



*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

—Margaret Mead

# SHEHRI

APRIL - JUNE 1998 Vol. 8/No. 2

## INSIDE

- Environment & Media
- Shehri AGM/Seminar
- Colombo Workshop
- Going Nuclear
- CPLC
- Development Issue
- PMTF Gardens

## Environmental Concerns Front Page News?

**Dhunmai Cowasjee** calls for a better understanding of environmental concerns and sustainable development needs among environmental reporters and asks decision makers in the media to accord environmental news the importance it deserves.

There are several challenges that face the environmental movement in Pakistan: lack of adequate legislation, lack of implementation mechanisms, lack of political will. But the biggest bogie of them all is lack of understanding of the issues and lack of public support and this is where the media comes in. The challenge for the media is to build public awareness, understanding and support for the environment in a country where the majority of people are faced with more immediate problems of clean water, food and shelter. Show the people the link between the environment and their own lives and livelihood.

But to do this, the media itself has to be convinced of the importance of environmental news. The opinion makers within the media have to 'buy in' so that environmental news makes it to the front page, or is the lead news on radio or television. Today, in 1998, there is more environmental coverage than ever before, but how many times has the environment been the main news item? Very little, because editors and sub-editors

see politics as the most important news, and the best reporters are assigned this beat. And yet, recently, we had a leading columnist write that if you look at the headlines today and in the past 10 years, you will not be able to distinguish between today's and yesterday's news or between the people who said them. It is this mindset, that politics is news and that any other issue is not important news that we have failed to change.

We have to convince those who decide what is printed, broadcast or telecast that environment is not a fad nor merely a western idea, that there is a direct link between environment and poverty, between environment and people's livelihood, and how environmental degradation impacts on people. Not all the media feels

like this - there are many good journalists reporting on the environment but the will to place that news on the front pages is lacking. So often it happens that a piece is written only to be chopped and put on the city or back pages.



Environmental degradation: a chain of deadly disasters, but who is reporting?

At first the environmental movement did have a limited view: preserve charismatic species like the African elephant or the Bengal Tiger. But this approach changed as there was a realisation that these animals could not be divorced from the environment they live in - just as

people cannot be delinked from the environment they live in. So from preserve it went to conserve. But the main breakthrough in thinking came in 1980, with the publication of the World Conservation Strategy - a seminal docu-



**SHEHRI**

206-G, Block 2, P.E.C.H.S.,  
Karachi-75400, Pakistan.  
Tel/Fax: 92-21-453-0646  
e-mail/address:  
shehri@onkhura.com  
(web site) URL: http://  
www.onkhura.com/shehri

**EDITOR**

Farhan Anwar

**MANAGING COMMITTEE**

Chairperson : Qazi Faez Isha  
Vice Chairperson : Vicky de'Souza  
General Secretary :

Amber Ali Bhatti  
Treasurer : Khalib Ahmed  
Members : Navaid Hussain  
Khalib Ahmed  
Hanif Sattar

**SHEHRI STAFF**

Co-ordinator :  
Mrs. Mansoor  
Asst. Co-ordinator :  
Mohammad  
Rahat Ashraf

**SHEHRI SUB-COMMITTEES**

- i) Anti-Pollution  
Navaid Hussain
- ii) Conservation & Heritage  
Danish Azar Zubay  
Humaira Rahman
- iii) Media & Outreach  
Farhan Anwar  
Humaira Rahman  
Hassan Jaffery
- iv) Legal  
Qazi Faez Isha  
Amber Ali Bhatti  
Roland d' Souza  
Victoria d' Souza  
Khalib Ahmed
- v) Parks & Recreation  
Khalib Ahmed
- vi) Gun Free Society  
Navaid Hussain  
Qazi Faez Isha
- vii) Fund Raiser  
All Members

Contributions are welcome  
Interested contributors should contact  
the SHEHRI office for writers guide-  
lines. SHEHRI newsletter reader-  
ship is from students, professionals,  
environmentalists, policy makers,  
NGOs and other organizations.

