials and SECMC executives was prompted by their failure in satisfying the SHC, which had sought a report of the survey supposed to be conducted before executing any such project.

"They are now making desperate attempts to woo the protesting villagers because the mandatory survey had never been carried out," said advocate Bheemraj.

He said that in the Monday meeting, the visiting team was asked to produce a map or layout plan of the reservoir so that it could be established that the reservoir would be restricted to just 1,500 acres.

Advocate Leela Ram termed the fresh move an eyewash and "fraud" with the villagers. He said the fresh offers came when they failed to satisfy court during the previous proceedings.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1326182/protesting-villagers-reject-fresh-olive-branch-offered-to-agree-on-gorano-reservoir>

'UNESCO CONCERNED OVER ORANGE LINE THREAT TO SHALIMAR GARDENS'

Dawn, April 14th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Human rights activist Asma Jahangir on Thursday told the Supreme Court that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) had expressed concern that the Orange Line Metro Train could pose a threat to the Shalimar Gardens, a world heritage site.

“[Unesco’s] World Heritage Committee, in its 40th session in 2016, had expressed serious concern about the development of the Orange Line and had requested the government to prepare a visual impact study before pursuing work on the Orange Line associated with the Shalimar Gardens,” the counsel told a five-judge SC bench.

Headed by Justice Ejaz Afzal, the bench is hearing identical petitions filed by the Punjab government, Lahore Development Authority, Punjab Mass Transit Authority and Nespak, challenging the Lahore High Court’s suspension of construction work on the Orange Line project within 200 feet of 11 heritage sites.

The order came on a petition filed by architect and civil society activist Kamil Khan Mumtaz.

The heritage sites include the Shalimar Gardens, Gulabi Bagh Gateway, Buddhu ka Awa, Chauburji, Zebunnisa’s Tomb, Lakshmi Building, General Post Office, Aiwan-i-Auqaf, Supreme Court’s Lahore registry, St Andrews Presbyterian Church on Nabha Road and Baba Mauj Darya Bukhari’s shrine.

On Friday, Advocate Azhar Siddiq will argue on behalf of the Civil Society Network, after which the petitioners will be allowed to rebut, and possibly, wrap up the same day.

Earlier, referring to the Unesco meeting on July 16 last year, Ms Jahangir reminded the court that the meeting also had asked the government to submit a heritage impact assessment for all proposed projects that might have an impact on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Shalimar Gardens, prior to the approval of the project.

The OUV describes the criteria used to place sites on the UN’s World Heritage List. Currently, 962 properties are “recognised by the global community as having special significance which needs to be protected for future generations to enjoy”.

The committee had asked the government to invite a joint World Heritage Centre-International Council on Monuments and Sites (Icomos) monitoring mission to the Shalimar Gardens to examine the Orange Line project so it could review arrangements for the management and protection of the site and hold discussions with the government, but the mission has not yet reached Pakistan.

“They (the mission) will not be coming to stage a demonstration, but rather to suggest solutions to save the heritage site because they have the expertise,” the counsel argued.

The Unesco meeting had also sought an updated report on the state of conservation of the Shalimar Gardens, to be examined by the committee in its next session in 2017 to consider whether there was any potential danger to its OUV.

The same team, in 2012, regretted the accidental destruction of two of the three hydraulic works and walls of the Shalimar Gardens in 1999, when the Grand Trunk Road was being widened, contending that this significantly marred the integrity of the site.

“Does this not worry the elected representatives of the province?” Ms Jahangir wondered. She then cited a judgement of the high court of New Delhi, which held that the city should integrate its elegant past and modern developments into an organic whole by the fusion of cultural and architecture heritage with modern developments.

“If it loses its heritage, Delhi loses its soul. There has to be sustainable development,” the judgement had observed. The counsel emphasised this when she contended: “Lahore should not lose its soul.”

The counsel also cited a 2015 Sindh High Court judgement where the illegal allotment of 100 acres of land of the Kali Mai Temple for a housing scheme was cancelled, even though the site was not included in a list of archaeological sites.

Recalling the 2001 destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues in Afghanistan, she said that at the time, people used to ask “why cry for the statues when people were being killed?”. “But the statues were part of world heritage and belonged to all,” she said.

Ms Jahangir regretted that Pakistan had also destroyed the ancient ruins of Harappa — another archaeological site — while laying railway tracks.

Justice Sheikh Azmat Saeed also regretted that many historical buildings in Harappa were demolished to make way for railway lines.

The counsel also highlighted that the second NOC for the Orange Line project was not credible, since it was issued in response to a Nespak report, a consultant which itself was party to the contract.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1326861>

COTTON RESEARCH INSTITUTE LAND ALLOTTED TO SAFE CITY PROJECT

Dawn, April 16th, 2017

Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: The Punjab government has allotted the land of the Central Cotton Research Institute (CCRI) to the safe city project, police station and Dolphin police force buildings in Multan.

The move has triggered severe criticism from farmers who have planned a protest.

The Punjab had leased over 115 acres for the CCRI, to the Pakistan Central Cotton Committee (PCCC) in Multan on April 29, 1979 for 25 years with effect from July 14, 1972. The PCCC is a national organisation with the mandate of improvement and development of the growing, marketing and manufacture of cotton established under the Cotton Cess Act, 1923 (adopted in 1948).

According to a document, the PCCC established the CCRI in Multan to promote agriculture research (cotton sector especially). After ending the lease period, the PCCC wrote to the Punjab government for extension in lease for another 50 years or permanent transfer of this piece of land to its institute.

“Instead of extending the lease period or transferring the land to the CCRI, the Punjab government has allotted 59 kanal to the safe city project, of that four kanal are for the Qutabpur police station and remaining for the building of Dolphin force. Earlier, the government had also allotted 56 kanal to Wapda for a grid station,” reads a letter by Dr Zahid Mehmood, Multan CCRI director, to the government.

“Finally, the prime minister was approached for extension in lease, and he directed (CCRI) to approach the Punjab government for the purpose”.

The letter says the PCCC and federal government have spent a huge amount to make the CCRI a prestigious multidisciplinary institute for research on cotton. The CCRI has developed 23 cotton varieties, production technologies and sand pest management strategies, and helped cotton farmers save and improve their production.

“Due to research at the CCRI, the cotton production increased from three million bales in 1979 to 14.6 million bales now. It is a centre of excellence in Asia as declared by the OIC,” the letter states.

It said the Multan CCRI, which was already facing shortage of land for its experiments, was now left with very small land for research. “Keeping in view the importance of cotton crop in the economy of the country and contribution of the PCCC in cotton research and development, it is requested that the land allotted to the safe city, police station and Dolphin force may kindly be cancelled and transferred back to PCCC/CCRI permanently in the best national interest,” the letter demands.

Pakistan Kissan Ittehad chief Khalid Khokhar told Dawn that the growers would never accept the land transfer.

“In 1992, the production of cotton bales in India was 12.8 million bales and 11 million (weighing 170 to 180kg each) in Pakistan. Today (as per current year’s report), our cotton bales were 10.40 to 10.50 million bales or below with less weight. If we dig further, our bales would be 8.5 million annually keeping in view the numbers and weight,” Mr Khokhar said.

He said India had touched 40 million bales just due to promotion of research. “We also lack cotton support price that must be announced by the government,” he added.

He said the government had also allowed a housing colony at 1,400 acre, allocated for research in Sialkot. “Side by side, the government also continues charging farmers various taxes on fertilisers. If this highhandedness continues, we will hold a protest rally outside parliament in Islamabad on the day of budget for 2017-18 in June,” Mr Khokhar warned.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1327303/cotton-research-institute-land-allotted-to-safe-city-project>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 3 RD TO APRIL 9 TH 2017

SINDH SEEKS LAND IN DHA TO ESTABLISH MUCH-NEEDED FORENSIC LAB

Dawn, April 4th, 2017

Hasan Mansoor

KARACHI: The Sindh government is still awaiting approval from the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) to get a piece of land to establish its all-encompassing forensic lab to improve the capability of prosecution in the criminal justice system, it emerged on Monday.

Officials said the provincial home ministry, after receiving a request from the Sindh police for a 4,000-sq-yd plot of land in DHA, had sent the request to the authorities concerned. The army authorities had assured the chief minister that the request would soon be granted.

It is learnt that the Sindh government had rerouted its earlier plans for establishing its Rs2 billion forensic lab from Jamshoro to Karachi after it was advised that the provincial capital would be more convenient for police authorities where top forensic experts would not hesitate to reside.

This forensic facility, as the Sindh police hope, is extremely important in order to improve the force's capability in detecting and solving criminal cases. It will include major facilities, including DNA testing, ballistics, and an explosives lab etc.

Officials said a re-appropriation order amounting to Rs47.59 million had been issued by the provincial finance ministry vis-a-vis the provincial police's effort to have an effective explosives lab.

They said nomination of two army experts for the procurement committee, however, was still awaited as is the training request for forensic staff.

It is learnt that the revised PC-I for the explosives lab had been submitted along with a PC-I for establishing divisional ballistics labs.

Senior officials of the Sindh police said the force had been trying to establish a state-of-the-art forensic facility in the province for years. However, several hiccups had been witnessed along the way, and they have still not been fully removed.

Improving the forensic facility had been a vital part of the apex committee's agenda. Three months ago, a senior military official had informed Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah that the land required for the project would soon be acquired from the DHA.

"We hope we will get that piece of land soon," said a senior official in the Sindh government.

"It [forensic lab] is required to improve the criminal justice system and prosecute criminals through modern investigation tools. At present it is extremely hard to do this," said a source in the police.

Officials said despite having a modest forensic facility, in cases like the Baldia factory fire, they had to rely on experts from Punjab.

At present, the police largely rely on 'experts' from within their own ranks in their current facility, which was originally called the criminalistic division a few years ago, which has units for digital forensics, audio-visual analysis, chemical samples testing, investigating crime scenes, firearms and ballistics, forensic photography, automated fingerprint identification system and latent fingerprint.

Ballistics cross-matching, which the provincial police are at present capable of conducting at their facility, enables investigators to establish the history of weapons or shells used in a crime. However, the increasing crime rates make it hard for the force to examine every case in minimum possible time.

The Sindh home ministry has recently increased funds for crime investigation by around 38 per cent, which, officials said, was to improve the investigation of heinous crimes and acts of terrorism, as lack of funds had been a primary hindrance in prosecuting suspects.

The budget of the cost of investigation has been increased from Rs264m in the last fiscal year to Rs364m during the current financial year.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1324643>

MOST LAND RECORD CENTRES WORKING AD HOC

The Express Tribune, April 7, 2017

Rana Tanveer

LAHORE: Land record automation – one of the dearest projects of the Punjab chief minister – is working on ad hoc basis as most of the officials at different land record centres (LRCs) across the province have served out their contracts.

As many as 89 assistant directors (ADLRs), the administrative heads of these centres, are functioning on expired contracts for the past one month. More than 457 service centre officials (SCOs), who are also working on term-based contracts, were sacked two days ago on the charges of illegal recruitment.

The first batch of ADLRs of BS-17 joined the Punjab Board of Revenue on March 8, 2013 for three years tenure. Their contracts were revised for one year on March 8, 2016.

Since March 8, these officers are now working without contracts. All their steps are open for appeal at any judicial forum as they currently enjoy no authority to carry on the official work, according to legal experts.

On the other hand, the moral of the officers is also suffering as their fate is hanging in the balance after four years of service.

Requesting anonymity as they are not authorised to speak to the media, some ADLRs told The Express Tribune that termination of hundreds of SCOs had already affected the operations at the LRCs as no replacements had been provided so far. All offices have been overburdened and many visitors are returning home without even being entertained.

Advocate Tipu Salman Makhdoom said without having any justification to function as heads of a public institution, officials could not work with peace of mind. “They even cannot access official records,” he said. “All mutations, land transactions, issuance of ‘fards’ made after April 8 are illegal and unconstitutional. They can be challenged in any court.”

Advocate Makhdoom said it was the right of every contractual employee to be regularised maximum after three years of his service. There are several judgments of the Supreme Court which establish the right of contractual employees to be regularised.

In 36 districts of Punjab, 151 LRCs are functioning. This project of the Punjab government was aimed to rid the society of the reviled patwari culture but it is still depending on patwaris as to verify family trees for inheritance mutation, correction of record, correction of names, demarcation of land and issuance of pass books.

The land record centres are governed by the independent Punjab Land Record Authority (PLRA), which is governed by its board members. MPA Rana Babar Hussain, who heads the board of land record authority, expressed unawareness about the expiry of the contracts of the ADLRs.

He told The Express Tribune a board meeting of PLRA was scheduled for April 13 and he would take up the matter. He added the authority was considering to regularising the ADLRs.

Confirming that 457 SCOs were sacked recently, he said their hiring authority, Maqbool Ahmed Dhawla, former deputy project director of the Project Management Unit (Land Record Management Information System), was also under investigation for these recruitments.

Babar said the SCOs were sacked after the due procedure and after assessment of their working ability.

PLRA Director-General Capt (ret'd) Muhammad Zafar Iqbal said keeping in view the people-friendly policies of the chief minister, all recruitments would be made through a third party in the future.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1376663/staff-without-contract-land-record-centres-working-ad-hoc/>

May 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 29TH TO JUNE 4TH 2017

JIRGA SETTLES LAND DISPUTE

Dawn, May 29, 2017

SUKKUR: A jirga held at Sheranpur near Jacobabad on Sunday imposed a total of Rs10.8 million fine on the group found guilty of murdering four persons and wounding two during a dispute over land.

The jirga chaired by Sardar Abdul Ghafoor Khan Thaheem settled the ongoing dispute between Syed, Thaheem and Qambrani clans over a piece of land which had so far claimed five lives including a father and his son.

The jirga found men working for Syed community guilty of attacking Thaheems and imposed a total of Rs10.8 million fine on them. Besides, it handed over the disputed land to the Thaheems clan after they swore on the holy book that their claim was authentic and they were genuine owners of the land.

Raja Thaheem, his cousin Haq Nawaz, his son Shaman Ali Thaheem and his paternal cousin Sikandar Ali Thaheem were killed in the armed clash between Syed, Thaheem and Qambrani tribesmen in Haji Ahmed Thaheem village within the jurisdiction of Mouladad police station, Jacobabad, on Oct 14, 2016.

Nek Mohammad aka Washloo Qambrani, associated with the Syed group was also killed while Ms Janul Thaheem suffered wounds.

The jirga fixed compensation money for a murder at Rs2 million and fine of a wounded woman at Rs1 million. Thus, it imposed Rs8 million fine for the murder of four men, and Rs1 million for the wounded, Rs300,000 fine on Syed community for registering three fake cases, Rs500,000 for injuring another person and Rs1 million fine for the murder of Nek Mohammad aka Washloo Qambrani who fought on behalf of Syed group.

The jirga also decided that the cases registered by the groups against each other would also be withdrawn.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1335958>

LAND COMPENSATION

Dawn, June 1st, 2017

I.A. Rehman

THE aggressive manner in which land, houses, shops, religious places and heritage sites (listed and unlisted) have been acquired or destroyed for Lahore's Orange Line train project, together with complaints of arbitrary grant of compensation, has underscored the need to lay down fair rules for such transactions.

The instrument for acquiring privately owned land is the Land Acquisition Act of 1894, as amended regularly over the years, especially through an ordinance in 1969.

During the colonial period, land could be acquired for a public purpose or to meet the need of companies (business firms, cooperative societies, and societies registered under the law). The practice has continued although acquisition of land for the benefit of companies has become rare. If the government wishes to give land to a company, charity or society, it may do so out of its own land or make a special request to a friendly owner (such as Pakistan Steel that has offered a large piece of land for the CPEC project).

The law lays down a detailed procedure for identification of the need to acquire land for public purposes, the issuance of a preliminary public notification, the filing of objections and their disposal, the issuance of a declaration about the land to be acquired and for orders to the collector to proceed.

The process includes taking measurements of the land as well as the issuance of public notices, and notices to occupants of the land, entitled persons and parties with known interests. In urgent cases, full compensation is deposited with the collector who is directed to take possession of the land 15 days after the issuance of a notice. In other cases, possession is taken at the conclusion of court proceedings.

The landowner is entitled to compensation according to the market value of the land on the date of the preliminary public notification. Compensation can be paid for any damage caused at the time of handing over possession to crop and trees and for severance from other land.

Compensation can also be given in case of damage to any other moveable/ immovable property. Reduced earnings, expenses incurred because of change of residence or place of business and transfer expenses, or losses resulting from a fall in profit between the period of declaration of acquisition and taking of possession also can be compensated. Additional compensation can be paid if payment of the latter is delayed.

Problems arise if the procedure for notifications and disposal of objections is not duly respected or the landowner is not satisfied with the amount of compensation fixed for land or for other losses. But the state's right to acquire land cannot be challenged. Legal experts maintain that the word 'compensation' is wrongly used for land acquired under the Land Acquisition Act. What the

landowners receive is the price of land. Any other payment depends on the discretion of project authorities, and rehabilitation cannot be demanded by right.

How unsatisfactory this process is becomes evident when we take a look at the compensation paid for acquisitions by the government or state agencies (such as Wapda or the National Highway Authority) for projects supported by international organisations such as the World Bank.

While acquiring property for these projects, the authorities pay compensation not only to title holders but also to unauthorised occupants of land other non-entitled people, including encroachers, that is, everybody who is dislocated is compensated.

The package for people affected by the building of high-tension transmission lines and towers, grid stations and feeder lines includes, besides the price of land, compensation for shifting to a

new workplace. The owners of farms over which high-tension transmission lines are stretched also get compensation.

The National Highway Authority also offers a handsome package to the people who are affected by its road-building projects that are backed by the Asian Development Bank. For the Gojra-Shorkot-Khanewal motorway (M-4) project, the land owners get rent at Rs5,000 per month for 20 months, another Rs20,000 per month for three months if livelihood is affected, Rs40,000 for securing a new electricity connection and Rs 10,000 for the transport of household goods.

If a hand pump is shifted to a new location, Rs10,000 is paid. If anybody is asked to abandon his house and he has a piece of land elsewhere the project management will ask a contractor to build a five-room house including a toilet and the boundary wall. The economically vulnerable, that is a person earning Rs20,000 a month can get a livelihood grant of Rs40,000.

Those affected by a World Bank-supported project (the Dasu dam) are even more fortunate. They are paid money for shifting from one place to another, and also for business restoration, and rehabilitation. Those occupying land strips without a legal title to its ownership are also compensated. The rehabilitation plan includes settlement in new villages that will have modern facilities.

Thus, those who are dislocated because of development work, mainly related to infrastructure, are divided into two categories. Those affected by foreign-backed projects are compensated quite generously for both tangible and intangible losses, and compensation is paid to non-entitled affectees too. Those dislocated due to government projects get much less and only title holders benefit. Thus, those affected by the Orange Line train project who did not have title deeds were thrown out of their homes without any compensation.

No elaborate argument is required to prove that dual standards of this kind are unacceptable. The gap between the recipients of proper compensation and those who get little or nothing amounts to discrimination. The whole system is loaded against the poor whose capacity to overcome the effect of dislocation and loss of livelihood is minimal. The state must do whatever is necessary to guarantee equitable compensation to all families that are affected by any kind of development work.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1336610/land-compensation>

MAYOR ASKS ICT FOR POSSESSION OF STATE FOREST LAND

Dawn, June 2nd, 2017

Kashif Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: Mayor Sheikh Anser Aziz has requested the Islamabad Capital Territory administration to get 118 kanals of state and forest land vacated from a private company.

In 2012, 118.4 kanals of Islamabad reserve forest land in Sangjani was given to the Park Line Estate Company on the basis of an allegedly vague demarcation.

After several months, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) challenged the demarcation in 2014 before the collector court.

In 2015, the collector set aside the 2012 demarcation, reverting the land in question to the state. But the company filed an appeal before the same court, and in Sept 2016, the collector ordered a fresh demarcation.

On May 22 this year, the mayor – who is also the CDA chief – directed the Islamabad chief commissioner to direct the company to vacate state land.

“Parkline Estate Company may also be directed to vacate the state land (118-Kanal, 14 Marla) as the previous demarcation of the ICT Revenue staff has been set-aside by the Addl. Collector (Revenue), ICT Islamabad,” read the letter addressed to the chief commissioner.

The letter, available with Dawn, also says that ICT should expedite the process of re-demarcation of the land.

Sources said that the first demarcation was carried out in 2011 and it was established that the land in questions belong to the forest. Then, in 2012, another demarcation was carried out, which decided that the land belongs to the company.

The CDA’s environment directorate, without filing an appeal, handed over the land to the company in 2012 on the directive of then-CDA Chairman Farkhand Iqbal and DG Environment Dr Sulman Sheikh.

Sources said that the then-deputy commissioner Islamabad and CDA’s law directorate – in Jan 2013 – advised the civic agency to file an appeal against the earlier demarcation.

When CDA filed an appeal, it got a decision in its favour in 2015. But the company challenged the 2015 demarcation, which was accepted by the ICT revenue department. Consequently, the collector court of Islamabad ordered another demarcation in Sept 2016, but this has not been carried out so far and the company continues to hold the land.

“We have ordered re-demarcation and we will expedite the process,” said Rabia Aurangzeb, additional deputy commissioner for revenue.

But perturbed by the non-compliance with the 2015 decision in the matter, the CDA chief wrote to chief commissioner.