Views expressed herein do not nec-  
essarily express the views of the  
Editor/Editorial Board.

Composed by :  
GRAPHISENSE PAKISTAN  
Tel : 62 80 72

Printed by :  
Samina Printers  
Tel : 62 88 22

For the printing of this newsletter  
SHEHRI-CBE  
acknowledges the support of  
The Friedrich-Naumann  
Foundation

**SHEHRI-CBE**

acknowledges the support of  
The Friedrich-Naumann  
Foundation

Member of

**IUCN**

The World Conservation Union

**EDITORIAL**

*A Nation in Mourning*

“Sustainable Development”, is a term much favoured by environmental and development analysts while describing a desirable process of growth. Explained in the simplest of terms it implies the use of resources in such a way that they can sustain not only our growth but that of our future generations without being depleted and exhausted along the way. Looking at our present pathetic and humiliating financial straits, it seems as if this development philosophy never reached our shores. One feels shamed, disgraced and disgusted at the contents of the explanations on offer and on the remedies being proposed by our “leaders” and financial custodians - sanctions, IMF/World Bank dictates, enemy conspiracies being among the more popular ones. Quite frankly, none of the above can be blamed. The crisis is but a natural outcome of years of loot, plunder and shameful neglect of duty and national honour by those that govern us - both administratively and political-ly. It is the contemptuous legacy of a long list of egomaniacs, past and present, masquerading as national leaders, who never missed an opportunity to place concerns of personal aggrandizement above (and at the cost of) national duty. We are a nation in perpetual mourning - even the tears have now dried up.

ment by IUCN, WWF and UNEP – that coined the phrase “sustainable development”, development in a way that ensures that natural resources are used but are still available for future generations.

That conservation was not the opposite of development and that it could not be achieved without alleviating the poverty of millions of people. That brought about the link between environmental issues and economic survival. Conservation has a place, but it occupies a much smaller space and the emphasis is on sustainable develop-ment.

Let’s take a look at the link between environment and development.

- Fish catch, and particularly shrimp, harvested from the sea is decreasing – with a consequent decrease in valuable export earnings.
- Pakistan has lost 45 million

hectares of its land to desertification – this land is no longer available to farmers for agriculture or grazing lands.



Polluting our seas:  
Should this not constitute  
front page news?

- Prime agricultural land around Lahore is being gobbled up for urban use – so the the best quality land is going out of use for food production.

- Little to none industrial waste water or domestic sewage in the country is being treated – this waste water is the major culprit behind the spread of water borne diseases that account for approximately 60% of infant deaths.

- Tarbela dam’s life expectancy has dropped from 100 years to 55 years – the reason? Siltation because of poor watershed management and this will have an enormous impact on irrigation and hydel power, and be a hidden economic cost for the country.



- Quetta's water is supplied by its underground watertable – with water being extracted faster than it is being replenished. In another 5-10 years, this water will be gone.

All these are environmental issues and yet they impact on development and on people and their source of income. Media people have to come to this understanding, that environmental issues need little 'packaging' to be interesting. They are about people and their lives and this, after all, is more interesting reading than the speeches of our political personalities.

If there is agreement that environmental reporting is necessary, then the next issue is understanding the subject. The environment spans many disciplines; some of its concepts are scientific concepts that need to be explained in simple terms; and they cover local, national and global issues.

- A wide range of subjects come under the term sustainable development, anywhere from legislation to urban migration. Under legislation, you need to have an idea of environmental legislation such as the 'Pakistan Environmental Protection Act' of 1997 to the laws that affect the environment that can be found under forestry, fisheries, irrigation, agriculture and mining legislation. Or about international conventions. Or that one of the reasons for urban migration can be salinity and waterlogging that force small farmers off the land. It can be an understanding of indigenous practices such as the *Hurri* or acacia plantations in Sindh that helped maintain soil fertility or the karezes of Baluchistan that helped carry water for upto 20 miles without pumps or pipes and without losing water to

evaporation.

- Scientific terms need to be simply explained. For example, genetic diversity that means that each living creature contains information that will determine what it is, and this information is within its genes. Genetic variety is important and especially for agriculture for it allows scientists to develop new varieties of food crops such as wheat that can be pest resistant or produce more per acre.

- How it is a global subject. Look at the example of global warming, greenhouse gases and the ozone layer. Plenty has been written about it but from a western orientation. There is little understanding of how they affect Pakistan. If the earth's temperature increases even slightly, one effect can be increased snow melt in the northern areas and the greater chances of floods in the Punjab.

Environmental reporting needs to be seen in two ways. In the first instance, reporters need to have a general understanding of the issues. And second, there is the need for journalists who have more in depth knowledge of the subject. As long as there is awareness, then many more people can begin to report on a variety of issues, gaining expertise as they go along. This is vital in a country like Pakistan, where people in the media come from a variety of backgrounds.

There is a need for analysis of

news: as more and more land is lost to salinity and waterlogging and desertification, less and less land is available for agriculture and for food crops. What this means for Pakistan and its rapidly growing population is a food crisis. Last year we had the example of a wheat crisis, and we are in a situation where we have gone from being a wheat-exporting nation to a wheat-importing nation.

**Media people have to come to this understanding, that environmental issues need little 'packaging' to be interesting. They are about people and their lives and this, after all, is more interesting reading than the speeches of our political personalities.**

Once this analysis starts happening, then reporting will become more focused and capable

of evoking a response. Take the case of the Indus Highway. Conceived in the early 1970s the Highway was to link Karachi to the Northern Areas. It came to the forefront in 1991, when a section from Nuriabad to Sehwan was to be constructed through Kirthar National Park. Public pressure eventually led to rerouting the road along the Park boundary. In this case, it was the press that drew attention to the issue, the press that kept the issue alive in the papers in the several months it took for a decision to be made. It was the editorials in the press and the letters to the editor that led to signature campaigns and public litigation by two NGOs.

Kirthar was important for another reason also. The decision to reroute the highway was taken by the then Prime Minister. It was a decision taken at the highest political level without any repercussions for individuals. This was because the national press took this up as an issue; it was written



about by a number of newspapers in the English, Urdu and Sindhi press; and it was backed by a number of NGOs who both raised public awareness and took the issue to court. This does not mean that every issue has to have such a high profile but that on a particularly contentious and political issue, many counter forces have to be at work.

What also needs to be drawn out is the benefits of looking at environmental issues. An example is IUCN's biodiversity project in the Northern Areas and the NWFP.

Rural communities are receiving technical help to draw up natural resource management plans that meet their own development needs. These plans are being developed with the support of the local government and have a dual purpose: economic development through the sustainable use of natural resources.

We need to expand our vision to development reporting. Right now environmental organisations are focussing on environmental issues, women's organisations on women's issues and human rights

organisations on human rights. But all these are linked. A clean environment is a human right, women use the environment and a degraded environment means more time spent on fetching fuelwood and water and being exposed to agricultural chemicals in the fields. We need to combine our energies and look at development reporting and to these issues, for it is these issues that would help us improve our people's lives. □

*(Dhunmai Cowasjee is Acting Programme Director, Communications Unit, IUCN, Pakistan)*

## In memory of those who brought environmental news to the front pages

*The year 1993 was unfortunate for the environmental movement in Pakistan in that we lost two extremely talented, energetic and brave young ladies - Ameneh Azam Ali and Zulekha Ali. 5 years down the road, Shehri pays tribute to those brave souls and hopes that their mission is carried forward with the same zeal, professionalism and commitment by those that follow in their footsteps.*

### Ameneh Azam Ali (1955-1993)

Ameneh's first base was the Herald, where due to her efforts and commitment, the Herald became the first publication in Pakistan to carry a special section on the environment. She specialized in research reporting and did extensive work on the issue of deforestation, in the areas of Swat



and Malakand. She was also in a sense, a pioneer in the field of urban development reporting. Her work on the Lines Area Project won her much acclaim. Her article "Apocalypse Now" on the urban crisis in Sindh won her an All Pakistan Newspapers Society Award.