“In compliance the orders passed by the learned court of collector, Islamabad dated 29-9-2016, the committee of the officers/staff of ICT revenue, CDA Lands and Planning Directorate, Punjab Forest Department and Survey of Pakistan was constituted to complete the re-demarcation of the subject land as the previous demarcation carried out of by the ICT revenue dated 19-04-2012 has been set-aside. It is to inform that after a lapse of considerable time, the ICT revenue department has taken no action for the re-demarcation of the subject land,” the letter said.

It requested that the assistant commissioner (Rural) should fix a date and time convenient for all stake holders and remain present at site along with relevant revenue staff to conduct re-demarcation, as directed by court of Additional Collector, ICT, Islamabad and intimate the same to director environment for further coordination.

A couple of years ago, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) also started a probe in the matter, but its outcome is yet to be made public. Sources in the CDA say that statements of some CDA officials, including Environment director general, were also recorded, but there has been no outcome so far.

The land was originally owned by the government of Punjab, which had objected to the handing over of the land to a private company without its permission.

“I don’t want to implicate myself in a political controversy. I don’t know which politician owns the company, I simply know that state land is under their illegal occupation on the basis of a vague demarcation, which has been set aside,” Mayor Anser Aziz told Dawn.

Sources said that at the time the land was transferred to the company, PPP leader Faisal Sakhi Butt was calling the shots in CDA.

Media reports linked former president Asif Ali Zardari to the Park Line Estate Company when it was given possession of the land in 2012.

However, PPP spokesman Farhatullah Babar told Dawn that, at the moment, he could not recall the company or those media reports. “I would just say that, in the past, the name of Asif Ali Zardari was maligned in many cases, but at the end of the day he was acquitted in all the cases,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1336916>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 22ND TO MAY 28TH 2017

VIRUS ATTACK: LAND RECORD SERVICES SUSPENDED IN PUNJAB

Dawn, May 22nd, 2017

Waseem Ashraf Butt

GUJRAT: Computerised land record services across the province have been suspended since Saturday after virus attack corrupted the software of the Punjab Land Records Authority (PLRA).

The Computerized Land Record Centers (CLRCs) at 143 tehsils remained open on Sunday on the direction of the PLRA management since the concerned officials were striving hard to resolve the issue.

The management said it might seek the help of the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) officials. The PLRA maintains the record of over 55 million holdings, mainly of farmers.

Sources said the virus 'RANSOME' had corrupted the software called the Land Record Management and Information System (LRMIS) and its computers at more than a dozen record centers in Gujrat, Sialkot, Daska, Pasrur, Chunian, Malakwal and Faisalabad. They said Faisalabad was the worst hit where the virus had affected the entire data base of the LRMIS.

The district administration in Gujrat had to intervene on Saturday when people protested against the suspension of the services at the CLRCs.

“Someone somewhere used Usb-internet and this was a golden chance for virus and hackers to enter the software as well as computers since LRMIS is a networking-based technology,” said an official of the PLRA.

Some heads of CLRCs and computer experts informed this reporter that LRMIS had no security shield against virus attack. “The only security is that it does not run on internet and hence it is difficult for outer bodies to enter its system.”

Another official said that the management at the PLRA lacked qualified higher staff with updated knowledge of information technology.

He said only four data base administrators were recruited by the PLRA who later assumed managerial posts with high salaries of about Rs 350,000 a month. This was good for them but they did not hold refreshing courses to update IT knowledge of other staff, said another source privy to the matters related to the administration of the PLRA.

He said the same issue was with CLRCs who were not equipped with new updates of IT.

The PLRA has asked the service centre incharges (SCIs) across the province to keep the services suspended even today (Monday).

A senior Officer of PLRA told Dawn the authority had been making all out efforts to rectify the issue as the services of Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) might be hired to rescue the LRMIS from the virus attack.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1334613>

EX-SERVICEMEN CHALLENGE 'ILLEGAL' CONSTRUCTION IN ARMY HOUSING SCHEME
Dawn, May 24th, 2017

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: Senior ex-servicemen on Tuesday challenged the conversion of greenbelts into commercial spaces and residential areas in an army-led residential scheme.

The 10 retired army officers, including two brigadiers, filed a petition with the Lahore High Court (LHC) Rawalpindi bench, alleging that the Askari Colony management working under the director

general housing of the General Headquarters (GHQ), was converting parks and greenbelts into residential and commercial units in Askari 14.

Justice Shahid Waheed of the LHC sought reply from the Askari Colony Management Office (ACMO) by May 29.

The petition also alleged that a foreign company not cleared by intelligence agencies was hired for surveillance and security services in all the housing schemes working under the ACMO.

Say greenbelts in Askari 14 converted into commercial spaces and residential areas in violation of master plan

The petitioners included retired brigadiers Said Nazir, Abdul Razzaq, retired colonel Aurangzeb Safdar, retired lieutenant colonels Arshad Hayat, Sultan Fayyaz Akhtar, retired majors Mohammad Riaz, Abdul Haq, Raja Tahir Jalil, Saeed Amir and Major Attiq Ahmed Kiani.

They cited the federation of Pakistan through the secretary defence, the director general housing GHQ, the ACMO and the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) as respondents.

The petitioners maintained that they were veterans of the army and residents of Askari-14 Adiala Road, Rawalpindi, a project of the GHQ housing directorate with a well thought-out master plan.

“The original master plan of the housing area for 1,100 families consisted parks, playgrounds, mosques and commercial areas. However, at a later stage the authorities concerned altered the master plan all together. In the changed master plan, the main playground was converted into a commercial/residential block, the main mosque shifted from its original central place to the rooftop of the Army Public School and a space reserved for children’s golf course was turned into commercial flats.”

Moreover, the left lane of the double road adjacent to houses connecting sector B and C was broken and digging started for the construction of commercial houses to be sold to the public. And illegal construction also started in the leftover mini-park of Sector A. The newly-constructed commercial houses were not delivered to retired officers whose allotment as per entitlement was due and instead the same were sold to blue-eyed officers through an under-table deal.

“These officers, a majority of whom belong to the housing directorate, after taking over the possession earned millions of rupees through illegal sale in the open market which speak volumes about the malice on part of the authorities concerned.

“Residents protested at this and also took up the matter with GHQ and representation was sent to the then COAS. After the protest, all the illegal construction was immediately stopped, the broken road restored and the residents were assured that the master plan would be adhered.”

The petitioners also said the housing authorities allowed an outsider to establish a service station in the residential area which is otherwise a security risk to the residents and no deal document was shown to the residents.

All of a sudden, a four-storey building was planned in the school playground and children were stopped from entering the ground and illegal construction started there.

After a few days, a jogging track reserved for families was given to some outsider through a secret deal for the construction of a shopping mall.

“In the recent past, in the darkness of night two mini-children parks at Sector-A were destroyed and digging started for the construction of houses.”

In the meanwhile, the residents came to know through a housing directorate letter that a foreign-based company, M/s Ertibatat (Pvt) Ltd, had been hired to provide internet facilities, security and surveillance services in Askari colonies all over the country.

“The company was having business in other countries, including India, and as per the knowledge of petitioners the company was not cleared security wise by MI, ISI, IB and more so Pemra also took serious notice of the fact that how the housing directorate concluded an agreement with a foreign-based company which is not registered in Pakistan.”

The petitioners requested the court to direct the respondents to remove all the construction and encroachments made in the green areas and parks in violation of the master plan.

A complete audit of the housing directorate with regard to Askari-14 may be carried out and contracts/agreements executed by the housing directorate with the foreign company as well as proprietors of the shopping mall and the service station be placed before the court, the petition added.
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1335088/ex-servicemen-challenge-illegal-construction-in-army-housing-scheme>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 15 TH TO MAY 21ST 2017

INTERIOR MINISTRY LOSES INTEREST IN DHA CITY SCAM INQUIRY

Dawn, May 17th, 2017

Zulqernain Tahir

LAHORE: The interior ministry does not seem to be interested in bringing back Kamran Kayani, a brother of former army chief retired Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, from abroad in the Rs15 billion DHA City scam despite the request of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB).

“We had written to the interior ministry early this year seeking issuance of a red warrant for Kamran Kayani and pursuing the case with Interpol to bring him back to the country for his alleged involvement in over Rs15bn DHA City Lahore scam,” a NAB official told Dawn here on Tuesday. He said the interior ministry had not yet initiated the action against the suspect on its request.

The ministry’s ‘silence’ over the matter has even surprised many in NAB. The ministry did not come up with a clear-cut response when Dawn sought its comments on the matter. “I will speak to the officials concerned about Kamran Kayani’s matter and tell you the ministry’s point of view,” Sarfraz Hussain, the interior ministry spokesman, told Dawn. But he did not give the ministry’s version (over the Kayani issue) despite several reminders during the last one week.

A source in NAB said the bureau could not go after Mr Kayani as it was the interior ministry that had to pursue this case. “We fail to understand as to why the interior ministry is not showing interest in this case,” he said.

NAB had already filed a reference against the prime suspect, Hammad Arshad, a relative of a former chief justice of Pakistan, Mr Kayani and others in an accountability court.

NAB also had issued Mr Kayani's arrest warrant after getting him declared a proclaimed offender through the accountability court.

According to sources, NAB determined 'Rs4bn' liability against Mr Kayani in the DHA City scam.

In Jan 2016, NAB arrested Mr Arshad, the owner of Globaco (Pvt) Ltd. The Defence Housing Authority declared Mr Kayani's firm, Elysium Holdings Pakistan, co-accused in the scam.

According to NAB, Globaco signed an agreement with the DHA-EME in Nov 2009, agreeing to develop the DHA City Lahore on a tract measuring 25,000 kanals near Thokar Niaz Beg. The firm managed to purchase only 13,103 kanals of the land, and that too in a scattered form. Mr Arshad collected Rs15.47bn from the public by issuing allotment letters and later transferred the money to his personal accounts.

The accused used the funds for personal gains and invested them in other business ventures.

NAB said that because no meaningful development work was undertaken in the DHA City, the accused cheated the general public and the families of soldiers and martyrs by depriving them of their hard-earned money.

Of the amount received by the main accused from the public, he spent only Rs1.82bn to acquire the 13,103 kanals.

There are more than 11,700 affected persons registered with the DHA, which claims that Globaco — now known as Orange Holding Private Limited, an offshoot of Eden Private Limited — “intentionally kept delaying the project and gave different options for more financial gains”.

Mr Arshad and project director of the DHA City Lahore, retired Brig Khalid Nazir Butt, are in judicial custody. Last week, NAB arrested Murad Arshad, director of Globaco. Murad Arshad was among the major signatories of the controversial agreement between the DHA administration and Globaco Pvt Ltd. He has been on physical remand.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1333613>

BRT LAND ACQUISITION, RESETTLEMENT TO COST RS18.9 BILLION

Dawn, May 19th, 2017

Manzoor Ali

Peshawar: The Peshawar Bus Rapid Transit's land acquisition and resettlement is likely to cost Rs18.9 billion, documents reveal.

The cost estimates are contained in the BRT's Land Acquisition and Resettlement Plan made by the KP planning and development department for the Asian Development Bank.

The plan puts the total land acquisition and resettlement cost for the Rs56 billion project at Rs18.9 billion.

Work on the project is likely to be launched in August this year.

Around 98 per cent of the money, which is estimated to be around Rs16.92 billion, would be spent for land acquisition, while the rest will be used to meet the expenses of compensation and resettlement assistance and 10 per cent contingency.

However, the costs of relocation of public utilities including electricity pylons and poles with transmission lines, transformers, water supply stations, drainage systems and telecommunications infrastructure will not be included in the LARP budget. Instead, they will be part of the BRT budget.

The plan noted that the project is likely to affect 535 households due to the acquisition of 117 kanals of private arable land, demolition of permanent structures of two underpasses on the Grand Trunk Road, four commercial toilets, three kiosks and 12 stores, a horizontal structure of 14 shops, a store room and two mosques.

In addition, the document noted that the project will also impact the livelihood of eight tenants of agriculture land, 86 formal businesses and shopkeepers, 235 informal vendors operating road side micro enterprises, 99 employees of formal businesses, four security guards of underpass markets, and a mosque prayer leader.

It added that all formal and micro businesses need relocation of their businesses.

“The losses will be mitigated by providing compensation for loss of land, crops, wood and fruit trees, structures, provision of alternative shops against loss of commercial structures by leaseholders and resettlement assistance for loss of income and livelihood,” it said.

The LARP said the BRT construction would be restricted to the existing road and available width of the right of way and that there would be no acquisition of private land for the alignment of the main BRT route.

According to it, the bus depot at the western end of city will be constructed on 30 kanals of unused land of sewerage treatment plant located in Hayatabad Phase III and owned by the Peshawar Development Authority, while 31 kanals of government owned land located in the Dabgari Garden area of the city will be acquired for staging station and multi-storeyed car parking facility.

However, 117 kanals of private land would be acquired for the construction of eastern bus depot at the junction of Northern Bypass, GT Road and Motorway (M1) near Chamkani. The Firdous and Hashtangri underpasses situated on the GT Road will be demolished.

The project will restructure the main city transport corridor that links eastern and western parts of the city.

The BRT full alignment starts from Chamkani and it goes along the GT Road at-grade until the junction with Ashraf Road, where it will go into a tunnel connecting both approaches of GT Road, Malik Saad Shaheed Road and Cinema Road.

After the tunnel, the main BRT route follows Cinema Road at-grade where it would become elevated to bypass the junction with Hospital Road. It stays elevated on Khyber Bazaar Road and Railway Road and passes the Soekarno and Suba Chowk, the two most congested intersections in the area.

After the railway road, the elevated BRT section turns right at Saeed Anwar medical center to cross the railway station, where a BRT-only bridge will be constructed.

After crossing the railway station, the BRT goes at-grade again and join Saddar Road just after Peshawar Press Club.

On the preferred alignment, the BRT stays at-grade on Saddar Road, turns right to Khadim Hussain Road and Sir Syed Road to go to Aman Chowk, where the BRT goes on BRT-only tunnel.

The corridor continues through GT Road and Jamrud Road where it goes into an elevated BRT only corridor above a dried-up river bank before the Bab-e-Peshawar Bridge until it joins the Habib Jalib Road towards Tatar Park and joins the Ring Road.

This alignment puts the total length BRT length at 30.8 kilometers of which 26 kilometers will be built in Phase I and five kilometers in Phase II.

Of this, the elevated portion would be around 4.1km along with 3.5km long tunnel, while 31 BRT stations will be constructed with an average distance of 922 meters between two stations.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1334097>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 8TH TO MAY 14TH 2017

LAND RETRIEVED

Dawn, May 8th, 2017

The district administration has demolished as many as 1,187 houses built ‘illegally’ on Sardar Kauray Khan Jatoi land at Jatoi Shumali, Rampur, Shahbazpur, Mauza Jatoi Janobi and Rao areas during the last one week.

Talking to Dawn on Sunday, Deputy Commissioner Saif Anwar Jappa claimed that 700 kanal more land was retrieved from grabbers and “now it has been given to different people on Rs2 million per year lease.”

On Saturday, he said, 6,100 maund wheat was collected from [land grabbers] and sold to the food department while cases were registered against ‘illegal’ occupants.

He said on April 10, the auction of wheat crop on 417 acre land was held. He said the amount was deposited with the treasury. “These funds will be spent on the welfare [health and education] of the Muzaffargarh district.”

The DC said now all land had been retrieved and some area was eroded by the Indus.

Dawn learnt that the Sardar Kauray Khan Jatoi land was [allegedly] misused by the district officials. The Supreme Court has directed the district and sessions judge to hear the case moved by [locals] Muzaffar Ali Maggsi and Syed Mansoor Shah in 1993. Sardar Kauray Khan had been donated 84,000 kanal land for the welfare of the district before the Partition.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1331755>

JOINT SURVEY OF CHAMAN BORDER AREA BEGINS

Dawn, May 9th, 2017

QUETTA: Pakistan and Afghanistan on Monday started a joint survey of the Killi Luqman and Killi Jahangir villages along their border near Chaman following last week's deadly clashes, officials said.

The two sides had on Sunday agreed to conduct a geographical survey of the villages to "remove discrepancies".

The start of the survey coincided with remarks from senior officials of the two countries, reiterating their positions on the incident in which several people on both sides lost their lives.

The clashes occurred on Friday when Afghan forces opened fire on census workers and troops escorting them in two border villages.

Islamabad claimed 50 Afghan troops were killed in retaliatory action, a claim Kabul denies.

Kashif Nabi, a local administrator in Balochistan, said the surveyor teams, which included military officers, arrived in the border villages on Monday and were working "amicably".

The situation is calm but that the border crossing remains closed, he added.

"Officials from both sides launched the survey in the border villages along with experts," a senior security official said, adding the job would be completed in three to four days.

They said that after completion of survey a report would be sent to Islamabad for approval.

Adviser to PM on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz said that neither side "wants any violence between our two countries or any loss of life".

He was addressing a joint press conference in Islamabad with the visiting Foreign Minister of Oman Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Mr Aziz said diplomacy must overcome the "misunderstandings and restore trust," but Afghan forces fired first which necessitated retaliation. After the initial retaliation, he added, other channels have also been employed to deescalate the tension.

He said the two sides agreed to look at the demarcation line in the area.

"I hope in the next couple of days the issue will be resolved through meetings between local commanders as well as at the high-level commanders," he added.

Meanwhile, Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan Omar Zakhilwal said that only two Afghan soldiers were killed and seven others injured in retaliatory action.

“Woke up to celebratory front page headlines today on all Pakistani papers saying Pakistan killed 50 Afghani soldiers and injured 100 in Chaman clash,” Mr Zakhilwal tweeted.

The truth is only two Afghan soldiers were killed and about seven others injured, he added.

On Sunday, Commander Southern Command Lt Gen Aamir Riaz said that 50 Afghan security personnel were killed and another 100 injured as Pakistani forces retaliated to unprovoked firing by Afghan forces. He also said that five Afghan posts were destroyed.

The Afghan envoy slammed the reports, saying, “the Chaman clash left casualties, deaths and injured on Pakistan side too but we, instead of celebrating, called it unfortunate and regrettable”.

He said that the loss of even two lives “are too many if our claim for seeking good neighbourly relations is genuine and if we mean well for each other”.

It should be noted that on Sunday Inspector General Frontier Corps Maj Gen Nadeem Anjum had said: “We are not happy over the human and other losses suffered by the Afghan forces since they are our Muslim brothers.”

He said that on Friday the Afghan government had requested for a ceasefire which Pakistan accepted.

In a related development, China expressed the hope that Pakistan and Afghanistan would address their border issue amicably for the sake of peace and stability.

In reply to a question in Beijing, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said that the “Chinese side had noted relevant report” about the death and injuries to Pakistani citizens due to unprovoked firing in Chaman by the Afghan forces on the security forces assigned census duties.

“As a close neighbour to both Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Chinese side hopes the two sides will properly address the relevant issue,” he added.

Afghanistan refuses to recognise the Durand Line, established more than a century ago when the British Empire controlled much of South Asia, as the international border.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1331919>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 1ST TO MAY 7TH 2017
‘CDA PAID DEVELOPERS 400PC OF LAND VALUE FOR H-17, I-17’
Dawn, May 5th, 2017

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) made an ‘irregular payment’ of Rs575.1 million to Bahria Town and the son of a local politician when purchasing land in sectors H-16 and I-17, according to an audit report submitted to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

According to a report from the auditor general's office, CDA purchased the land from Bahria Town and Usman Nawaz Khokhar between July 2008 and January 2009 at Rs830,000 per kanal, when the land was actually valued between Rs100,000 to 200,000 per kanal.

The audit report claimed that both Bahria Town and Khokhar "purchased the land from the owners at the rate of Rs100,000 and Rs200,000 per kanal, as per [the] record".

However, it said that the land award was fixed by the authorities at Rs830,000 per kanal.

The audit report also points out that an "inquiry was not conducted to fix responsibility against the persons who made huge payment of land compensation to bigwigs".

Auditors recommended the PAC direct CDA's principal accounting officer (PAO) to conduct an inquiry and share the outcome with them.

As per the report, the then-CDA director (land) deliberately failed to implement the policy under which investors could not purchase property in places where the civic authority was set to acquire land for sector development and when the rate of the land had not been notified through an award.

Subsequently, investors were allowed to purchase the land in 2008, whereas the award of land was announced in January 2009.

The audit report said the "mutation/transfer of land in the name of investors was unauthorised".

CDA acquired 3,277 kanals in the Bhadana Kalan revenue estate from the landowners, but "made payment only in respect of 222.13 kanals", which was provided by the housing society and its middleman.

The original owners of the land, it should be noted, are still pursuing compensation-related petitions in the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

The report said that CDA paid Rs541 million to Bahria Town, while Mr Khokhar was just paid Rs34 million.

Retired Colonel Khalilur Rehman, a senior Bahria Town official, told Dawn the housing society would explain its position before the inquiry committee, as and when summoned.

In a related audit para, auditors pointed out that in July 2009, the CDA board banned payments for large land holdings due to a financial crunch.

The para again noted that CDA's then-director (land) made a payment Rs1.25 billion to selected land holders, in violation of the policy.

During a meeting of the departmental account committee (DAC) in March this year, the civic agency explained that payments were made to landowners as per the award announced by land acquisition collectors.

The DAC did not accept CDA's explanation and directed the authority to conduct an inquiry to fix responsibility in this matter.

DG Audit Maqbool Gondal also told the PAC on Thursday that CDA had allowed post-bid changes in the contract agreement for the Centaurus mall to allow for the construction of a 42-storey building instead of the permitted 20-storeys.

He said that if the 42-storey provision had been part of the original bid, the offered rates to bidders would have been different, due to the need for a wider covered space for commercial activities.

The audit report pointed out that the CDA's member for finance had decided on Aug 22, 2007 that the construction of additional storey would be charged at the rate of Rs4,229 per square yard (Rs135.5 million), but that this amount was not collected.

When the PAC inquired about progress from the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), an official said that the investigation into the matter had been closed.

However, Mr Gondal suggested that the PAC could seek the investigation report to ascertain why NAB gave the builder a clean chit.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1331176/cda-paid-developers-400pc-of-land-value-for-h-17-i-17>

June 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 26TH TO JULY 1 ST 2017

'ILLEGAL' HOUSES RAZED TO RETRIEVE RS30M STATE LAND

Dawn, June 26th, 2017

TOBA TEK SINGH: Dozens of houses were razed on Saturday and Sunday in Chak 320-GB, 321-GB, Adda Khan Jawan, C Plot, Bilal Colony and 673/14 GB in Pirmahal by a team of the revenue department.

Tehsildar Manzar Hafeez said all the houses razed had been constructed illegally on state land and demolished on government orders. He claimed that Rs30 million worth of state land had been retrieved in the operation.

Muhammad Ramzan and Abdul Rashid, owners of two houses in Chak 321-GB, told the media that they had been living in their houses for 20 years.

They claimed they were not informed of the operation beforehand as a result of which their valuables worth hundreds of thousands had been destroyed and a number of cattle injured.

They demanded alternative land to reconstruct their houses and compensation for their losses.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1341790/illegal-houses-razed-to-retrieve-rs30m-state-land>

MODEL FARMS FOR CATERING TO HIGH-END FOREIGN MARKETS

Dawn, The Business and Finance Weekly, June 26th, 2017

Amjad Mahmood

PUNJAB has embarked on a project to establish model farms for producing best quality products and enhancing exports, especially to the high-end foreign markets where Pakistani produce having better taste and cosmetic beauty are in high demand, says PC-I of the project.

The plan envisages making 250,000 acres of land (75,000 acres each for citrus, mango and potato and 25,000 acres for other vegetables) compliant to Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). Out of these 40,000 acres, comprising 50 clusters, will be Global GAP certified.

A certification plan is being introduced for farms' compliance with sanitary and phyto-sanitary (SPS) requirements of the international consumer market," says a technical expert affiliated with the government's Rs3.261bn project.

The expert laments that the local supply-based instead of demand-driven farm production system results in low prices of farm products, especially during the peak season, while consumers pay high prices during offseason. "This not only generates low returns to the farmers but also robs the consumers of the required quality and quantity of the produce they pay for."

Development of an intelligent web-based traceability system is also part of the project, and Deputy Secretary Planning, Dr Ghanzanfar, believes the system will act as passport for selected products for entry in the international markets that prefer certified and traceable products.

The PC-I reveals that the owners of the GAP-compliant land will be provided farm machinery at a subsidised rate of Rs2,500 per acre up to a maximum of Rs3m. Likewise, pack houses, processing units, cold storages and common facility centres will be established on 50-50 cost-sharing basis with a cost of Rs15m each unit/facility, it says. Trade will be promoted by participation in world trade fairs, exhibitions, single country shows.

"The GAP compliance and provision of subsidized machinery with improved supply chain will facilitate 30pc increase in farm produce exports as our special focus will be on citrus, mango, potato and vegetables," hopes an official of the agriculture department.

Under the project, capacity of farmers will be built through trainings in GAP and production technologies. Vegetable growers will attend weekly and fruit growers fortnightly classes.

Qasim Aijaz Qureshi, who is engaged in citrus export business, acknowledges the need for GAP certification but is apprehensive about the implementation of the project. "The department had announced launching a similar project a couple of years ago but its implementation could not go beyond holding off and on meetings."

The agriculture department's official says a firm or consortium of firms (Value Chain Technical Assistance Team) with international experience in imparting training and capacity building and market-related activities in horticulture sector will be outsourced to address the project's requirements.

Currently, only 30 mango orchards over 1,757 acres, nine citrus farms over 1,462 acres are presently GAP certified.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1341880>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 19TH TO JUNE 25 TH 2017

SHC STAYS ALLOTMENT OF RESEARCH FARM LAND FOR HOUSING SCHEME

The Express Tribune, 22 June 2017

HYDERABAD: The Sindh High Court (SHC) has stayed the allotment of 78 acres of land for the construction of the Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Township in Mirpurkhas.

The order came on a petition filed by Masood Ahmed Wassan and three others, who prayed to the court that the land is being allegedly illegally handed over for the township.

They claimed that the land in question is part of the 282 acres of land in Hussain Bux Mari taluka, Mirpurkhas, where the Sindh Horticulture Research Institute conducts research and cultivation of different fruits and vegetables.

The petition maintained that the revenue department illegally allotted the land for the 100-acre township. According to them, two weeks ago, the township's management tried occupying the land and chopped down 100 'valuable' mango trees from the orchard.

They claimed that 120 varieties of mangoes have been grown on 70 of the 282 acre land and other fruits on another 37 acres. Further, there is a vegetable research centre on 51 acres and a livestock research centre on 24 acres, they said.

The SHC's division bench of justices Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi and Yousuf Ali Sayeed ordered the Sindh chief secretary, agriculture secretary, land utilisation secretary, senior member of the board of revenue, Mirpurkhas commissioner and other respondents to submit a reply by July 30.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1441462/shc-stays-allotment-research-farm-land-housing-scheme/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 12TH TO JUNE 18 TH 2017

VIRUS ATTACK PROBE: THREE LAND CENTRE INCHARGES SUSPENDED

Dawn, June 12th, 2017

GUJRAT: The Punjab Land Record Authority (PLRA) has suspended from service three incharges of the Computerised Land Record Centres (CLRCs) for negligence in the wake of the virus attack probe.

Some days back, a virus had hit the Land Record Management Information System (LRMIS), causing suspension in the services at the CLRCs across the province.

A PLRA source told Dawn that Bilal Ahmed of Phalia (Mandi Bahauddin), Taimoor Riasat of Pasrur (Sialkot) and Ms. Shumaila were suspended from service. He said suspensions were made following an inquiry into the matter.

Sources said virus 'RANSOME' had corrupted the LRMIS software at more than a dozen land record centres in Gujrat, Sialkot, Daska, Pasrur, Chunian, Malakwal and Faisalabad. They said Faisalabad was the worst hit where the virus had affected the entire data base of the LRMIS.

Meanwhile, the authority has posted the recently recruited land record officers (LROs) to some 93 centres of different tehsils. Of total 143 tehsils, some 50 are still without LROs. Earlier, the LROs had been working at the PLRA headquarters since their recruitment for the last few months.

The department says the LROs were being given departmental training from Feb 2 to June 10, 2017. After completion [of training], they have been posted to different cities that will help improve services at the land record centres.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/amp/1338964>

MAN GUNNED DOWN OVER LAND DISPUTE IN SHER DHAMIAL VILLAGE

The Express Tribune, June 13th, 2017.

A man and his son allegedly killed another man, reportedly over a land dispute, in the Sher Dhamial village near the Naval Anchorage, police said on Monday.

Officials said that Raja Hanif allegedly shot Sajjad Hussain Shah over a property dispute.

Mujahid Hussain Shah, the victim's son, told the Lohi Bher police that Hanif and his son Khalil were trying to illegally occupy Sajjad's land in the village.

On Sunday afternoon, when the suspects were ploughing their land with a tractor Sajjad asked them to stop.

Mujahid said that Khalil, who was apparently incensed over Sajjad's opposition, brought a rifle from his house. However, Hanif grabbed the rifle and shot Sajjad in the head.

As a result, Sajjad died on the spot.

Police said after being alerted to the incident, they found Sajjad's body lying in a pool of blood in the field with a gunshot wound to his head.

However, police has yet to arrest the suspects.

"We are conducting raids and will arrest them [Hanif and his son] soon," a police officer told The Express Tribune.

Meanwhile, police are yet to track down the suspected killers of a property dealer who was shot dead within the remits of Koral police station on Sunday.

Officials said that Khurram Zafar was found dead with gunshot injuries. Police have registered a murder case against unidentified suspects but have made no arrests yet.

A man killed his nephew and injured his brother over a suspected land dispute in the Mohra Chapper village of Gujar Khan on Monday.

Police have arrested the suspected killer Rabnawaz and one of his accomplices. They have also recovered the gun used in the incident.

The victims were rushed to the hospital where the deceased was identified as Awais while the injured was identified as Shahnawaz.

Gujar Khan police station SHO Nadim Zafar, said Shahnawaz and his son Awais were ploughing their lands in the morning when Rabnawaz arrived, brandishing a pistol.

Zafar said that Rabnawaz then indiscriminately shot at his brother and nephew.

As a result, Awais was killed on the spot while Shahnawaz sustained multiple bullet injuries and had to be rushed to a nearby hospital.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1433960/man-gunned-land-dispute-sheer-dhamial-village/>

LAND, FUNDS FOR SU CAMPUSES PLEDGED

Dawn, June 14th, 2017

HYDERABAD: Sindh Chief Secretary Rizwan Memon on Tuesday assured Sindh University (SU) Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Fateh Mohammad Burfat of allotment of land and necessary funds for the varsity's Larkana campus as well as for the approved development schemes pertaining to its other campuses, according to a press release issued by the university.

Prof Burfat, at the head of a delegation comprising pro-vice chancellors of several SU campuses, called on Mr Memon in the latter's office at Sindh Secretariat in Karachi, said the press release.

It said that the chief secretary told the delegation that he would direct the authorities concerned to issue the necessary no-objection certificate (NOC) to the SU for the construction of more classrooms at the Govt Boys' Arts and Commerce College in Larkana. He also assured the vice chancellor that 100 acres of forest land would be reserved for SU's Larkana campus and would be allotted as per the relevant rules.

Regarding the SU Laar campus, the CS said that after allotment of land for it in Badin, release of funds for the already approved schemes pertaining to this campus would be started from next month.

The SU press release quoted the chief secretary as saying that the allotment of land for SU's Larkana, Thatta and Mirpurkhas campuses would be made as per the official policy.

Mr Memon told the delegation that all possible efforts would be made to improve the condition of the campuses in order to bring them at a par with best higher education institutions of the country.

Prof Burfat briefed the chief secretary about the ongoing academic programmes, enrolment, classrooms, laboratories and equipment, hostels and facilities available at various SU campuses and also identified the issues being faced by the university in providing quality education to students.

The pro-vice chancellors accompanying Dr Burfat included Dr Mohammad Siddique Kalhor, Dr Sarfraz Hussain Solangi, Dr Noor Mohammad Jamali, Dr Ghulam Sarwar Gachal and Mohammad Usman Mangi.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1339312>

CDA MAY LIFT BAN ON LAND ALLOTMENT SOON

The Express Tribune, June 14th, 2017.

Shahzad Anwar

ISLAMABAD: The civic authorities in the capital may soon lift the year-long ban on allotment of land, officials stated.

“We are in process of making standard operating procedure (SOP) and a comprehensive policy to avoid irregularities which were carried out while allotting land in the past,” Islamabad Mayor and Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chairman Sheikh Anser Aziz told The Express Tribune, adding that the SOPs are expected to be finalised over the next ten days.

He said that CDA’s estate department would prepare the policy in consultation with the chairman and other stakeholders.

With CDA a subordinate department of the Capital Administration Development Division (CADD), the latter’s State Minister Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry had barred the civic agency’s land department from allotting land in the second week of May last year.

The move came in the wake of receiving a number of complaints from citizens regarding alleged corruption in CDA’s land department.

However, while the ban was lifted by the CADD minister, the CDA continued with the ban.

Aziz explained that the ban on allotting land had been in May 2016, while he took charge as the CDA chairman four months later in September. He added that officials in the civic agency and the CADD minister had huddled over the issue at a meeting last week in which they decided to lift the ban.

He added that previously people affected by corruption in the CDA’s land department used to stage large demonstrations as a protest. Even though evidence of corruption committed by CDA officials was provided, the authority failed to stop some influential officials from partaking in crooked practices.

“The actual impact of this [ban] was being felt by those investors who had purchased allotment files at very low price from eligible and genuine affectees who could not process their files owing to the cumbersome process of allotment and corruption in CDA’s land department,” an official of the authority, who is privy to the internal affairs of the CDA but did not wish to be named, told The Express Tribune.

The official added that there were some parliaments and influential political personalities among the investors who were involved in using arm twisting techniques from the platform of parliamentary panels to pressurise the CDA in order to protect their financial interests.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1434812/cda-may-lift-ban-land-allotment-soon/>

MPS CRITICISE FEDERAL SHARIAT COURT FOR DERAILING LAND REFORMS

Dawn, June 16th, 2017

Kalbe Ali

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Shariat Court (FSC) was criticised during a meeting of a Senate standing committee on Thursday for derailing land reforms in the country.

The committee urged provinces to support efforts for a new law in this regard.

The Senate Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting met for a special hearing by senior lawyer Abid Hassan Manto regarding his case in the Supreme Court for initiating land reforms in the country.

He told the committee that land reforms were derailed after a decision by the Federal Shariat Court in a case popularly known as the Kazalbash Trust Case in 1989, in which it was decided that land reforms were un-Islamic.

PPP Senator Taj Haider said he was in favour of land reforms in the country and said Justice Taqi Usman had even ruled that the breaking up of large land holdings was also un-Islamic.

Mr Manto said he had gone to the apex court against the judgement by the Shariat Court but the SC was not taking up the case.

“Former chief justice Iftikhar Chaudhry even asked me where my clients who wanted land reforms were, as those opposing the reforms were also there,” he said.

He requested the Senate body to either become party in the SC case or formulate a law to initiate land reforms in the country.

Attorney General Ashtar Ausaf Ali said if the Senate becomes party in the SC case it would mean they are lowering their powers as lawmakers and are asking the same from the court, and suggested a new law for land reforms should be made.

The chairman of the committee, Senator Kamil Ali Agha said the Federal Shariat Court has left nothing to initiate land reforms.

The 1989 Shariat Court judgement says the government cannot take inherited or religious land and has to pay market price to buy land from private individuals. Committee members observed that the government cannot take land given by colonial rulers but can take land from individuals who bought it after independence.

“If the government has to buy land at market rate from landowners who do not even till it, then where will the reforms go,” Senator Agha asked.

Officials of the Federal Land Commission informed the committee that one of the reasons for the delays in land reforms was the continuous shifting of the commission from one ministry to the other and that it was currently part of heritage and therefore under the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and National Heritage.

The committee was told that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Balochistan were opposed to laws regarding land reforms while Senator Haider said Sindh supported laws for land reforms.

Senator Karim Ahmed Khawaja said small land holdings will ensure high yield at low cost as families will concentrate on effective farming and stated that feudalism was the opponent of democracy. The committee was informed that land reforms were initiated in 1959 which limited land holding to 500 acres for irrigated land and 1,000 acres of un-irrigated land and the land reforms of 1972 set these limits to 150 acres and 300 acres respectively.

The committee has asked the provinces to forward their point of view over land reforms under which large land holdings will be distributed among landless farmers and family members to ensure effective and technical farming.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1339857>

SHALAMAR GARDENS, LAHORE FORT MAY MAKE IT TO 'HERITAGE IN DANGER' LIST, FEAR CONSERVATIONISTS

Dawn, June 18th, 2017

KARACHI: Conservationists have expressed the fear that the World Heritage Committee (WHC) may put Shalamar Gardens and Lahore Fort on the Unesco's List of World Heritage in Danger owing to the construction of Orange Line Metro Train (OLMT) in Lahore.

In a statement issued the other day, officials of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (Icomos) in Pakistan, Fauzia Qureshi and Aneela Naeem, said such a decision might be formally taken through a vote of member states in the upcoming WHC meeting scheduled to be held in July.

They said the decision to send a 'reactive mission' to Lahore in the context of reported damage to Shalamar Gardens was a result of the vote and unanimous decision of all representative countries taken during the WHC meeting held in Istanbul last year.

They claimed that despite repeated letters from Unesco and WHC the government had not issued visas to members of the WHC's reactive mission. They urged the government to issue visas to the mission's members so that they could visit the sites and prepare their report about threats and damage the OLMT might be causing to the historical monuments.

They said if the OLMT project was not going to damage the monuments as claimed by the government, then why the mission, comprising international experts from the world's leading scientific body, was not being allowed to come here, review and examine the situation at the sites.

They said the Heritage Impact Assessment provided by the government to the WHC was not in line with international standards and failed to address the full range of impacts of the project. They said it was also not clear on what basis the Punjab Department of Archaeology had issued a No Objection Certificate for the project.

They called for carrying out of a comprehensive Heritage Impact Assessment in line with the WHC-Icomos guidelines, including a Visual Impact Study. The reactive mission should also be allowed to visit Pakistan and carry out its studies independently to ensure transparency, they added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1340276>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 5TH TO JUNE 11 TH 2017

PUNJAB TO OUTSOURCE LAND RECORD SYSTEM

Dawn, June 6, 2017

LAHORE: As Punjab government decides to outsource its computerised land record system and LRMS authority, the Bank of Punjab signed the first agreement in this regard here on Thursday in the presence of Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif.

Under the agreement, the BoP will set up special desks in its 453 branches for submission of challan forms for getting fard (land ownership record), mutation and payment of all fees.

Lauding the team that computerised the land record in all 143 tehsils of Punjab, the chief minister said the system benefited millions of people and rid the rural areas of `patwari culture` to a large extent.

He said that 17,000 sham entries were identified in the manual record of gurdawars (Sikh temples), but because of the LRMS, no such glitch occurred during the wheat procurement drive that had recently been completed.

He hoped that the patwar system would be completely eliminated, and added: `The patwaris then will have to deposit the money they have amassed through corruption with the NAB and go home.

He said the provision of land record was being outsourced to offload the additional burden the government was to bear in this respect.

The step, Shahbaz added, would also benefit the owners of ruralland as the land record would now serve as a bankable document for seeking loans etc from the bank.

Responding to a query about expanding the land record system to urban centres as well, he said the step could be taken af ter completion of the rural part of the computerisation project.

He declined to reply political questions.

Earlier, Law Minister Rana Sanaullah briefed the audience on the reasons behind the LRMS outsourcing and exploitation of small farmers by patwaris.-Staff Reporter

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=09_06_2017_002_006

July 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 24TH TO JULY 31ST 2017

'TILL THE FARMER GETS HIS LAND, POVERTY WILL NOT END'

Haneen Rafi

Dawn, July 24, 2017

KARACHI: “The rights of the peasant will benefit greatly only by creating widespread social awareness of land reforms which can be our greatest weapon. And this cannot be possible without including women in this struggle,” said PPP Senator Taj Haider at a seminar organised by the Awami Workers Party in Karachi on Sunday.

Highlighting the importance of empowering the farmer and peasant, Mr Haider criticised the fact that Pakistan remained one of the few countries that allowed a system to persist in which a few individuals sitting at home directly benefitted from the farmer toiling away on the fields.

The urgency of the land reforms needed in Pakistan have remained a constant demand of the AWP in a bid to battle the monopoly of feudal land owners that have for long usurped the rights of the peasants.

AWP peasant secretary Hassan Askari highlighted how land reforms in East Pakistan were more rigorously pushed through than in West Pakistan. “In East Pakistan land reforms were supported more because most of the land owners there were Hindus. In West Pakistan the land owners however, were not touched.”

“One of the most dynamic revolutionary forces is the kisan,” said AWP Sindh president Bakhshal Thallo, who explained how it was the British who organised and privatised the feudal system in South Asia.

Central secretary general Akhtar Hussain was of the opinion that to make land reforms, or for that matter any sort of reforms successful, the grassroots need to be galvanised and be invested enough to get the reforms implemented. If this is missing, then no amount of reforms will garner much change as there are many examples in Pakistan.

He also spoke about different legal developments the country has witnessed with regards to land reforms.

Prof Tauseef Ahmed Khan criticised how giving ownership of the land to the peasant was not a custom accepted by those in power. “It was for the first time after the revolution in 1917 in the Soviet Union that a state accepted that the land belongs to the peasant and eliminated the feudal system.”

He explained that it was when the communist party was established in the subcontinent that the idea that the peasant who works on a piece of land should own it too came to the fore. However, in his opinion the political parties led down this cause. Even in Pakistan this trend subsisted. “It was the Left politics that created a sense of awareness among the kisan about his rights. And till the farmer does not get his land, poverty will never end from this country.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1347188/till-the-farmer-gets-his-land-poverty-will-not-end>
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1347188/till-the-farmer-gets-his-land-poverty-will-not-end>

20 ASSOCIATES OF MNA ASAD SIKANDAR BOOKED IN LAND GRAB CASE

Dawn, July 24th, 2017

HYDERABAD: Twenty associates of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) MNA Malik Asad Sikandar were booked in a land grabbing and harassment case by the Jamshoro police on Saturday evening.

The FIR (125/17) was registered under Sections 147, 148, 149, 447, 504 and 506/2 of the Pakistan Penal Code on the complaint of Koro Khan Mastoi, who stated that his 100 acres of barren land in Deh Moro Jabal was forcibly occupied by the suspects, who dislodged him from the land at gunpoint and were threatening him with dire consequences.

Those nominated in the FIR are Arbab Ali Samoon, Mohammad Amin Babbar, Raza Pathan, Jan Mohammad alias Jano Rajar, Ali Mohammad Rajar and 15 other unidentified suspects.

PPP MPA from Jamshoro Faqeer Dad Khoso, who is a close associate of MNA Malik, speaking to local reporters, said that Arbab Samoon was implicated in a false case “at the instance of [another PPP MPA] Dr Sikandar Shoro”.

Deh Moro Jabal is situated off Indus Highway after crossing the Thermal Power House. “Since Arbab Samoon is a supporter of Malik Asad Sikandar and has obtained a stay [from a court of law] in the matter of his private housing scheme, he has been named in the FIR,” MPA Khoso claimed.

He said the population of the area where the 100-acre land was situated included the Rajar community and the area fell in his constituency. “The documents of the land’s ownership possessed by the complainant are questionable,” he claimed.

Arbab Samoon is among the five builders whose suits against the demolition of structures on their housing schemes by the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) was dismissed by a lower court of Kotri on Friday. He and another builder obtained a restraining order against possible demolition from the Kotri sessions court the next day.

Associates and supporters of Malik Asad Sikandar and MPA Faqeer Dad Khoso gather at the site of Arbab Samoon’s housing scheme almost daily to resist the SBCA demolition drive.

ALLOTMENT OF PLOTS TO BAKRIAL LANDOWNERS BEGINS

Dawn, July 29, 2017

MANSEHRA: The district administration on Friday began issuing letters of allotment of 10-marla plots to the residents of Bakrial area, who voluntarily vacated their houses and land for the New Balakot city housing project.

The then president, Pervez Musharraf, had launched the project in 2007 for the 2005 earthquake’s survivors from the Balakot red zone at the cost of Rs13 billion.

Work on the initiative was scheduled to be completed in 2012 but it didn’t happen as the people continued to occupy their land acquired for it despite over Rs1.2 billion payments.

“We want the early completion of work on the New Balakot city housing project for the rehabilitation of the earthquake survivors,” deputy commissioner Shahrukh Khan told a ceremony held here to give away plot allotment letters.

Balakot assistant commissioner Fiaz Khan was also present on the occasion.

The DC handed over the allotment letters to 40 families, who had voluntarily vacated their houses and land in Bakrial area.

He said as landowners vacated houses and land, plots in the New Balakot city housing project would be allotted to the 2005 calamity survivors.

Over 100 landowners were held lately for refusing to vacate their land and thus, beginning the voluntarily vacation of land and houses for the project.

The Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority will accommodate over 4,000 earthquake-surviving families in the New Balakot city project.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1348375>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 17TH TO JULY 23RD 2017
TARBELA DAM AFFECTEES STILL DEPRIVED OF RIGHTS, NA TOLD
Business Recorder, 19 July 2017.

Fazal Sher

ISLAMABAD: Despite passage of over 42 years, 70 percent of Tarbela Dam affectees have not been allotted land yet, while the remaining 30 percent who were allotted substitution land are still facing residential and other problems.

Representing Tarbela Dam affectees at the National Assembly Standing Committee on Human Rights, one Ejaz Ahmed Khan said that 70 percent Tarbela Dam affectees were still deprived of their rights as they were living in miserable condition.

The meeting was chaired by MNA Babar Nawaz.

He said that 82,000 acres of land were acquired for the construction of Tarbela Dam Project and over 96,000 people from 120 villages were displaced, and only 30,000 acres were allotted to the affectees in Punjab, but no land had been allotted in Sindh province as promised under the resettlement plan.

Khan said that compensation was not given to the affected persons like peasants, landless fishermen, boatmen and gold extractors. It was stated that the resettlement policy laid before the government may be introduced.

The committee directed the officials of Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) to present the complete record of Tarbela Dam affectees in the next meeting.

The affectees of Warsak Dam also attended the meeting and they informed the parliamentary body that the real owners of the land get electricity for only two hours a day.

One Arbab Sheryar Khan while representing the affectees of Warsak Dam said that no scheme or policy was formed to rehabilitate the affectees. He said that according to the agreement signed by the government, it was bound to provide electricity and jobs to the affected families but the promise had not been fulfilled.

Committee's Chairman Babar Nawaz said the Wapda had installed electricity meters in the areas of resettled community, while the people were regularly receiving electricity bills. The committee members expressed serious anger over availability of electricity for only two hours in the resettled community.

The Wapda officials informed the meeting that they followed the government orders in both cases, adding that best efforts were afoot to avoid violation of human rights. The committee issued directives to Wapda officials to present 10 years' record of appointments in basic pay scale 1-2 from Warsak, tribal areas and Mohmand Agency in the next meeting. The committee also decided to visit the areas of Warsak and Tarbela Dams' affected persons along with the Wapda officers.

Earlier, a presentation was made by the representatives of the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services regarding the proposed National Action Plan (NAP) on business and human rights. They said the action plan dealt with the links between business and citizens' human rights, an issue that had been endorsed by the United Nations.

The meeting was also attended by MNAs Sahibzada Muhammad Yaqub, Syed Essa Nori, Begum Tahira Bukhari, Surrayya Asghar, Kiran Haider, Zahra Wadood Fatemi, Amra Khan, Dr Shazia Sobia, Musarat Rafique Mahesar, Kanwar Naveed Jameel, Aliya Kamran Murtaza and Naseema Hafeez, and senior officers from the Ministry of Human Rights and Ministry of Water and Power.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/07/19/5-page/892567-news.html>

THARIS CALL FOR SURVEY TO AVERT DISPUTES OVER LAND

Hanif Samoon

The Express Tribune, July 20, 2017

MITHI: Landowners and social activists have urged the Sindh government to carry out a comprehensive survey of lands with clear demarcation or implement existing revenue laws in letter and spirit in order to avert disputes among Tharis over land ownership, which often flare up in the wake of rains.

More than 10 clashes have so far been reported from different areas of the desert over land disputes with the most violent among them resulting in injuries to 24 people, two of whom later died in a hospital a week ago.

Prof Noor Ahmed Janjhi (environmentalist and landowner), Mohammad Sajan Charo (landowner), Kirshan Sharma (activist), Partab Shivani (activist), local political leader Shahnawaz Higorjo,

Bharumal Amrani (environmentalist) and others told Dawn that some greedy people made a rush to cultivate grazing lands (gaunchars) and state land in connivance with revenue officials in the wake of monsoon rain which sparked disputes.

They deplored that revenue officials who were there to stop this trend were least interested in performing their duties. Under the Land Grant Policy introduced by British rulers people had to seek permission every year for cultivating government land but the practice gradually discontinued after 1985 and no serious effort was made by the authorities concerned to implement the relevant rules.

“If a person continues to cultivate grazing land with the permission of revenue officials for 10 years then he is entitled to use the same land forever under the existing revenue laws in the desert area,” they said.

The process of documentation of government land had virtually ceased in Thar and the status of thousands of acres of both evacuee property (1947) and enemy properties (1971) was still unclear, they said.

They demanded all such land should either be distributed among landless Tharis or government should properly take over its property since different communities were fighting with each other over their control.

Besides, if left unattended, the size of government land would ultimately shrink, dealing a blow to availability of fodder for livestock, which was mainstay of economy in the arid zone, they said. They emphasised the need for carrying out a survey of government land to avert further clashes over land, most of which comprised large tracts of grazing land. People often make a rush to cultivate all the land within their reach after rainfall and even sow crops on top of sandy dunes, depriving cattle owners of fodder.

They said that though Thar Deputy Commissioner Dr Abdul Hafeez Siyal had directed his staff to destroy such land which had already been prepared for cultivation, the illegal practice continued unabated in several areas.

Naturally, they said, the competition for control over land caused friction between groups of people and often spiralled into violent clashes.

They cited recent example of a deadly clash in Mithrio Khokhar village near Chelhar town in which 24 people of Khokhar community were injured, two of whom later died in a hospital.

They said that more than 10 clashes had so far been reported from different areas of the district over similar reasons. The illegal cultivation was also damaging the land's fertility as it caused moisture in soil to evaporate soon after rainfall.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1346325/tharis-call-for-survey-to-avert-disputes-over-land>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 10TH TO JULY 16TH 2017

VILLAGERS DEMAND COMPENSATION FOR LAND ACQUIRED FOR AIRPORT

Dawn, 14 July 2017

MITHI: large group of villagers and landowners resumed their protest outside the press club in Islamkot, 41km from here, on Thursday, demanding the government immediately pay them compensation for the land acquired for the construction of an airport for Thar coalfield projects. The protesters' leaders Sohrab Shah, Hub Ali Shah and others, who had come from Sobharo Shah village near Islamkot, told journalists the government had obtained 295 acres of surveyed land that fell within the proposed site for the airport about seven to eight years ago but it had not paid them compensation for it since then.

They regretted that despite frequent appeals to authorities concerned and protests, over 95 per cent of the landowners remained unpaid, and demanded that the chief minister order the officials concerned to pay them what was their due right at the earliest.

Thar Additional Deputy Commissioner Khurram Shahzad said the government would pay the landowners for their land but stopped short of giving a time frame.

He said the work on construction of the airport continued on a war-footing under the directives of the chief minister.

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=14_07_2017_119_003

BREACH IN CANAL INUNDATES PADDY FIELDS, HOUSES

Dawn, 14 July 2017

SUKKUR: Saifal Distributary developed a 30-foot breach near Gulab Jafferi village in Tangwani taluka, 85km from here, on Thursday, inundating paddy fields on about 100 acres, a fish farm and an unspecified number of houses.

The affected villagers complained to journalists that strong current of floodwater had flooded their houses and damaged all valuable items, stocked grain and other belongings.

They said that they had informed irrigation department officials about the breach but nobody reached there to help them avert the disaster.

Finally, they took it upon themselves to fill the breach with loose earth, which took them five hours of hectic efforts to plug, they said.

They blamed negligence on part of irrigation staff for the breach and said the canal banks had been weakened and could not withstand pressure of water current because of lack of proper maintenance.

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=14_07_2017_119_001

PPP MNA TAKES A STAND TO PROTECT PEOPLE'S LAND

Z Ali

The Express Tribune, July 16, 2017

HYDERABAD: Over the last two decades, Jamshoro district has remained politically synonymous with mogul MNA Malik Asad Sikandar. Elected as an MNA four times and an MPA twice, besides

holding the position of nazim from 2005 to 2009, Sikandar's influence spreads from Malir in Karachi to parts of Thatta and large swathes of Jamshoro.

But recent land acquisition in Jamshoro by a leading real estate developer has ignited a quarrel between the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)-led Sindh government and Sikandar.

“I have no objection to giving away the land [to the builder] which is not in use of the people for their living and their livelihood. But, if any decision is taken against the people of Kohistan [the mountainous region in Jamshoro], I will stand with the public,” Sikandar, who has been accused of land grabbing himself, said in a recent statement.

The MNA and his supporters, who include PS-72 MPA Faqir Dad Khoso, allege that they are being subjected to reprisals. Dozens of officers, including the deputy commissioner and senior superintendent of police, posted in Jamshoro, on his recommendation have been transferred and replaced. Two deputy commissioners, Munawar Ali Mahesar and Agha Suhail Pathan, have been transferred in less than a month. On July 11, BPS-18 deputy secretary Mutassam Abbassi was notified as the new deputy commissioner.

Sikandar's companions' businesses like housing schemes, coal mining, stone crushing plants and lifting of sand and grit are facing crackdowns for being illegal, although they have continued for years. MPA Khoso himself led a protest on Friday against the crackdown of the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) and Sehwan Development Authority (SDA) on housing schemes of builders considered close to Sikandar.

The protesters staged a sit-in on the Indus Highway. According to Khoso, the booking offices of Al Karam City and Hassan Residency were demolished on Thursday as ‘punishment’.

The SDA's deputy director, Maqbool Ahmed Qureshi, said that around a dozen housing schemes have been built in Jamshoro in violation of SBCA and SDA rules. On Friday again, accompanied by a large police contingent, Qureshi led a drive to demolish allegedly illegal schemes but hundreds of Sikandar's supporters impeded the action.

Khoso argued that the housing schemes facing the crackdown have been legally established and around 80% of the plots have been allotted to private buyers.

“There are dozens of housing schemes [in Jamshoro] that have been established on government land occupied by forging revenue records and without obtaining the no objection certificates and approvals from the SBCA and SDA,” said an official of the SDA, who requested anonymity.

According to him, Sikandar is a known supporter of land grabbing. “But he isn't alone. Other elected representatives in the provincial government are also involved in same activities,” he alleged.

According to unconfirmed reports, the provincial government has planned to transfer four dehs – units of revenue administration – of Jamshoro to Malir. All four dehs – Mool, Babbur Dad, Hothal and Butt – happen to be strongholds of Sikandar and are located in Khoso's constituency. The detachment of these dehs will electorally weaken Sikandar in Jamshoro, which has one MNA and three MPA seats.

Although Sikandar was not available for a comment, Khoso said the dispute did not start over the dehs. “The real problem is a land dispute in Kachelo Burfat village in Malir.” He alleged that the Sindh government is supporting a real estate developer’s forceful occupation of the village, where people are supporters of Sikandar.

He claimed that around 15 days ago, people in around 100 vehicles, including 50 to 60 police mobiles, charged upon the village to get some parts of the land vacated. A few villagers were injured in the resultant clash and were also booked in an FIR by the Malir police.

“Malik sahib [Sikandar] said if they [government and builder] want to purchase the land, he can arrange their meeting with the villagers and will request the people to amicably resolve the issue,” said Khoso, lamenting that the offer was not even considered. “This is a very strange way of handling the situation by lodging FIRs and putting people in jail. This is done only during dictatorships,” he said. Khoso said they are not opposed to the sale of private land to any builder but they feel the need to watch the process if the provincial government gives away the state’s land to the builder. “We will have to see for which purpose the land is being given and whether there is a provision for such allotment.”

Another Jamshoro MPA, Dr Sikandar Shoro, who is being labelled a rival by Sikandar’s camp, said the issues are being raised unnecessarily. “Action is being taken against the illegal lifting of sand and grit and crash plants operating without permission, illegal coal mining and housing schemes established in violation of the rules.”

He said earlier the issue of removing four dehs from Jamshoro was raised but the provincial government clarified that there is no such plan. “And now they are complaining in favour of some local builders whose housing schemes have been built illegally.”

Meanwhile, Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz’s minority wing leader Khaal Das Kohistani said his party will support Sikandar if he stood up for the land rights of the local residents

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1458842/ppp-mna-takes-stand-protect-peoples-land/>

August 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 14TH TO AUGUST 20 Th 2017

CHINA PLANS PETROCHEMICAL COMPLEX NEAR KARACHI

Dawn, August 17th, 2017

KARACHI: A Chinese proposal to set up a refinery along with a downstream petrochemical complex near Karachi is advancing steadily as requests for 500-1,000 acres has been submitted to the provincial governments of Sindh and Balochistan.

The estimated cost of the project is about \$4 billion.

This was disclosed by Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) President Zubair M. Tufail after a meeting with the visiting Chinese delegation, led by Ms Li-Jial, Director Tianchen Engineering Corporation (TCC), at the Federation House on Wednesday.

Ms Li-Jial and MrTufail agreed in principle to establish and exchange investment missions to further enhance trade relations between the two countries.

The Chinese asked for land in Karachi since they found rents in Gwadar Free Zone to be too expensive, MrTufail told Dawn. “Port Qasim does not have enough space for a project of this size,” he said. “So they have asked for land a few kilometres away or in the Hub area, which falls inBalochistan”.

They will go with whichever provincial government best facilitates their interests, MrTufail added. “Any of the two provincial governments give better deal they would go for it and this would be a win-win situation for both the countries.”

MrTufail said both the provincial governments are interested in this project but would depend how they make a land deal with the Chinese investors.

The complex envisions a number of jetties, a refinery with 10 million tonnes per year capacity, as well as downstream processing facilities for naphtha and its component chemicals. “Currently we are importing \$2bn worth of these chemicals from the Middle East” MrTufail said, adding that the complex could help reduce Pakistan’s external deficit.

Building of the complex will take four to five years, he said, “since they’re starting from scratch”.

Talks on the proposal have been under way for over a year now, but the proposal has begun to take shape more recently with the formal submission of a request for land.

Ms Li-Jial speaking on the occasion said that TCC would like to invest in Pakistan to enhance investment opportunities.

“Over the years, China had been extending cooperation in different sectors of the economy in Pakistan and lately there had been a sudden jump in these relations for the mutual benefit of both countries,” she added.

The FPCCI president said that Pakistan could benefit from the TCC’s vast experience in oil refinery, energy, chemical complexes and other projects and explore investment opportunities mutually beneficial to both the countries.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1351945>

GOVT TO LAUNCH OPERATION TO CLEAR SINDH UNIVERSITY LAND OF ENCROACHERS

Dawn, August 18, 2017

HYDERABAD: The Sindh government will provide all-out support to University of Sindh (SU) to improve standard of higher education in the province, and launch a massive operation to clear the

university land of encroachers, says Adviser to Sindh Chief Minister on Information Technology DrSikandarShoro.

He said that no encroachments would be tolerated on the university's land and efforts would be made to help SU officers, faculty and employees get rid of the cases registered against them by the land-grabbers, according to a press release issued here on Thursday.

MrShoro said at a ceremony for the distribution of shields at Shaikh Ayaz auditorium on the SU campus organised by the Sindh University Officers' Welfare Association that he knew that false and fabricated cases had been lodged against officers, teachers and employees of the university and those nominated in the cases had to attend hearings in the court, he said.

'Sindh government will help them get rid of the fake cases. The encroachments on the university land will be removed provided that the university administration points it out,' he said and added that he wanted to see the university on top position in Higher Education Commission (HEC) ranking.

He said that sons' quota would be restored at the university through adoption of required legislative measures and said that sons of the employees, who had given their entire lives to the university, must be given jobs as per their qualification and merit.

SU Vice Chancellor Prof DrFateh Mohammad Burfat, who presided over the ceremony, announced that he would resolve all genuine issues and redress grievances of officers, who, he said, were backbone of the university. 'The charter of demand (CoD) submitted by the officers' association is in the process of implementation. For the restoration of sons' quota, I pledge that the matter will be placed before the syndicate,' he said.

He said the issue of grant of leave encashment to the officers on the completion of five-year service instead of 10 years would also be contemplated in the upcoming meeting of the syndicate for further consideration.

The association's president Ghulam Nabi Kaka urged the university administration to implement CoD in order to resolve all issues pertaining to the university officers, including promotions, grant of time scale, leave encashment and the right of representation on the university syndicate.

'The prosperity of officers is actually the prosperity of the university, the rectified seniority lists of officers should also be issued as per promise of the vice chancellor, he said.

Later, DrBurfat gave away shields to 35 recently retired officers.

Representatives of officers' associations of other universities of the province also participated in the ceremony.

The annual ceremony was followed by a grand musical show.

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=18_08_2017_119_004

CDA ALLOTS 330 PLOTS TO LAND AFFECTEES IN SECTORS I-12, I-11

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) in second round of balloting allotted 330 plots in Sector I-12 and I-11 to rehabilitate and accommodate land affectees of Islamabad.

The balloting was held at Jinnah Convention Centre on Thursday evening in presence of large number of people the majority of which allegedly comprised property dealers instead of genuine affectees. It was second balloting in line with the recently-announced standard operating procedures (SOPs) to rehabilitate and accommodate affectees of Islamabad during last one week.

Some participants who were claiming themselves as genuine affectees objected over balloting and blamed CDA Land Directorate for carrying out balloting to accommodate property dealers and some individual personalities instead of genuine affectees.

The number land affectees told The Express Tribune that CDA Land Directorate allotted plots to affectees of ChakShahzad and MauzaHumak in I-12 and I-11 Sectors by dodging its new SOPs, which was unjustified and denying the rights of genuine affectees.

They maintained that despite imposition of ban for one year on allotment of plots to land affectees the culture of allotment could not be changed particularly in lucrative sectors.

During balloting of Raja Khawar a land affectee from Sangjani objected over allotment of plots 25×50 and asked CDA officials to stop announcement of their names. He said that they were legally deserving plots size of 30×60. CDA officials however, agreed to objection of affectees by requesting them not to create hurdle in balloting process and advised them not accept these plots and promised to rectify this anomaly.

The CDA allotted total 330 plots of different sizes to the affectees of Islamabad in Sector I-11 and I-12. These plots were allotted through balloting including 60 plots of 25×50 size and 50 plots of 25×60 size, in Sector I-12, 118 plots of 25×50 size and 102 plots of 30×60 size.

The plots were allotted to the affectees whose land was acquired by CDA decades ago. The allotment of plots had been made through manual balloting by the committee constituted under the new SOPs introduced on the directions of Mayor of Islamabad and Chairman CDA, Sheikh Anser Aziz. The committee was supervised by CDA Member Estate, Khushal Khan. On this occasion, Director Land, Deputy Commissioner CDA, Additional Director Estate Affectees were also present.

Manual procedure was adopted for balloting, under which one box was used for names of affectees and the other box was used for plot numbers. On this occasion balloting was done by the affectees and in presence of some members of the media

On this occasion CDA Director Land IrfanMarwat said that the process of allotment of plots to the affectees would continue and balloting would be done every Friday. He said that those affectees, whose claims had not been cleared in this balloting would be included in the next balloting. He added that CDA in next 10 to 14 days will start allotment in Kuri where authority owns 26 thousands kanals area.

He further added that through plots are available in Sector I-12, however, he said that new sector at prime location would be opened for the rest of the affectees to settle their claims to meet their demands.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1485238/cda-allots-330-plots-land-affectees-sectors-12-11/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 1ST TO AUGUST 6TH 2017

ZARDARI INTERVENES TO SORT OUT DISPUTE OVER ALLOTMENT OF LAND TO BUILDERS IN JAMSHORO

Dawn, August 4th, 2017

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party-Parliamentarians chief Asif Ali Zardari has asked Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah to continue 'reconciliation policy' and issued instructions to sort out differences among some party leaders over allotment of land to certain builders in Jamshoro district, according to sources.

Mr Zardari urged the chief minister during a one-to-one meeting in Dubai on Tuesday to step up pace of work on ongoing development projects before upcoming general elections, said the sources.

Mr Zardari gave this instruction after having been briefed by the chief minister on his meeting with new prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi immediately after the PML-N leader was sworn in at an oath-taking ceremony in Islamabad.

The sources said that Mr Shah briefed the party chief about his exchange of views with the prime minister regarding working relations with the Centre, issues related to National Finance Commission, loadshedding and shortfall in transfer of the province's due share in resources. He also briefed Mr Zardari about the stand MQM had taken on the election of new prime minister, said the sources.

They said that it was learnt the PML-N had reportedly promised MQM a berth in the federal cabinet and also offered to announce another development package for Karachi and Hyderabad and expedite work on the ongoing development projects including the Blue Line transport scheme to facilitate commuters in Karachi.

The party chief asked the chief minister to continue reconciliation policy and step up pace of work on the ongoing uplift schemes so that they could be completed at the earliest to facilitate people before upcoming elections.

Mr Zardari, the sources said, gave instructions to sort out differences among some party leaders over allotment of land to certain builders in Jamshoro district.

In this connection, the sources said, PPP leaders, chairman of Jamshoro district council Malik Asad Sikandar and Gayanchand Israni also reached Dubai on Wednesday to meet the party chief and apprise him of their point of view on the land allotment issue.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1349399>

GOVT FAILS TO ENFORCE BAN ON CULTIVATION OF GRAZING LAND IN THAR

Dawn, August 4th, 2017

MITHI: Tharparkar revenue department has failed to enforce the official ban on cultivating land reserved for grazing and tops of sand dunes and has also been unable to take action against influential encroachers in the wake of abundant rain across the length and breadth of the arid region.

Most of the grazing land spread over 22,000 square kilometres meant to produce fodder for livestock in the rain-dependent Thar, has been brought under cultivation by greedy elements.

Locals and social activists told Dawn on Wednesday that no serious effort was being made by the revenue officials to take punitive action against the illegal practice, which was depriving cattle of fodder.

They said that more than half the grazing land had been cultivated in the entire district but officials concerned were sitting unconcerned. Action had been taken against only a handful of encroachers while those affiliated with the ruling party or influential persons were openly violating the ban on cultivation, said sources.

Thar Deputy Commissioner Dr Abdul Hafeez Sial said that he had directed the revenue officials concerned to launch a massive crackdown against land-grabbers, bulldoze the crops they had sown or let herds of cattle trample down the illegally cultivated land.

He said that he was trying his level best to put an end to the menace with the help of police in the light of directives of the high-ups and existing laws.

The unbridled greed to bring more and more land under cultivation is on the one hand depriving over seven million livestock of fodder while on the other the large tracts of grazing land, enemy and evacuee properties have become a bone of contention among Tharis and causing bloody feuds.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1349398>

K-IV'S LAND ACQUISITION IN GADAP CHALLENGED

KARACHI: The much needed and long awaited project to provide the city with additional water, commonly known as the K-IV project, has hit a snag, as owners of 15 acres of land in Gadap Town, which has allegedly been acquired for the project without compensation, have challenged the project in the Sindh High Court (SHC).

A two-judge bench, headed by Justice Munib Akhtar, has also issued notices to the provincial chief secretary, managing director of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) and director-general of the Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) to file their comments by August 9.

The bench passed these directives on Thursday while hearing a petition challenging the acquisition of 15 acres of land for the project allegedly without payment of compensation to the land owners.

The judges ordered the government and K-IV project officials to act in accordance with the law till the next date of the hearing and before beginning work or stepping foot on the 15 acres of land in question they must provide a map with the project's parameters to the petitioners. The petitioners will then be able to challenge the inclusion of their property in the project. The bench also directed the officials to explain to the petitioners that their property is not affected by the project.

A group of residents had approached the court, naming the provincial chief secretary, KWSB MD and FWO DG as respondents.

The petitioners, including Abdul Qadeer, said they are lawful owners of the 15 acres of land in Gadap Town locality of District Malir. The judges were told that the course of the K-IV project was changed

and the provincial government had acquired 15 acres land from the petitioners in order to execute the development project.

The petitioners said the authorities had promised to pay compensation for the acquired land under the land acquisition law. They said the staff had carried out a survey of their lands and work had been initiated. However, they alleged that the respondents had not paid compensation to the residents so far.

Advocate Malik Altaf argued that the acquisition of the petitioners' land without paying them compensation is illegal and a violation of the land acquisition law. He apprehended that the government and project authorities might not pay the amount, thus they will deprive the petitioners of their right to get compensation in return for their land.

Therefore, the court was pleaded to declare the land acquisition without compensation illegal and a violation of the law. It was further pleaded to declare that the petitioners are entitled to compensation.

The lawyer pleaded to the judges to grant a stay against the work on the K-IV project on the petitioners' land as an interim arrangement to save their land.

After hearing initial arguments, the bench issued notices to the respondents to file their comments by August 9.

Karachi has been plagued with water issues for years and the recently, the problems have intensified, with constant water shortages in many areas of the metropolis. The K-IV project is a joint venture between the Sindh and federal governments.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1474854/k-ivs-land-acquisition-gadap-challenged/>

September 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 18 TH TO SEPTEMBER 24 Th 2017

BALUCHISTAN CM WARNS OF ACTION AGAINST LAND GRABBERS

Dawn, September 17th, 2017

Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Nawab Sanaullah Zehri on Saturday warned that his government would not tolerate land grabbing in any form and take strict action against those involved in it.

He was responding to a call-attention notice submitted by provincial Health Minister Rehmat Saleh Baloch to the Balochistan Assembly.

The health minister said some elements were illegally taking control of government buildings, including a public library, rest house and officers' club, in the Panjgur area.

The chief minister declared that he would take tough action against such elements, and ordered the commissioner and the deputy commissioner of Panjgur to send a comprehensive report on the issue and take action against the land grabbers.

A former provincial minister and his nephew serving as an officer in the agriculture department are reportedly involved in the land grabbing.

Mr Zehri also responded to the issue of the non-availability of dynamite for chromite mining, and formed a committee comprising several provincial ministers.

The issue was raised by Mr Agha, himself a mine owner. He said dynamites for mining were not available in Muslim Bagh and other areas of northern Balochistan as the government had yet to renew the licences of importers buying dynamite for industrial uses.

Dr Shama Ishaq raised the issue of fake degrees possessed by some doctors, citing reports circulating on social media, but the provincial health minister described the reports as inauthentic.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1358190/balochistan-cm-warns-of-action-against-land-grabbers>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 11 TH TO SEPTEMBER 17 Th 2017
LAND GRABBING WITH IMPUNITY
Dawn, September 12, 2017

It is ironic that while law-enforcement agencies pursue militants, another category of criminals has been for years operating with total impunity in the country. A report in this paper yesterday revealed that land grabbers in Sindh have been convicted in only five cases since 2010 — a fact all the more shocking because an anti-encroachment court and a special force in Karachi were established that year for conducting speedy trials of land grabbers and retrieving public property by demolishing illegal structures. So far, a mere 10 cases of land encroachment in Karachi have been registered this year: judging by the record, one can well imagine what the outcome is likely to be.

However, Pakistan's largest city is not the only one where land grabbing is taking place. With the rise of the middle class and the subsequent boom in the requirement for residential accommodation — especially that ultimate symbol of upward social mobility, the 'gated community' — construction has become a bigger business than ever before in this country. In the process, the regulation of land has fallen victim to avaricious vested interests. Relevant authorities — rather than implementing zoning laws, safeguarding government land and green spaces, and ensuring that areas for low-cost housing are utilised for that purpose — are complicit in the wholesale plunder of land.

They place their services at the disposal of powerful segments of the ruling elite, both civilian and otherwise, and corrupt development authorities to construct lavish housing complexes and expand existing neighbourhoods. The police, of course, are a vital cog in this thriving racket, using force, or the threat of force, to compel people into giving up their land.

The human cost of such criminal wrongdoing is enormous. When master plans are violated, the urban poor are squeezed to the fringes of cities and farmers in rural areas are forced off their land and deprived of their livelihood. Moreover, because the government has paid no heed to its duty to provide affordable housing to a growing population, the vacuum has been filled by another breed of land grabber in the informal sector — again in collusion with formal authorities — who has made a

profitable business of supplying land for lower-income housing. Mushrooming on the outskirts of urban centres, these localities are magnets for those involved in drug smuggling, gunrunning etc. Then there is the environmental cost exacted by encroaching on protected land and natural drainage channels. Huge tracts of forest land outside Rawalpindi have been devoured by land grabbers while the once spectacular natural setting of Bani Gala in Islamabad has been similarly encroached on. Illegal construction on storm water drains prevents rainwater from exiting populated areas, resulting in urban flooding like that experienced in Karachi recently. Until the laws against land grabbing are strictly applied to whoever engages in it, we are allowing rapacious elements to compromise our future.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1357042>

October 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 23rd TO OCTOBER 29th 2017

CENTRE'S HELP SOUGHT FOR RECOVERY OF STEEL MILLS LAND

Dawn, October 23rd, 2017

Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) has sought urgent help of the federal government to recover more than 1,800 acres of land from the Sindh government and private parties amid the Centre's efforts to dole out pricy land near Karachi's Bin Qasim Port for 'selective' settlement of liabilities on the balance sheet of the sick unit.

This comes as a newly formed PSM Stakeholders Group (PSMSG) comprising its employees, pensioners, suppliers, dealers and contractors has put up a Rs65 billion claim against the country's largest industrial complex. It has warned the government not to transfer the expensive land to the National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) and the Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGCL) under a selective "Liability Settlement Plan" at throwaway prices.

The entire process that has turned a profitable entity with tremendous growth potential into a white elephant over the last 10 years boils down to real estate booty, says Mumrez Khan, the convener of the PSMSG. "The problem is not with the machine or the man behind it even now but the successive rulers who destroyed the mother of industries for vested interests," he added.

The PSM was forced to shut down almost 28 months ago and is without a chief executive officer (CEO) for more than a year now. Its employees have not been paid salary for almost five months and its pensioners are running from pillar to post to seek payment of their dues.

The Centre has been making efforts to settle liabilities of the NBP and the SSGCL against its land on top of carving out another piece of land for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor at rates questioned by many stakeholders, including former acting CEO who had to leave the job soon afterwards.

In a latest report to the federal government, the acting CEO of the PSM has updated the land situation, saying it had a total of 19,013 acres, mostly in Malir district of Karachi and Thatta district. This includes 10,278 acres under the main plant and 8,071 acres of the Township land.

Of this, 16,988 acres have been mutated in favour of the PSM in the record of the Board of Revenue but 2,024 acres have still not been mutated. This un-mutated land also includes 1,675-14 acres which was part of 3,059 acres surrendered by the Port Qasim Authority to the PSM in 1974-75.

The report said 1,377-6 acres under PSM Township paid/mutated land was forcibly resumed by the Sindh government in 2006 for establishment of educational institutions under the Higher Education Commission. “The said national cause has been abandoned. The PSM is struggling for cancellation/resumption order and its re-mutation in favour of PSM,” wrote acting CEO Arif Shaikh.

Also, another piece of PSM Township paid/mutated land of 400 acres had been resumed by the provincial government out of which 200 acres were allotted for parking of oil tankers and “remaining 200 acres have been illegally allotted to individuals and builders for which PSM is struggling for grant of equal land”.

Moreover, the PSM management has been struggling for re-demarcation/fixation of outer boundary of PSM Township land since 2011 to resolve a demarcation dispute over 178 acres without any success due to ‘unknown and unavoidable circumstances’. On top of that, another 244 acres have been encroached.

On the other hand, the PSMSG has written to the federal government that they are unheard victims running from pillar to post for revival of the mill and payment of salaries, final dues, bills, advances and security deposits and have collectively stuck up funds of Rs65 billion. It alleged that the mills had been made non-functional and financial crisis it was facing had been engineered with mala fide intent by the successive governments from 2005-17 as was evident from minutes of meetings of its board of directors.

The group said the gratuity dues had not been paid since April 2013, provident fund payments had been blocked ever since the mill was shut down in June 2015 and salaries were outstanding for months. Similarly, payments of many local and foreign suppliers and contractors for different deliveries had been stuck up.

It said about 7,600 acres were being given to the NBP and the SSGCL without valuation for settlement of its loans and gas bills and mark ups.

“This smacks of lack of integrity and transparency”, the PSMSG convener wrote, adding that 157 acres had been given to the PQA at the rate of 9.3 million (per acre) and 930 acres sold by ad hoc management at the rate of 13m (per acre) while the prevailing value of the land was more than Rs30m and Rs40m per acre respectively.

“This is a daylight robbery and should be reversed”, the group wrote, offering a substantially higher rate than the land was sold for. It has demanded performance audit of the successive governments and PSM managements between 2005 and 2017 to identify the causes of the mill’s functional and financial disaster.

Interestingly, former acting CEO Mohsin Haqqani had also warned the Privatisation Commission about Rs59 billion employees' retirement liability, saying it should have priority over the liability of the NBP and the SSGC. He proposed that the land should be disposed off at market rate after proper valuation by an independent evaluator. "In the last two years, the valuation of land in Karachi has appreciated due to improvement in law and order situation and various other factors such as it is the only industrial land available in Karachi connected with Port, national highway and railway network, its value is in the range of Rs2.5 to Rs4 crore per acre approximately", wrote Mr Haqqani on Sept 5 last year. But he was forced out within a week.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1365607>

2,000 FOREST KANALS GIVEN TO POWER PROJECT IN LAND-FOR-LAND DEAL

Dawn, October 27th, 2017

Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: The government has handed over 2,000 kanals of the forest area of Punjab to a Chinese company for the construction of the 720MW Karot Hydropower Project. The project, part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, is being executed by the China Three Gorges, by the Karot Power Company (private) Limited and the Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB) on the River Jhelum.

"Actually, the land acquired for the mega CPEC-funded hydropower scheme was 20,000 kanals," says a senior official. "Up to 10,000 kanal each was to be acquired by Punjab and Azad Jammu and Kashmir governments. Though we acquired and handed over 18,000 kanals to the Chinese, but couldn't get the remaining 2,000 kanals, owned by the Punjab Forest Department.

"Recently, the issue was resolved after the Punjab Forest Department was given alternate land near Chakri with some compensation by the Chinese to acquire the land for the project," said the official, requesting anonymity.

According to the official, the cost paid by the Chinese was reasonable, and even sufficient to buy more land than the department surrendered for the project. Besides this, the department was also paid the price of thousands of trees. The official said under the law the forest land could only be provided for public purpose.

"So the government amended the law and transferred the forest land to the project in the public interest," the official added.

According to a report, about 15 per cent of the construction of the project has been completed. The financial close of the project was done on February 22, this year after which the civil work was launched by the contractors.

"At present the construction of access roads, bridge, concrete batching plants, diversion tunnels, spillways etc is in progress at the site located at the dual boundary of the Rawalpindi and Kotli districts.

“It is a run of the river project that will produce 3,249 GWh annually on average. The design discharge of the project is 1200 m³/s and it will have four Francis turbine units. The total cost of the project is estimated \$1.698 billion and it will be completed hopefully by December 2021”, reads the report.

The PPPB official said as per design of the project, all important structures and installations fall in Punjab. The project is being constructed by the Mangla Dam on the River Jhelum in Karot village.

“Actually, the right side of the boundary line falls in Punjab and left in the AJK. And the major structures such as power houses, spillways etc are being constructed on the right side, while the water storage lake falls in the areas of AJK,” he added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1366505/2000-forest-kanals-given-to-power-project-in-land-for-land-deal>

CM CENSURES THATTA ADMINISTRATION OVER LAND MAFIA'S ATTEMPT Dawn, October 27th, 2017

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has censured the Thatta district administration over land mafia's attempt to grab property of the Edhi Foundation and regretted that a person like Faisal Edhi had to reach the government through a press conference.

Faisal Edhi, son of world famous social worker Abdul Sattar Edhi, had said at a press conference on Wednesday that the local administration had shut Thatta's Edhi centre on the orders of a local court.

The foundation could opt for suspending its services in rural districts of Sindh as a last resort because 'land mafias' were continuously encroaching upon its land and establishments with complete impunity, he said.

The chief minister took notice of Faisal's press conference and initially directed Hyderabad commissioner to look after Edhi Foundation property and solve its problems immediately.

“They are doing great humanitarian work and it is our responsibility to support them and help them continue their services,” he added.

He asked the commissioner to provide space for office to Edhi Foundation in Thatta so that it could continue its welfare services unhindered.

The commissioner informed the chief minister that the Thatta administration had not shut the centre unilaterally but it had been closed on the orders of the court. On this the chief minister directed him to provide an adequate space to the foundation for the establishment of centre in Thatta till the case was decided.

The chief minister then spoke to Karachi commissioner as well and directed him to meet Faisal Edhi personally and solve his problems. “It is quite shocking and deplorable that the land mafia is grabbing the property of the Edhi Foundation,” he said, adding where was the administration when it happened and what was it doing?

A person like Faisal Edhi should not be made so helpless that he had to reach the administration and the government through press conference. “It is our responsibility to remain in touch with him so that he can continue humanitarian services and improve them further,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1366432/cm-censures-thatta-administration-over-land-mafias-attempt>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 9TH TO OCTOBER 15 Th 2017
SC TELLS TAREEN TO FURNISH REVENUE RECORDS OF LEASED LANDS
Nasir Iqbal

Dawn, October 11, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court reminded again on Tuesday the counsel representing Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf secretary general Jahangir Khan Tareen to furnish revenue records of his leased lands to establish that those who had leased out their lands to him were true owners.

At the last hearing on Oct 5, a three-judge SC bench, headed by Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar, had asked Sikandar Bashir Mohmand, the counsel for Mr Tareen, to submit Khasra Gardawari, Jama Bandi and other relevant revenue records showing how much money he had paid to the lessor to get lease of 18,566 acres of land in 2010 and evidence proving that he had earned around Rs1.6 billion agriculture income from the said land.

The apex court had taken up a petition of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader Hanif Abbasi seeking disqualification of Imran Khan and Jahangir Khan Tareen over non-disclosure of assets, existence of offshore companies as well as the PTI being a foreign-aided party.

Justice Umar Ata Bandial, a member of the bench, clarified to the counsel that the court was asking for the Khasra Gardawari, Jama Bandi etc to see whether the lessor claims the ownership of the lands leased.

Justice Faisal Arab observed that since the client of the counsel was so meticulous in keeping records, he must have all the revenue records.

In the petition, Mr Tareen faces allegations that in 2010 he showed the revenue he earned and the tax paid before the FBR in tax returns, but he did not mention the same in his nomination papers submitted to the Election Commission of Pakistan.

The counsel assured the court that he would provide the documents being asked but at the same time requested the bench to give some consideration to the fact that all the payments Mr Tareen made to the lessors were through crossed cheques, adding that he could get affidavits from the lessors that they received so much funds from Mr Tareen.

But the court was not convinced and the chief justice wondered why the counsel was insisting on the affidavits and not the revenue records. “I am perceiving a situation, therefore, it is better that the counsel should show the revenue records being asked,” the chief justice observed, adding that if need be the court might seek the assistance of the officers from the relevant revenue departments for the confirmation and veracity of the documents presented.

The chief justice also told the counsel that the documents produced by the respondents would have relevance only when the papers being asked would be provided. The court reminded the counsel again that he had to furnish proof about the ownership of the lands of the lessors, evidence regarding leased lands, revenue records along with the copies of crossed cheques issued for the payments. The chief justice suggested to the counsel not to seek answers from the court which may prejudice his case.

However, the counsel tried to explain that the affidavits would show the true ownership of the lands Mr Tareen had leased.

Advocate Azid Nafees, who is fighting the case of petitioner Abbasi, however, told the court that Mr Tareen had never ever produced Khasra Gardawari before courts where Mr Tareen had moved appeals etc.

Sikandar Mohmand, however, told the court that his client had asked for the documents from the relevant departments and this exercise was taking place. But he hastened to add that in the two districts where the lease lands were situated, the revenue records were usually not found in pristine condition.

On Tuesday, the counsel submitted 178 lease agreements of 160 different lessors from whom the lands have been leased out. But the court was not happy with the record since most of the lease agreements were neither registered nor these show particulars about the lessors and in many cases not even the Muza or Khata numbers or evidence to prove that the lessor was the real owner of the lands.

The counsel, however, replied that he would do a cross-reference exercise but argued that his client was the biggest agriculturalist who had employed modern farming methods as a result of which his yield per acre in 2010 was 818 maunds with a revenue of Rs22,891 per acre and he was the biggest sugarcane producer as wells of best quality mangoes and cotton.

The counsel cited a 2013 judgement of the Lahore High Court which came on an election dispute, yet the court held that even after the enforcement of the Punjab Agriculture Income Tax Act, 1997, no institutional framework was in place even in 2013 as contemplated by the act for collecting, determining, assessment and retaining agriculture income tax etc.

The judgement also held that entries or columns in the nomination forms pertaining to the disclosure of agriculture income tax were ambiguous and, therefore, the benefit of doubt should go in favour of the contesting candidates.

The counsel also cited a 2003 letter of Mr Tareen to the senior member of Punjab revenue highlighting difficulties in calculation of tax accrued.

On Tuesday, senior counsel Akram Sheikh, who represented the petitioner in the Imran Khan disqualification case, objected to the fresh filing of certain documents by Mr Khan despite closing of the case.

Despite the initiation of the case in November last, this was the first case in which the Supreme Court kept receiving documents, the counsel argued, saying that Mr Khan was also highlighting new issues after the closure of the case.

The court, however, asked the counsel to submit a rejoinder on the new documents filed by Mr Khan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1363014/sc-tells-tareen-to-furnish-revenue-records-of-leased-lands>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 1ST TO OCTOBER 8 Th 2017

GLOBAL PACT FOR INDIGENOUS LAND RIGHTS LAUNCHED

Dawn, October 4th, 2017

STOCKHOLM: Indigenous peoples could soon regain some control of their native forests with the creation of a new global institution dedicated to securing their land rights.

The International Land and Forest Tenure Facility, formally launched in Stockholm on Tuesday, aims to help communities protect their land resources as well as combat climate change.

Funded by Sweden, Norway and the Ford Foundation, a US charity, the Tenure Facility has already provided grants and guidance for pilot projects in Peru, Mali, Indonesia and three other nations.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1361565>

CDA ANNOUNCES CONTROVERSIAL BUILT-UP PROPERTY AWARD

The Express Tribune, October 07, 2017

Kashif Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has announced a controversial built-up property (BUP) award to compensate house owners to pave the way for the construction of the much-delayed King Hamad University of Nursing and Allied Medical Sciences.

The civic agency announced the BUP award for 782 people contrary to its initial list of 134 houses/havelis which was compiled a couple of years ago.

The number of claims had jumped to 400 by July this year when the CDA stated that there were 430 genuine claims. However, the locals were of the view that the number of their claims was over 700. Finally, CDA Deputy Commissioner Qazi Ahmed Sohaib announced the award on Friday accepting over 782 BUP claims.

Sources in the CDA said the local people and some officials of the civic agency took advantage of CDA's controversial policy on the BUP claims which entitled the owner of a house with 300 square feet covered area a 25×50 feet plot. The owner of a house with over 300 square feet covered area will be eligible to get a 30×60 plot.

A source said in connivance with the CDA officials the locals constructed a large number of houses – even within the same premises – to meet the requirement of 300 square feet covered area to get plots.

The university, whose foundation was laid by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif in January this year, will be constructed on 237 kanals at Park Road in Chak Shahzad. The affected people will be given plots in the same locality.

In 2014, Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa announced his decision to fund a nursing university as a gift to the people of Pakistan. It was decided that the government of Pakistan would arrange the land and utility services for the university. Bahrain would fund the university's construction.

"The FIA and NAB should investigate the case as this award seems to be highly controversial," said an official of the CDA land directorate.

On the other hand, a revenue officer defended the award, saying there were 134 havelis and almost in all of them there were several other houses, entitling the residents to get the BUP plots if their house spread over 300 square feet.

He said almost 670 people would be given plots against the BUP claims while over 112 others who did not fulfil the criteria of the land acquisition policy would be given cash against the demolition of their houses.

When contacted, Mayor and CDA chief Sheikh Anser Aziz said: "Today I was informed that the BUP award for over 700 people has been announced on the basis of 300 square feet covered area."

He said there had been a dispute between the CDA and the locals for years over the BUP claims. After announcing the award the CDA is now moving ahead to clear the land for the construction of the university.

He said if there was any wrongdoing he would look into it. The mayor, however, criticised the CDA policy on the BUP claims.

"Earlier, the CDA used to give plots against 1,000 square feet covered area but a few years ago the policy was changed bringing down the size of the covered area to 300 square feet, which seems not realistic and needs to be revised," he said.

Though officials denied any wrongdoing, the CDA's corridors were abuzz with allegations that a large number of bogus claims had been included in the award list. Some officials of the CDA said a large number of new structures were built in the area for getting BUP claims. They said the CDA should have taken Google image of last year to know the exact numbers of houses.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1362200>

November 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 20th TO NOVEMBER 26th 2017

PAC INFORMED: DHA LAHORE OCCUPIES 300 KANALS OF ETPB LAND

ABDUL RASHEED AZAD

Business Recorder, November, 22nd, 2017

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) was informed on Tuesday that Defense Housing Authority (DHA) Lahore has occupied 300 kanals of land of the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) which

has caused Rs 1.93 billion loss to national kitty. The PAC meeting held here under the chairmanship of Syed Khursheed Ahmed Shah to discuss and review audit paras of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for 2016-17 was informed by Chairman ETPB Siddiq-ul-Farooq that the DHA authorities have even ignored the ruling of the Supreme Court and didn't return a single plot of the Board. The PAC while taking serious notice of the huge financial losses incurred to national exchequer by the ETPB and private companies M/s High Link and M/s Elysium Holding through fake and fraud financing directed the officials concerned to make all-out efforts to recover the amount. The chairman ETPB requested the Supreme Court of Pakistan to help the board in recovering the land grabbed by the DHA.

The chairman PAC directed the director DHA to appear in the next meeting and brief the panel as why the DHA has failed to implement court's orders. The audit officials briefing the meeting said that DHA neither developed 33 percent of the ETPL land nor returned it which caused Rs 1.93 billion financial loss to the national kitty.

Member Committee Shafqat Mehmood asked the chairman ETPB what action has been taken against the officials involved in the scam. The chairman ETPB said the ETPB officials involved in the scam have been made officers on special duty. On which Shafqat Mehmood said that they are drawing salaries from national kitty without doing any work. Farooq said that officials are drawing salaries even when they are suspended.

The committee expressed serious anger over the deputy director Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the director National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for their failure to brief the meeting on the issue. The chairman committee directed all the concerned departments not to send any official below grade-20 in the PAC meeting in future. The panel also asked the director general FIA to personally attend the next meeting.

The audit officials told the committee that the Evacuee Trust Property Board made financing of Rs 1.93 billion through M/s High Link and M/s Elysium Holding but there was neither any record of it nor the profit of Rs 613.94 million was shown. The chairman ETPB said that the national kitty was facing losses of billions of rupees as abovementioned companies didn't return the profit earned on the properties of the ETPB.

Shah said that DHA is a well known institution which inked agreements with ETPB but didn't pay the government dues after taking the governmental property. He expressed sorrow over the DHA and said that the authority even didn't give the due shares in plots of the housing scheme. The PAC chairman further said that this matter dates back to year 2009 but no inquiry has been carried out ever since.

The audit officials told the panel that the Ministry of Religious Affairs didn't return Rs 1.87 billions to pilgrims (Hujjaj). The principal accounting officer (PAO) of Ministry of Religious Affairs replied the committee that Rs 1.25 billions have been returned to pilgrims. The audit officials said that Rs 220 million were exempted against the rules and without a declaration.

The panel asked the PAO to recover the amount as early as possible. He said that former Chairman ETPB Syed Asif Akhtar Hashmi signed an agreement with DHA for developing 1,946 kanals of land owned by ETPB, adding so far the DHA has developed 1,110 kanals of land and returned only 800 kanals while rest 300 kanals of land are not transferred.

The audit officials told the committee that the ETPB, Lahore, fixed revenue targets of Rs 1.79 billion for 2012-13 and profit on investments was to be yielded amounting to Rs 759.34 million; however, the statement showed that the actual profit earned on investment during 2012-13 was Rs 145.40 million with shortfall of Rs 613.94 million. The officials told the committee that the ETPB made investment of over Rs 970 million in the M/s Elysium Holding but did not avail the profit and now the case is in the court of law.

Elysium Holdings, reportedly owned by Kamran Kayani, the younger brother of former Army Chief General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, is also facing NAB action in multibillion rupees DHA City (Lahore) scam. Later talking to media persons, Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Khursheed Shah suggested the government to get army's help in dealing with Islamabad Sit-in staged by a religious party. Siddiq-ul-Farooq also endorsed Shah's comments and said that the government can seek the help of army in resolving the sit-in crisis.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2017/11/20171122237140/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 13Th TO NOVEMBER 19Th 2017
RANGERS, POLICE TO TAKE ON LAND GRABBERS IN KARACHI
Hafeez Tunio

The Express Tribune, November 16, 2017

KARACHI: Land grabbers in the city will be targeted during a crackdown by the Sindh government, police and Rangers.

This was decided during the apex committee's 21st meeting on Wednesday. The meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, also discussed crucial issues such as street crime, ghost employees, illegal immigrants and cybercrime but land grabbing dominated the agenda and was termed by participants an "organised crime being committed by militants and organised mafias".

"The money generated through land grabbing is used in crime and terrorism," revealed intelligence officials.

Murad directed the inspector-general of police and Rangers director-general to start the operation soon. "Please make all arrangements to start the operation in areas such as Surjani Town, Gulistan-e-Jauhar, Manghopir, Super Highway and Scheme 33," he told them. Sources privy to the development said that officials briefed the participants of the meeting about organised gangs that occupy land and tamper with revenue records. "Please take strict action against those who are experts or involved in making fake property papers or documents," the CM directed the IG and chief secretary.

The chief secretary, who is also a senior member of the Board of Revenue, briefed the meeting and said that the land records have been digitalised. It automatically searches government and private land when the plot number is entered in its search system.

The meeting was attended by provincial ministers, Nisar Khuhro, Sohail Anwar Siyal, Syed Nasir Shah and Ziaul Hassan Lanjar, as well as Karachi Corps Commander Lt Gen Shahid Baig Mirza, Chief Secretary Rizwan Memon, Rangers DG Major General Mohammad Saeed, Sindh IG Allah

Dino Khawaja, Home Secretary Qazi Shahid Parvaiz, additional IGs of Karachi, the Special Branch and Counter-Terrorism Department and the provincial heads of intelligence agencies.

“We have controlled heinous crimes in the city but street crime has posed a big challenge and we must devise a concrete strategy to control it,” Murad said. It was pointed out that illegal immigrants in the city, who number around 2.5 million, are the often involved in street crime.

They generate funds through street crime and fund terrorism and other criminal activities, participants claimed, proposing that street crime be made a part of the apex committee’s domain. This proposal was approved by the chief minister, who directed the police and Rangers to begin a crackdown against street crime.

The chief minister also constituted a committee to be headed by the law minister with the provincial home secretary and attorney-general as members to call on the Sindh High Court chief justice to request that certain courts be dedicated for the trial of street crimes so as to get attention focused and make it difficult for culprits to get released easily. “My objective to take drastic measures is to create a deterrence in the commission of street crime,” the chief minister explained.

The meeting also has approved the transfer of 28 terrorism cases to the military courts.

The legal committee has so far held 16 meetings and has recommended 106 cases for trial in military courts. Presently, 38 cases with 29 accused are being tried in military courts. The military Courts have convicted 23 and awarded the death penalty to 21 accused, life imprisonment to two and returned three cases to the anti-terrorism court (ATC). One case is still pending before military court.

The meeting was also informed that re-verification of all existing fourth schedulers has been completed by the CTD’s additional IG. The chief minister directed the home department to approach federal government to amend the Anti-Terrorism Act to curb financial transactions of fourth schedulers through banks.

The Sindh government has approached the interior ministry to notify the Sindh police as a civil authority under the Foreigners Order, 1951, enabling it to take necessary legal action against illegal immigrants as well as unauthorised foreigners in the province.

The home department, on the directives of the apex committee, has approached the State Bank of Pakistan to issue specific instructions to all commercial banks and financial institutions to take all security-related steps as per the bank’s existing standard operating procedures.

The issue of missing persons was also discussed during the meeting. It was pointed out that some people are presenting exaggerated data of missing persons to gain political sympathy or present themselves as champions of human rights.

Murad directed the home department, IG and Rangers to compile data of missing persons so that actual figures could be made available. It was noted that some people go on jihad or for other criminal activities out of country and then go missing there but are included in the number of missing people in the city.

The participants of the meeting were informed that 83 prisoners in high-profile cases, including 52 under-trial prisoners, 18 convicts and 13 condemned, have been shifted from Central Jail Karachi to other districts. Another 137 prisoners, including 69 under-trial prisoners, 50 convicts and 18 condemned have also been shifted from Karachi to other districts.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1559466/1-rangers-police-take-land-grabbers-karachi/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 6 Th TO NOVEMBER 12 Th 2017

CM APPROVES LAND LEASE FOR PAF UNIVERSITY

Dawn, November 7th, 2017

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Pervez Khattak here on Monday approved a proposal to transfer 384-kanal land of the provincial government to Pakistan Air Force on lease for setting up Air University.

This decision was made in a meeting that also approved construction of buildings for vocational training centres, shifting of Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (Tevta) head office to Hayatabad and setting up of aircraft hangar.

According to a statement, the meeting was attended by head of Strategic Support Unit Sahibzada Saeed, Air Commodore Mohammad Amin, administrative secretaries of the departments concerned, Peshawar commissioner and other officials.

Mr Khattak directed the senior member board of revenue to finalise the leasing formalities. He also directed the secretary of planning and development and communication and works department to revise the PC-I for the construction of aircraft hangar for the provincial government.

Mr Khattak also formed a committee having adviser to chief minister technical training aviation and Peshawar commissioner as its members and industries secretary as its head to look into the proposal for Tevta head office and submit recommendations.

The chief minister directed the Nowshera deputy commissioner to prepare necessary documents for transfer of the available land to Tevta for construction of building for vocational training centre. He said that the encroached land should be cleared and summary should be processed in that regard.

Mr Khattak also approved transfer of Ceramic Training Centre Akora Khattak to Tevta that should be used for vocational training centre in Jehangira. He said that the allocated fund should be used for the renovation of the CTC building taken over from SIDB.

Regarding the transfer of plot at Batkhela for the construction of vocational training centre, the chief minister directed the officials concerned to get opinion of the housing department before transferring the plot to Tevta. He also directed the officials concerned to complete the process of handing over SIDB building at Urmar Payan to Tevta for using it as a training institute.

Mr Khattak said that work on the project for establishing commercial aircrafts' maintenance college at Rashakai should be undertaken on priority basis.

He also asked the officials concerned to process amendments in Tevta rules.

The chief minister directed the officials concerned to proceed for the overhauling of helicopter as per the agreement as the meeting was informed about the arrival of the representative of the Russian company.

Mr Khattak directed the Swat deputy commissioner to acquire 500-kanal land for PAF Base Saidu Sharif.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1368932/cm-approves-land-lease-for-paf-university>

December 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 25th TO DECEMBER 31st 2017 ARMY TO BE ALLOTTED OVER 1,000 ACRES FOR NEW GHQ, OTHER OFFICES

Dawn, December 27, 2017

Kashif Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) is all set to allot over 1,000 acres of land to the army for the construction of a general headquarters (GHQ) and other military offices in Islamabad.

The army had shelved its plan of moving the GHQ from Rawalpindi to Islamabad in 2008-09 due to financial constraints and on the instructions of the then army chief, Ashfaq Pervez Kiyani.

It now wants possession of the land at the earliest so construction work can be started and the army headquarters can be moved to the federal capital.

Plan to move GHQ from Rawalpindi to Islamabad was shelved in 2008-09 due to financial constraints

A high level meeting was held on Dec 19 at the CDA headquarters in which several key decisions regarding the handing over of land to the army were taken. The meeting was chaired by Member Estate Khushal Khan and was attended by concerned CDA officers and army officers of Defence Complex Islamabad (DCI).

CDA officials told Dawn that issues regarding an office complex, which will be constructed on 138 acres, were discussed in detail.

The meeting was informed that a formal allotment letter has not been issued due to an outstanding annual ground rent of Rs84 million.

It was decided that the ground rent will be waived off as it was the CDA's fault to not hand over possession of the land to the army for the construction of offices, a CDA official told Dawn.

He said a decision regarding 293 acres of land in D-11 was also taken and the CDA will now be issuing an allotment letter for this land in a week as possession of the land has already been handed over to the army.

The meeting was told that 870 acres of land in Zone III of the capital to the north of E-10 and D-11 was allotted to the DCI for the construction of an office complex for the GHQ, Joint Staff Head Quarters, Ministry of Defence (MoD) and DCI. The area of the office complex has now been reduced to 694.56 acres and an allotment letter for this land will be issued once the army pays off delayed charges amounting to about Rs225 million.

The resettlement of locals of the area was also discussed and the meeting was told that a summary in this regard has been submitted to the CDA board in which the allocation of a new sector has been proposed as H-16 will not be enough to accommodate them. All the decisions taken during the meeting will be implemented soon, the official said.

Talking to Dawn, CDA Member Estate Khushal Khan said almost all the issues between the CDA and the army were resolved during the meeting and that the civic agency will be issuing allotment letters of the land soon.

Asked about the annual ground rent, he explained that since the CDA did not hand over possession of the 138 acres of land for the office complex, there was no reason to charge the amount.

He said the army has been cooperating with the civic agency and have also paid back a large proportion of the amount for the land they will get from the CDA.

He said that according to the master plan, H-16 is reserved for institutions and will therefore be insufficient for accommodating those affected by the project in the area and that the CDA may acquire more land for developing more sectors.

“We are planning on acquiring land in H-17 and I-16 etc,” he said.

Demarcation of military land

According to CDA officials, the MoD has through an official letter, sought information from the CDA regarding the demarcation of military grass farm land in the Margalla Hills.

They said the military wanted a proper demarcation of the land so they could get complete control of it.

“I cannot recall the exact issue at the moment, but yes, the army does have land in the Margalla Hills,” Islamabad Mayor Sheikh Anser Aziz said.

He added that he will be in a better position to comment on the demarcation process after reading the MoD letter.

The MoD letter asks for the information to be “provided without any further delay”.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1379072/army-to-be-allotted-over-1000-acres-for-new-ghq-other-offices>

NA PANEL REJECTS MQM'S BILL FOR LAND REFORMS

Dawn, December 29, 2017

Kalbe Ali

ISLAMABAD: A parliamentary committee has rejected a bill presented by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) for land reforms.

Apart from mover S.A. Iqbal Qadri, only the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz members attended the meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Information on Thursday and rejected 'The Redistributive Land Reforms Bill, 2017' on the grounds that it may not be passed by the National Assembly.

Committee chairman Pir Mohammad Aslam Bodla of the PML-N said that the bill seeking to forcibly reduce land holdings would not be accepted by the parliamentarians and sought the opinion of the members.

The bill presented in September this year called for land reforms in the country by limiting family agricultural landholding to 36 acres of irrigated land or 54 acres of unirrigated (barani) land.

The bill stated that the government would pay compensation to the landowners at the rate determined by a commission to be established in this regard.

Speaking on the matter, Mr Qadri said the ownership of thousands of acres of agricultural land by one per cent of the population was creating discrepancy in society.

But members of the committee belonging to the PML-N, including Malik Shakir Bashir Awan, Mohammad Khan Daha, Mian Mohammad Farooq, Tahir Iqbal Chaudhary, Ms Zeb Jaffar and Chaudhry Mohammad Tufail, opposed the bill.

They said that limiting the landholding was contrary to the system and the Constitution as the individuals had a right to hold properties or wealth in any form.

Dr Fauzia Saeed, Executive Director of Lok Virsa, briefed the committee on the steps taken by her organisation for promotion, preservation and protection of cultural history and national heritage.

The committee chairman lauded the efforts made by the management of Lok Virsa for uplift, promotion and protection of cultural heritage, including national languages, and asked for a powerpoint presentation at the next meeting.

The committee recommended that the short video clips from Lok Mela or other events organised by Lok Virsa for the promotion of culture should be uploaded on social media for easy access to the public at large.

It also proposed that Lok Mela festivals should be held at the district level across the country so that the young generation could be well aware of the cultural history of the country.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1379520/na-panel-rejects-bill-for-land-reforms>

NAB TAKES NOTICE OF SLEAZY GWADAR LAND DEALS

Business Recorder, 31 December 2017

ISLAMABAD: Chairman NAB Justice Javed Iqbal has taken notice of the reported corruption and irregularities in the allotment of industrial and commercial plots by Gwadar Industrial Estate Development Authority.

Illegal allotments have caused million of rupees losses to the national kitty. Gwadar Industrial Estate Development Authority has not only jeopardized the economic development of the province but it also has purportedly turned into an estate agency. The Authority has doled out industrial and commercial plots among their favorites and relatives while ignoring genuine investors. The NAB has taken notice of mega corruption, said a press release.

During the initial scrutiny of record that the rules had totally been ignored by GEDA while allotting commercial and industrial plots. The plots were distributed among favorites and relatives with the help of facilitators. Furthermore, the files of industrial plots were sold on the basis of personal likes and dislikes by rejecting the applications of eligible industrialists and potential investors.

Chairman NAB said providing legal investment opportunities to all the investors in Gwadar projects was the basic requirement of economic progress of the new port. The corrupt wouldn't be allowed to take personal benefits from economic progress of Gwadar. The corrupt who want to jeopardize the economy progress of Gwadar would be dealt with an iron hand.—PR

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/12/31/1-page/690940-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 18th TO DECEMBER 24th 2017

THE DHA CITY JUGGERNAUT ROLLS ON IN THE NAME OF DEVELOPMENT

Dawn, December 18th, 2017

Ibrahim Kachelo's run-in with the most powerful development authority in Pakistan happened in early October.

"I was returning from a check-up when I saw a group of people, accompanied by armed guards, putting up concrete DHA markers on and around my land," says the farmer, his weather-beaten face flushed with indignation.

"I told them to leave, that I have a lease for it but they wouldn't listen." Furious, Mr Kachelo knocked down the markers in the DHA officials' presence, the guards drew their guns and a brawl ensued.

The men retreated, but Mr Kachelo fears that was not the last he has seen of them.

His reaction stemmed not only from anger, but fear — fear that he will be driven from the land that has been in his family for generations. After all, he has seen it happen to others not too far from where

his orchard is located along the northbound track of Superhighway in Malir, the largest of Karachi's six districts.

On the opposite side, along the highway's southbound track, the DHA City Karachi (DCK) housing project is under construction on 11,640 acres in deh Abdar and deh Khadeji (a deh is the smallest revenue unit for land in Sindh, similar to 'mauza' in the rest of the country).

Metalled roads and farmhouses have erased the pastureland where livestock belonging to the villagers used to graze, and the villages themselves have either been walled off or are in the process of being so as construction of the housing community proceeds.

(See box below) That they were able to retrieve some of their land from DHA is only because they filed a petition in the Sindh High Court and it ruled in their favour.

These 11,640 acres, which comprise Sectors 1 – 16 of the housing project, were allotted to DHA in 2005 at a concessional rate of Rs100,000 per acre by the Board of Revenue, Sindh.

(BoR is the provincial government department that is the original custodian of all land in the province, and the controlling authority for collection of land revenue, maintaining land records, etc.)

The 'visit' by the officials of the Defence Housing Authority, Karachi to Mr Kachelo's land was in connection with the expansion of DCK along the highway's northbound track, specifically over 8,000 acres in dehs Kathore and Boil.

Mr Kachelo's land in deh Boil has been in his family since generations; he himself has been cultivating it for 40 years. A rocky outcrop affords a bird's eye view of the huge orchard, dense with guava trees.

"Over the years, I've spent millions of rupees on it, including the expense of a tube well. This is my life's work," he says.

There are many others like him in the surrounding area, where lush pumpkin fields are interspersed with rows upon rows of trellises abounding in bitter gourd ivy. Orchards of guava, chiku and shareefa dot the landscape.

"The rains were plentiful this year so the wells have been renewed and the check dam has filled up," says Waheed Sikander Chhutto, another one of the hundreds of farmers who toil the land in this area. "We shouldn't have any problem cultivating for the next two years."

Their immediate concern is DCK's planned expansion. Taj bibi, picking ripened pumpkins along with other women, frets about how the 50 or so members of the extended family that live on the proceeds of their farm will survive if they are forced to leave.

A group of little girls — the youngest of whom is named Benazir — giggle shyly as they pose for pictures, blissfully unaware of the cares that have robbed the adults of their sleep.

(The estimated total population of deh Kathore is 15,000 and that of deh Boil 1,200, all of whom are dependent on the local agricultural economy.)

In 2012, BoR Sindh cancelled all 30-year agricultural leases on the 8,000 acres in dehs Kathore and Boil and allotted the land to DHA, a development the villagers only became aware of a year later.

However, aside from a brief foray by DHA personnel into deh Boil around that time — which ended abruptly when the locals sent them packing — the villagers had no reason to believe that their lives were about to be upended.

In early 2017, officials from DCK across the highway began to pay regular visits, pressing them to give up their land, carrying out surveys of the area and marking the boundaries of the housing project.

“They told us, ‘Look, this is a fauji idara [army institution], if it wants to enter this place you can’t stop it’,” said one of the villagers. “But how can we leave? This is not about money. Our zameen is like our mother, it sustains us.”

Although the government is entitled to cancel 30-year agricultural leases of the kind possessed by these farmers, it is not an absolute right; it is a qualified one.

According to Section 24 of the Colonisation of Government Lands Act 1912, if the land authority believes that a tenant has committed a breach of the conditions of his tenancy, he must be given the opportunity to defend himself.

Also, according to this law, no penalty can be imposed on the tenant nor his lease cancelled unless he is given a written notice to rectify the breach within a reasonable time, which should be no less than one month.

Such protection of an individual’s right to property is in consonance with principles of universal common law.

(Moreover, the Land Acquisition Act 1984 stipulates that the government can acquire land on payment of compensation when such land is required for a “public purpose”. Handing it over to a private developer does not fall under this definition.)

Farmers in dehs Kathore and Boil were renewing their leases regularly, paying their dues and cultivating crops as per the conditions of their lease.

A number of them have filed joint petitions against the cancellation of their leases, naming officials in the Sindh government and DHA, Karachi as respondents.

It is no less than a David and Goliath struggle playing out in the backyard of Pakistan’s largest city.

Officers at DHA, Karachi contend that as it is the Sindh government that has allotted them the land for DCK, it absolves them of responsibility for the farmers’ plight.

“They have given it to us according to their due process, and they dealt with the leases on it, and we checked it according to our procedures,” said Administrator DHA, Karachi Brigadier Shahid Hassan Ali in an interview with Dawn.

“Actually, DHA is a vulnerable hostage because we follow the law.” He added that their system of checks and balances was far superior to that of the civilians. “If the government has 10 procedures, we have 17.”

It was on May 6, 2011, when a letter — DHA/TP&BC/ 108/ DCK — from then DHA Administrator Brigadier Aamer Raza Qureshi to the then Sindh chief minister Qaim Ali Shah set in motion events that were to have far-reaching repercussions on the lives of the people in these parts of Malir.

The letter, which is in Dawn’s possession, thanks the Sindh government for allotting the first chunk of 11,640 acres at a concessional rate.

It goes on to state that, “However, the land that DHA had earlier acquired from the Govt of Sindh is insufficient to meet this demand.

The requirement of additional land has become imperative in view of the increasing number of casualties of the armed forces personnel in the War against Terror.

The Pak Army has a pressing need to rehabilitate the families of the martyrs and DHA Karachi has no option but to request you to meet this obligation towards those who have laid [down] their lives for the motherland.”

It then goes on to request the provincial government to lease an additional 5,000 to 7,000 acres on the same terms and conditions and at the same concessional rate of Rs100,000 per acre as the earlier allotment.

According to the Sindh Disposal of Urban Land Ordinance, 2002, “The disposal of land by Government to an Authority...shall be at the market price [as assessed by the deputy commissioner] through an agreement.”

(Land for low-cost housing schemes, however, is an exception: this may be allotted at concessional rates, which must nevertheless be at least 25pc of market value.)

As per market rates, land on both sides of the Superhighway was worth at least Rs10 million per acre in 2011.

The letter by the DHA administrator to the Sindh chief minister proceeds to helpfully add: “We would like to inform you that a parcel of approximately 10,000 acres of land is available in Deh Boil adjacent to the land already allotted.”

By July 9, 2011, as noted in a document signed by the City District Government of Karachi’s district officer (revenue), the tapedar (land record officer) of the area concerned had reported that a 7,000-acre chunk of land in deh Boil was available for allotment to DHA.

According to this document, the tapedar reported that 30-year leases had been given to 179 locals on 1,481 acres of this area for the purposes of poultry farming and wahi chahi (land partly irrigated from a well) and barani cultivation.

Only a “few” people, it said, “have developed/utilised the land for the purpose...Hence, except few matured cases (sic) the remaining grants are liable for cancellation proceedings as per conditions of grant”.

The tapedar concerned, as per the document, also specified two chunks of land adding up to 1,000 acres in deh Kathore as being available for allotment to DHA. “Some 30 years undeveloped grants are also falling in the above area”, he claimed.

In a letter dated Jan 7, 2012, the Sindh government noted that 8,000 acres had been allotted on payment by DHA of Rs800 million at Rs100,000 per acre and that all 30-year leases on that land had been cancelled.

To gauge the jaw-dropping ‘rebate’ given by the Sindh government to a profit-making venture, consider the following.

Even according to the official rates, the 11,640 acres in dehs Abdar and Khadeji — which comprise the initial phase of DCK — are worth an average of Rs1.2m per acre. That adds up to Rs14 billion.

In the next phase, which involves dehs Boil and Kathore, the 7,000 acres in Boil are worth a total of 7.7bn while the 1,000 acres in Kathore add up to Rs4bn.

Based on the official rates (a fraction of actual market value), the price of the entire 19,640 acres is Rs25.7bn. The Sindh government sold it to DHA, Karachi for only Rs1.96bn. If the market rate is applied, the land is worth an eye-watering Rs196bn.

Moreover, the allotment of the 7,000 acres in Boil, plus 1,000 acres in Kathore — a thousand acres in excess of what was demanded by DHA — offers evidence, yet again, of how the bosses of the Sindh government sacrifice the rights of the people to profit from favours to powerful segments of society.

(Ironically enough, this area has long been a PPP vote block. In the eyes of the villagers, the PPP government’s role in depriving them of their land is a betrayal of the Bhutto legacy by the party’s current leadership. “If Benazir had been alive today, this would never have happened,” said Ajmal Jokhio, his voice quavering with emotion, as several other villagers nodded in agreement.)

The provincial political heavyweights’ alacrity in matters like these is in stark contrast to its sluggish or non-existent response where the people’s basic needs are concerned.

For instance, there is no higher secondary school for girls within reasonable distance, which discourages parents from educating their daughters beyond Grade 8.

“We’ve had the school upgraded till Matric,” says Abdul Qayyum, a teacher at the local secondary school. “But the government has yet to appoint teachers and sanction funds for their salaries, etc.”

Their repeated applications during last several years to the education department and to the local PPP MPA Sajid Jokhio have fallen on deaf ears.

The locals' appeals to authorities about the imminent loss of their land have been similarly ignored. In a small provisions store in deh Boil, amidst the shelves of juice boxes, packets of crisps and other assorted items, local councillor Karim Bakhsh Chutta opened a small, battered case.

It contained documentation of the residents' struggle against DHA Karachi on the one hand and Bahria Town Karachi (BTK) on the other, two behemoths squeezing them from both sides in a pincer movement.

There are letters to the Sindh chief minister, Rangers, police, etc asking for their help in preventing the takeover of their thriving farmland. All have gone unanswered.

Having run out of options, residents of Abdul Rehman Chhutto goth in deh Boil have filed a constitutional petition No. 6504/2017 against the Sindh government and DHA Karachi.

In it, they denied that their leased agricultural lands — which add up to 229 acres, aside from the 18 acres on which stands goth Abdul Rehman which was regularised under the Gothabad Scheme Act, 1987 — had not, as claimed by the provincial government, lain undeveloped in violation of the lease terms.

As the matter stands at present, the Sindh government and DHA, Karachi have been issued notices to respond.

District Malir, measuring 521,000 acres, lies in the north and east of Karachi. Its 43 dehs comprise the rural outskirts of Karachi. Many of these dehs, such as Langheji, Kathore and Boil were part of the city's periphery that supplies fruit and vegetables to Karachi.

This green belt is all the more precious because of the unplanned construction that is obliterating green spaces in the city's urban areas. When it rains in the Kirthar range, the water rolls down to the plains of Malir to replenish the aquifers and check dams and bring seasonal streams to life.

The land here is either rain-fed (barani) — with agriculture being dependent on the rains — or it is sustained all year round by groundwater drawn through tube wells.

Notwithstanding its close proximity to a large urban centre, an oppressive feudal system prevails here.

Sardar Malik Asad Sikander, a PPP MNA from Jamshoro, is the most powerful feudal in the area, which is colloquially known as Kohistan (comprising Jamshoro and Hyderabad districts, as well as parts of Karachi's districts Malir and West).

Chief of the Burro tribes including Kachelo, Palari and Gondar sub-tribes, he exerts the kind of influence that brooks no defiance. "I hope our names are not going to be printed," says a local in a white, mirrored Sindhi cap. "These are sardar log. They will destroy us."

Mr Sikander regularly plays host to Arab royalty and assorted members of the Pakistani establishment and social elite on hunting expeditions in these parts of Malir district.

The expansion of DCK and nearby BTK is inversely proportional to the diminishing of his power and influence.

Nevertheless, however well-connected he is, Mr Sikander has to tread carefully given DHA's enormous clout and the business connections of Bahria Town CEO Malik Riaz with VVIPs in Sindh.

At the same time, everything is negotiable for a price, which in his case is reportedly scores of 'files' to the thousands of plots being carved out in the housing projects, not to mention other political advantages.

DHA Karachi requested the land for DCK — 11,640 acres first and 8,000 acres later — for the purpose of rehabilitating the families of the soldiers martyred in the 'war on terror'. According to military sources, an estimated 6,000 personnel have been martyred in the war against terrorism since 2001.

According to Administrator DHA Brig Ali, the fallen soldiers are compensated according to their rank, albeit there can be exceptions to this rule.

"The plots range between five marlas (100 square yards) to an acre (4,840 square yards)," he said. That raises the logical question: why then the requirement for so much land in the name of the martyred?

"The families could have been given plots in a city closer to their homes," says a disgruntled former local government official.

"Using the fallen for a commercial venture is unprecedented in the country's history. It's a crime committed by the Musharraf government against the people of Karachi."

The provision of housing is universally considered the basic responsibility of a state towards its citizens. Housing should be planned and developed for living in, not for speculation.

Exploitation of land for commercial reasons results in artificial price increase and ultimately puts housing out of the reach of the common man.

"These so-called housing schemes are siphoning away every last paisa that could help develop low to medium housing in Karachi," claims a former director KDA.

At 19,640 acres (11,640 plus 8,000 on both sides of the Superhighway), DCK is not only more than twice the size of DHA's first eight phases in the city, which add up to 8,852 acres, it is also larger than Karachi's Central District (19,000 acres), as well as Lahore's Old City area (16,000 acres).

According to experts, development of schemes like DCK in the green belts and protected areas of Karachi by powerful developers violates all rationales, including rights to property, environmental laws and principles of urban planning.

"In any city outside South Asia, they wouldn't have gotten permission. They would have been told to finish developing [the existing phases] first," said urban planner Arif Hasan.

Even 37 years after the inception of DHA Karachi, an area in excess of 3,000 acres in DHA phases VIII, & VII-extension is still lying vacant, for which, incidentally, DHA has also collected development charges four times.

According to a former land official: “It is incomprehensible that a developer whose capacity utilisation has been so poor during four decades has been allowed to undertake another scheme two and a half times in size”.

“Speculation is not in our control,” said Brig Ali. “The private investor comes in, and instead of living on it, sells it on. These are market forces about which we can do nothing.” He admits however, that it will be decades before the project is populated.

DHA Karachi’s administrator, a qualified civil engineer, said: “We’re looking at sustainability... We’ve got four or five operational check dams while another two or three are planned, so underground water is recharged...we haven’t disturbed any of the natural nallahs either.”

Planned as a “green and smart” city, the housing project is equipped with a 1.1 megawatt solar project.

In response to a question about supply of water and other utilities, the administrator replied that DHA had approached the Sindh government for a reasonable allocation from K-4.

K-4 is the water supply scheme that the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board has been pushing for almost 20 years to overcome the shortage of water, then assessed at 650 million gallons per day, faced by Karachiites.

In 2003, the Indus River System Authority agreed, though in principle only, to allocate 260 MGD additional water.

The feasibility study and designing of the project has been done by Osmani & Company Ltd. Estimated to exceed Rs 25 billion, K-4 was awarded to the Frontier Works Organisation for construction without the mandatory requirement of a public tender.

Interestingly, OCL along with the Greek company Doxiadis Associates are also the lead designers/consultants for DCK. According to a former MD KWSB, the design team was told to route K-4 along DCK and through BTK.

Such routing has created a problem for KWSB as there is no fiscal allocation for the construction of the requisite connections to supply even the remaining water to Karachi.

It is also worth pointing out that unlike all other water flowing through gravity into Karachi from the Indus, this route involves massive pumping against gravity.

Early in March this year, a NAB case against revenue officers of District Jamshoro, Taluka Thanu Bula Khan was reported in the press.

ADC-1 Javed Soomro and AC Irshad Kamlani sought bail before arrest in a case pertaining to the sale/transfer of 731 acres of government land — shown as private land in the record of rights — to DHA Karachi.

It seems that someone in BoR, realising there was no qabooli (inherited/privately owned) land on either side of the Superhighway, and that a fraudulent transaction had taken place, reported the matter.

As expected, the NAB investigations in the case came to a grinding halt soon after they began. While all queries to the official spokesman remain unanswered, a source in NAB claims, “You have no idea of the kind of pressure we have to contend with.”

Locals allege that Malik Asad Sikander, well known for maintaining links with both the security establishment and VVIPs in the Sindh government, had arranged the fraudulent sale and transfer of the land in Jamshoro district to DHA, Karachi for DCK’s Sector 17 in order to circumvent the Supreme Court ban on allotment and lease of government land to private and public entities that has been in effect since November 2012.

NAB documentation of the case (ID no: NABK2015111019865) lists nine persons under investigation, including three government servants and five private individuals. The amount involved is listed as “more than Rs500 million”.

An excerpt from the findings recorded in the case brief reads: “Inquiry established that forgery was committed by the revenue officers/officials of revenue deptt. The revenue record of rights through which state land was fraudulently shown as private land.”

The findings also record that “DHA has not responded to a single query despite issuance of call up notice”.

Another related NAB document notes: “731-28 acres of the land under possession of DHA Karachi has no legal title for being subject to land fraud and vests in Board of Revenue, Govt of Sindh.”

The sensitive issue of jurisdiction in DCK is also far from clear. All land development must be overseen by a municipal authority, where its by-laws apply.

Phases I till VIII of DHA Karachi are contiguous, and fall under the municipal jurisdiction of the Clifton Cantonment Board (CCB).

However, DCK, sometimes also called DHA Phase-IX, lies some 40 kilometres beyond the limits of the CCB as the crow flies, and falls in the municipal jurisdiction of Malir Development Authority.

The administrator DHA, Karachi, conceded that there is a “procedural anomaly” in this respect, adding: “We have started the process with the Sindh government so that DHA, Karachi would provide the municipal services to DCK.” There were, in his view, several options that could be considered.

Sources said one of those options, a strong possibility, is for DCK to be notified as a ‘detached’ part of CCB in order to bring it under its municipal control. However, the definition of cantonments in Section II of the Cantonment Act 1924 does not provide the necessary cover.

It reads: “The Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, declare any place or places along with boundaries in which any part of the regular forces or the regular air force of Pakistan is quartered or which, being in the vicinity of any such place or places, is or are required for the service of such forces to be a cantonment for the purposes of this Act...”

A retired city official asks: “How can land granted in the name of the shuhada of the ‘war on terror’ fall in the definition of a cantonment?”

Moreover, such a move would violate an apex court judgement. In October 2007, the Supreme Court, in a human rights case (6844/2006) ordered that “Civilian areas shall be excluded from the cantonment boards through a notification by Ministry of Defence.

To identify such areas, a survey will be conducted by a committee comprising Director, Military Lands and Cantonments Karachi, EDO Revenue.... The committee shall submit its report within one month”.

The minutes of a meeting on Dec 4, 2007 held by the committee constituted on the orders of the SC noted: “Agenda of the meeting could not be discussed/ decided as at the very outset, the Director Military Lands and Cantonments pointed out that a review petition is being filed ... in the Supreme Court of Pakistan against its order...and till such time implementation must be stopped/ halted.”

However, the review petition was “dismissed for non-prosecution”, and the SC’s order has not been complied with.

Although it led nowhere, the work by the committee — which also included the director, military lands and cantonments Karachi — is illuminating.

To give but one instance, while the Clifton Cantonment’s civilian area came to 9,953 acres, its area of operational (military) use is only 58 acres. In fact, the operational areas in all of Karachi’s six cantonments add up to 17,516 acres, about 2,000 acres less than all of DCK, of which no part is designated for military use.

Meanwhile, the civilian areas in the six cantonments add up to 26,095 acres, some 6,000 acres more than the land thus far allotted to DCK.

Even earlier, a report by the National Reconstruction Bureau during Gen Musharraf’s government had also recommended that non-military use lands in Karachi be excluded from cantonments and handed over to CDGK. However the recommendation was not acceded to.

According to sources in MDA, which has a claim of more than Rs1.35 billion as development charges alone against DCK’s Sectors 1-16, DHA Karachi has neither submitted layout plans for the scheme, nor obtained the mandatory Permission to Build or the NoC to Sell from the Authority.

MDA authorities insist they have sent several letters to DHA Karachi, but that the latter has not responded.

According to news reports, on Oct 7, 2017, the Sindh government has transferred an additional 8,500 acres of land to the army in district Jamshoro for the families of the martyred at the rate of Rs15,000 per acre.

Meanwhile, the DHA City juggernaut continues to roll on in the name of development.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376579>

FARMERS IN PERIL

Dawn, December 20, 2017

FOR small-time farmers, the massive gated communities coming up in Karachi's peripheries are an ominous development that threatens to upend their very existence. Their quality of life, the prospects of their future generations, even their place within the extended community, is inextricably linked with the land.

On Monday, an investigative report in this paper exposed the travails of indigenous people in Karachi's district Malir who are under pressure of eviction from the land to which their claim often goes back generations.

The district, which is part of the city's rural belt, has in recent years been the focus of Bahria Town and DHA, Karachi, mega private developers who belong to or have connections within the highest echelons of power in this country. The tens of thousands of acres that have been acquired for the purpose in this area, at times by blatantly illegal means, add up to around 10pc of the entire district.

The construction of housing projects here also entails enormous environmental costs, whose extent will unfold over the years to come. The farmers unfortunately have no voice; those quarters whose duty it is to safeguard their rights have instead bartered them away in return for political favours and pecuniary benefits.

The state is constitutionally bound to protect its citizens' property rights. Instead, the PPP government is colluding with powerful lobbies by surrendering government land at throwaway prices and depriving those with a legal claim over portions of it in order to benefit from the proceeds. It is also the state's duty to provide housing, but no viable scheme for low-cost housing has been developed in Sindh for several decades.

The government's neglect on this score is in stark contrast with its alacrity in its transactions with private developers to build homes for the upper- and middle-income social strata. By going down this path, it is also encouraging runaway speculation in projects unlikely to see the light of day for decades.

Even the fact that this area constitutes a PPP vote bloc has not deterred the Sindh government; the avarice of its head honchos has blinded it to the party's very raison d'être and the legacy of its founders. Senator Farhatullah Babar on Monday called for the military's commercial activities to be confined to defence production and allied matters. He may want to question his own party's role in expanding the security establishment's commercial interests in Sindh.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1377655>

SHC REJECTS BAIL APPLICATION OF FORMER REVENUE DEO FOR SELLING LAND ILLEGALLY

Dawn, December 20th, 2017

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court on Tuesday dismissed the bail applications of former revenue DEO Allah Bachayo and two others in a case pertaining to illegal sale of 177 acres of land.

Headed by Chief Justice Ahmed Ali M. Shaikh, a two-judge bench rejected the bail applications after hearing final arguments from the defence and prosecution sides.

According to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the accused persons in connivance with each other prepared forged documents for 177 acres of land and sold it illegally. Total loss caused to the national exchequer was Rs380 million, the NAB maintained.

The accused persons, however, denied the charges and termed them baseless.

They prayed to the court to approve their bail applications as, according to them, they had nothing to do with the said offence.

An appellate bench of the high court set aside the conviction of a man who was sentenced to suffer rigorous imprisonment for 14 years for possessing explosive material.

The bench exonerated Mohammed Ibrahim of the charges and ordered his release if his custody was not required in any other criminal case.

The appellant was awarded the 14-year term by an antiterrorism court in the explosive material case in 2015.

The convict through his counsel challenged the punishment awarded by the trial court and submitted that the prosecution had failed to submit any concrete evidence against him.

The defence counsel contended that the ATC did not follow due procedure while convicting Ibrahim. He also contended that the prosecution failed to bring incriminating evidence against the accused person.

The defence counsel prayed to the court to set aside the conviction awarded to his client and order his release forthwith.

After hearing the arguments from both sides, the SHC bench set aside the punishment and ruled that the convict should be released if not arrested in any other case.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1377642>

COUPLE GETS POSSESSION OF 'GRABBED' LAND AFTER 35 YEARS

The Express Tribune, December 21st, 2017.

After 35 years, a man was finally handed possession of a plot he had bought in the federal capital.

A court also suspended the licence of two lawyers — who are also facing contempt of court proceedings — who had been occupying a house built on the land.

Faiza and her husband Khawaja Abdul Sami had filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) stating that they had applied for plots in the capital in the 1970s. While Sami was unsuccessful, Faiza's name was drawn in the balloting for allotment of the Sector E-7 plot. The couple subsequently paid the price of the plot.

But years later, when Sami visited the site of what he believed would be his future home, he was shocked to find a building standing on top of it with people living in it. Ever since, he had been struggling to retrieve possession of his plot even as possession of the house built on top of it shuttled between various occupants, most recently landing with a lawyer Sohail Ahmed.

After another court-mandated eviction order was resisted by the lawyer, the IHC had earlier in the week ordered to immediately hand over possession of the two-Kanal-plot to the petitioner.

When the case was taken up again on Wednesday, the court asked Sami if he had been given possession of the property. To this, he replied in the affirmative and thanked the court for making it possible for him to retake possession of his land after three-and-a-half decades.

The police also submitted a compliance report before the court, stating that the possession of the property has been handed over to the petitioner.

Later, while speaking to the media, Sami said that he had fought long and hard for his property.

“I had to struggle a lot in this long legal fight,” Sami said.

Earlier, Islamabad's Civil Judge Shaista Kundi had sent a bailiff to execute IHC's orders. The bailiff visited the contentious property on December 8 to ask the illegal occupants to hand over possession to Sami.

Ahmed, however, together with several of his colleagues resisted efforts of the bailiff and other officials to evict them.

With the help of the police, the bailiff was finally able to secure possession of the land and hand it over to Sami. But the very next day, Sohail re-occupied the house in defiance of court orders.

The bailiff had later approached the police and submitted a separate complaint against the group of lawyers who resisted them. He said that the lawyers had allegedly attacked and threatened him.

Meanwhile, two lawyers — Ahmed and Mushtaq Gulbaz — who are facing contempt of court proceedings in the case, deliberately failed to appear before the IHC on Wednesday.

Justice Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui had suspended the licences of the lawyers and had initiated contempt proceedings against them at the last hearing on December 18 for misbehaving in the courtroom.

Angered by their truancy, Justice Siddiqui warned that the court would issue arrest warrants for the lawyers should they fail to appear before the court at its next hearing. The court subsequently re-issued notices to the lawyers for January 9 and referred the matter to the bar council concerned for further proceedings against the lawyers.

The court also sent a copy of the order to the chairman of the election board of the bar council for appropriate action.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1589044/1-couple-gets-possession-grabbed-land-35-years/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 11th TO DECEMBER 17th 2017
RAILWAYS PLANNING TO UTILIZE ITS 10,913 ACRES OF BARREN LAND
Business Recorder, 11 December 2017

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways (PR) is planning to utilize across the country 10,913 acres barren land by executing various projects to earn more revenue for the department.

“Pakistan Railways has 8424 acres barren land in Punjab, 1346 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 263 in Sindh and 880 acres in Balochistan,” sources in the Ministry of Railways told APP. Giving details, they said the department owns 167,690 acres land all over the country, out of which 90326 situated in Punjab, 39428 in Sindh, 28228 in Balochistan and 9,708 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

They said that Pakistan Railways had leased out 15172 acres land for various purposes across the country and 3330 acres land is under encroachments of different government departments and individual.

The sources said Pakistan Railways was using 1086 acres land for Railway Housing Societies in four provinces and 806 acres land is under the utilization of regular and non-regular ‘Katchi Abadies’.

“Pakistan Railways has reserved 12808 acres land in four provinces for future operational use including 4364 acres in Punjab, 1800 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 900 acres in Sindh and 5744 acres in Balochistan,” they added.

To a question, they said that during the last three year of the present government PR has leased out 6496 acres railway land across the country to different departments and private persons to generate extra revenue.

“The land was leased and licensed out for various purposes including premium shops, stacking, agricultural and parking stands etc,” they added.

Giving province wise break-up, they said that Pakistan Railways has leased out 5,132 acres in Punjab, 833 in Sindh, 470 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 59 acres in Balochistan.

To another question, they said that Railway Administration carried out six anti encroachment operations to retrieve its encroached lands from government departments and individuals.

They said that a total of 3594.488 acres Railway land has been retrieved with the assistance of Railway Police and District Administration since 01st Feb 2012 till 31st Aug 2017.—APP

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/12/11/5-page/686979-news.html>

THREE LITIGANTS INVOLVED IN LAND DISPUTE KILLED

Dawn, December 15, 2017

LARKANA: Three persons were killed and two others injured in firing targeting some people sitting at a hotel near Chandka bridge within the jurisdiction of the Civil Lines police station of Larkana on Thursday.

The victims were identified as Allah Dino Bugti, Dad Mohammed Bugti and his son Akbar Bugti.

The victims were taken to the Chandka Medical College Hospital, where the injured were admitted and a post-mortem examination of the deceased was performed.

Police arrested Jan Mohammed Bugti and Janib Bugti after the attack.

Janib Bugti told reporters that he along with some other members of his tribe was having lunch at a hotel near the bridge on return home after attending the hearing of a case pertaining to a disputed piece of land. He alleged that his rivals in the case, Khadim Hussain Bugti and Alim, opened fire killing the three persons.

Jan Mohammed Bugti said that his father was also killed in 1999 by their rivals in the same land dispute.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376660/three-litigants-involved-in-land-dispute-killed>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 4th TO DECEMBER 10th 2017

RAILWAYS STRUGGLE TO RETRIEVE 4,120 ACRES OF ITS LAND

The Express Tribune, 5 December 2017

The matter of retrieval of its own land has become an issue for Pakistan Railways as 4,120 acres of land worth Rs89 billion has been encroached across the country by both private and government institutions, including army and rangers.

For the last several years, Pakistan Railways (PR) has been doing its utmost to get the problem of land encroachment resolved where thousands of acres of land has been occupied for commercial, residential and agriculture purposes, leaving the organisation exasperated.

Interestingly, government institutions are also involved in encroaching the land of Pakistan Railways, though most of it has been regularised through settlement with the latter.

As per records, in Punjab 2,091 acres of land has been encroached upon by private groups, government offices and different departments of defence.

Similarly, 1,159 acres of land in Sindh; 618 acres of land in Balochistan and 250 acres of land in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) has been occupied for different purposes.

Of these, around 1,903 acres of land had been occupied for agriculture purposes and about 1,317 acres for residential purposes. About 540 acres of land, however, was occupied by government departments in all the four provinces and 251 acres by departments of defence.

As per estimates of the Ministry of Railways, the net value of all 4,120 acres of encroached land was Rs89 billion.

“This is an ongoing process and we are trying to reach a solution with all the stakeholders,” said Parveen Agha, Ministry of Railways Secretary while talking to The Express Tribune.

She said they were still struggling for the commutation of land in provinces for titling as per the orders of Supreme Court. “Of all the provinces only K-P has cooperated for the titling of land while talks with the rest of the provinces are under way,” she concluded.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf’s Hamidul Haq has been facing challenges in his (NA-2) and NA-1 constituencies regarding encroachment and has been keenly following the issue since his victory in the by-election. He terms the issue dangerous and commented that the encroachers had become mafias especially those who have constructed residential colonies. “We went to visit such lands in Lahore, Quetta, Peshawar and other cities. We were told that it could lead to bloodshed but we went any way,” he said.

In 2011, the then chief justice Iftikhar Chaudhry gave orders for anti-encroachment drive and computerisation of land, but that has yet to be followed properly though some inroads had been made.

A senior official of the ministry who wished anonymity said that backing of political elite was the primary cause for glitches and challenges in retrieving the land. “Many of our politicians and people directly or indirectly connected with them are involved in this business, hampering our efforts for across the board action,” he concluded.

Since 2012 about 3,683 acres of land worth Rs17 billion has been retrieved while 1,692 acres of land retrieved from Pakistan Rangers was regularised of which 1,255 acres belonged to army and 437 acres belonged to the Rangers.

As part of standard operating procedure of the PR, police investigations were initiated against people involved in encroachment or were unwilling to vacate the land and so far 3,026 people have been arrested in such operations.

A system to computerise land records through assessment management system for Pakistan Railways has also been introduced. Countrywide Pakistan Railways has 167,690 acres of land of which Punjab has 90,326 acres; Sindh has 39,428 acres; Balochistan has 28,228 acres and K-P has 9,707 acres.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1576045/1-railways-struggle-retrieve-4120-acres-land/>

‘HOUSING SCHEMES EATING UP FERTILE LAND IN PESHAWAR VALLEY’

Dawn, December 05th, 2017

PESHAWAR: The growing housing societies in Peshawar valley have been eating up agriculture land, which is considered to be the most fertile land of the country.

This was stated by environmentalist Nadeem Bukhari at a training workshop on ‘sustainable land management’ held at University of Agriculture here on Monday. The workshop was organised by the climate change centre of the university.

He said that the ultimate impact of the agricultural production on environment was negative because of the excessive use of insecticide, pesticide and fertilisers.

The workshop was also addressed by Dr Mohammad Zulfiqar, the director of climate change centre, and Dr Mohammad Jamal Khan, the chairman of soil and environment department.

Mr Bukhari said that land provided an environment for agricultural production. He said that land was also an essential condition for improved environmental management, including source/sink functions for greenhouse gasses, recycling of nutrients, amelioration and filtering of pollutants, and transmission and purification of water as part of the hydrologic cycle.

The sustainable land management was necessary to harmonise the complimentary goals of providing environmental, economic and social opportunities for the benefit of present and future generations while maintaining and enhancing the quality of the land resource.

Mr Bukhari defined sustainable land management as use of land to meet changing human needs while ensuring long term socioeconomic and ecological functions of the land. He said that government needed to frame policies for land management that would also stop environmental degradation.

He said that it was necessary for the sustainable land management to reduce the level of production risk and enhance soil capacity to buffer against degradation processes and protect the potential of natural resources and prevent degradation of soil and water quality.

Mr Bukhari said that sustainability could be achieved only through collective efforts of those immediately responsible for managing resources. “It requires a policy environment that empowers farmers and other local decision makers to reap benefits for good land use decisions, but also to be held responsible for inappropriate land uses,” he added.

He said that there was an urgent need to resolve the global challenge to produce more food to feed rapidly rising global population while at the same time preserving biological production potential, resilience and environmental maintenance systems of the land.

Mr Bukhari said that sustainable land management, if properly designed and implemented, would make agriculture a part of the environmental solution rather than remaining an environmental problem.

Dr Zulfiqar said on the occasion that global climate models showed that climatic conditions were changing significantly at regional and global scales. “At the end of this century, climate will be substantially warmer than that of the past century,” he added.

He said that environmental changes had also impact on high intensity rainfall, increased rates of soil erosion and shifting timing of seasonal events.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1374653>

MORE LAND

Business Recorder, December, 6, 2017

Syed Bakhtiyar Kazmi

“Make sure it is deleted”. With those crisp and clear instructions, he cut the line. Will they never stop talking about land reforms, the Man wondered, even the Economist seems to have joined the debate; land reforms are fast becoming a global conspiracy. He had already informed his employers that he did not have the wherewithal to delete the Economist’s content from the Worldwide Web; and while removing domestic content was still doable, he brooded for how long.

Why don’t they just give up and forget about the rich exploiting land? On the other hand, if everyone just did that, and stopped pushing for land reforms, people like him would be jobless. He grinned mischievously, if it was not for this stupid democracy, there would be far less income inequality in this world; that the Man knew was the absolute truth!

Above is an attempt at satirical fiction, built upon the knowledge that my last week’s article was not available on the net. The truth, however, was that there was a technical glitch at the publication which was resolved and the article is now on the net; but a sinister twist is always more enjoyable to read. As is, we, the Pakistanis, prefer conspiratorial stories over facts; facts are rather boring!

Interestingly, the one and only comment I got on last week’s article on land was about allowing real estate development on agricultural land; in a struggling agricultural economy, building real estate for the rich on land which feeds the poor verges on immoral. Apparently, the government and the state are not able to understand.

“It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends on his not understanding it,” Upton Sinclair. The conclusion which can be drawn on the basis of this rather impeccable quote is that political institutions, and their cadre, are perhaps the primary beneficiaries of the status quo, which is why complicated conspiracies have been allowed to flourish resulting in deferment of rational actions necessary for inclusive economic growth.

And I don’t believe that this insight is restricted to reforms only; the nation struggles to build Big Dams because of disputes which, considering the repercussions, are absolutely unfathomable. A few politicians have most recently picked up the gauntlet and become champions for advocating steps to manage water stress, but even for them Kala Bagh Dam is apparently a taboo subject.

Dear readers, Pakistan being water-stressed is not an abstract notion, it is real. If we don’t move very quickly, in less than a decade, we might even have sacrificed food self-sustainability. Also understand that agriculture remains by far the primary source of employment for the majority of Pakistanis, and there will be no agriculture if there is no water; and obviously no economic growth! Land needs water.

It is also extremely curious that Dewani courts continue to survive in a nation which claims to be a capitalist economy and a democracy to boot; clear property rights are the backbone of capitalism, and I continue to wonder why voters have never raised this issue with the politicians whom they continue to vote for and elect; something clearly wrong with democracy’s narrative. The equity capital blocked

because of the Dewani cases, once released, has the potential to elevate Pakistan into the top 10 economies of the world; I kid you not.

“Buy land, they’re not making it anymore,” Mark Twain. Perhaps this is the key principle developing nations need to understand; if a nation cannot capitalize on its biggest asset for economic growth, it will continue to struggle and keep building narratives based on flimsy arguments linked to GDP. Everybody borrows as a percentage of GDP is hardly an appropriate argument for claiming borrowing of more money as an achievement. Someday, I hope to eventually get down to writing articles to destroy the GDP myth.

“For people whose livelihoods and culture depends upon the land, secure land rights are essential. They enable farmers to take out loans, increase their crop yields, and build a secure future for their families and communities,” from the book “Doughnut Economics” by Kate Raworth. And as pointed out by the Economist, in a country with abundant labour, small agricultural land holding makes perfect sense; that might even address the issue of unmanageable immigration to urban areas in search of employment. So why there is a dearth of Robin Hood styled NGOs who buy land from the rich and give to the poor?

If my fictional satire at the beginning turns out to be even fractionally perceptive, then this article may also disappear from the net. The silent majority will sit in their offices with their morning java, read this article and nod their heads, and forget about land issues by evening. I have also exhausted my library of facts and arguments and waiting for the Man to quickly send the lifafa. On the other hand, I fast realize that writing about political scandals rather than real issues facing the nation is perhaps a more lucrative pastime. “Income inequality”, “inclusive economic growth”, “poverty alleviation” and anything to do with land for the poor are only catchy political slogans and fodder for coffee table discussions of the civic society, and nothing more!

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/12/06/20-page/686135-news.html>

SINDH SAYS IT HAS LAND AVAILABLE FOR GERMAN COMPANIES

The Express Tribune, December 9th, 2017.

Showing interest in meeting one of the biggest demands of investors, the Sindh government has agreed to provide land for an exclusive industrial zone for German companies.

“We have land available and we are ready to discuss it further with relevant people,” said Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah while speaking at the first annual meeting of the German-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (GPCCI) organised at the German Consulate, Karachi.

Shah said that the provincial government is trying to develop coal and all other resources to produce energy. He, however, said Germany and Pakistan can further cooperate in producing renewable energy, which is also necessary along with the traditional fossil fuels.

Sindh is fast developing Thar coal reserves while it is already producing about 70% of total gas production of the country. Moreover, it is fast attracting private investments in its Gharo-Jhimpir wind corridor, which has been identified by the federal government as the most lucrative site for wind power plants in Pakistan.

Shah invited German companies to further increase their investments in the province and said that they will get all the support from the provincial government.

Speaking on the importance of education and training, German Ambassador to Pakistan Martin Kobler said that Pakistan has to create job opportunities for its youth that are entering the job market in the millions every year.

Kobler, who took charge just four months ago, said that Pakistan needs to prepare for its pressing demands in education, energy, climate etc, mainly because of its growing population.

“Renewable energy is the sector where Pakistan can grow fast,” said the ambassador. He said that Germany is also investing in renewable energy along with other energy sources since the devastating results of Fukushima nuclear accident.

In March 2011, an earthquake hit Japan that badly damaged nuclear installations in Fukushima, forcing many countries to reduce their dependence on nuclear energy due to dangerous risks associated with this cheap source of energy.

Earlier in his speech, GPCCI President Qazi Sajid Ali urged the Sindh CM to provide land where only German companies can set up factories.

“What we are witnessing is a real desire in German companies to come here,” said Ali. “I am sure a large number of German companies are ready to start manufacturing in Pakistan.”

Since the launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in April 2015, a renewed interest is seen in foreign investors who want to invest in the country. Improvement in macroeconomic indicators of Pakistan has also generated some interest in investors.

However, some companies and even diplomats have shown displeasure in private as they believe Pakistani authorities are favouring Chinese investors. Ali assured that GPCCI is making all-out efforts to bring German companies to Pakistan.

“Our objective is to bring German knowledge, innovation and technology to Pakistan,” he stressed.

GPCCI has formed expert groups in textiles, pharmaceutical, auto etc. to analyse specific requirements of Pakistani and German companies increase bilateral trade between the two countries. He also said that Pakistan can use German technology in agriculture sector, especially in water management, reservation, use of fertilizers etc. to increase its annual output.

Also speaking on the occasion, German Consul General in Karachi Rainer Schmiedchen said that Germany recognises the needs of Pakistan in vocational training and will train 18,000 Pakistanis before 2021.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1579776/2-sindh-says-land-available-german-companies/>