In 1989 she joined the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme to work on women and development issues, in the Women in Development (WID) programme in Gilgit, a programme she was associated with till her death.

### Zulekha Ali (1969 - 1993)

Zulekha's stint as an environmental journalist, working with the News Karachi was extremely brief, yet she achieved in those few years more than many journalists may take a lifetime to achieve. She was a lively soul who

touched everybody with her boundless energy and commitment towards her profession - showing a level of maturity far beyond her years. Like a good journalist, she had a sense and feel for a real story. Her writeup on the "Toxic Dumps" case made headline news. □



She did not live long enough to receive any awards during her lifetime. However, posthumously, she was awarded the "Global 500 Youth Environment Award" of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in recognition of outstanding, practical achievement in the protection and improvement of the environment, on World Environment Day in London (1994). Posthumously, she was also awarded the "Sitara-e-Shujaat" by the President of Pakistan on 23rd March 1994 for saving her friend Natasha from drowning, an act of extreme valour which also cost her life and deprived the country of a promising young potential. □

*May their souls rest in peace - Amen.*

### A MOTHER REMEMBERS

Zulekha Ali was born on April 3, 1969, in England. She loved animals from the time when she was very small. Once she jumped into a pool, to save a small puppy from drowning, when only four. Zulekha had a natural way with all pets. She loved people and life itself. Couldn't see anyone in pain, and tried to squeeze as much as possible into her 24 hour day. Environment was her passion - best daughter, sister and friend in the world.

*This piece was written specially for Shehri by Ms. Ali Nawaz, mother of Zulekha Ali.*

## SHEHRI ACTIVITIES

### Eighth Annual General Meeting – Shehri-CBE

The eighth annual general meeting of Shehri was held at the Shehri office on Saturday, May 23rd 1998.

Mr. Qazi Faez Isa, Chairman Shehri-CBE, discussed in detail about the projects and activities carried out by Shehri during the year 1997. These included the KBCA workshops, seminar on the state of municipal services in Karachi and an evening with Shehri (Fund Raiser).

Also highlighted were the activities of various sub-committees of Shehri and the projects carried out by them such as the Citizens Guide Book on Solid Waste Management, Environmental Impact Study on the issue of land use conversion and the Karachi Guide-book Project (ongoing).

Members were also informed about Shehri's ongoing tree plantation campaign and its participation in KMC's 'Adopt a Park' scheme.

Mr. Isa paid rich tributes to the contribution of Mr. Navaid Husain towards the cause of Shehri and for the betterment of this city and deplored the murderous attack on his life, which took place last year. He expressed his satisfaction at Shehri's achievements, called for greater input from members and praised the Shehri staff and members for giving their valued time and commitment to the democratic traditions of the organization.

Ms. Amber Alibhai, General Secretary Shehri, proposed that the minutes of last years meeting be



L-R: Qazi Faez Isa, Chairman Shehri, and Amber Ali Bhal, General Secretary, Shehri

adopted. This was seconded by Shehri member Mr. Farooq Fazal.

The audit report for the year 1997 was presented by Mr. Khatib Ahmed, the Treasurer, Shehri. The motion for adoption of Shehri's annual report for the year 1997 was moved by Ms. Azra Aqil, a Shehri member and seconded by another Shehri member, Dr. Gardezi.

Mr. Roland de'Souza, member Legal Sub-Committee, Shehri, spoke on the occasion and called upon the Shehri members and the citizens at large to give more time and money for projects and causes aimed at improving the living conditions of the residents of the city.

Mr. Farooq Fazal and Ms. Raffat Rasheed ul Haq, members of Shehri, also spoke on the occasion. They praised and appreciated the work of Shehri and called for expanding its activities. They also urged their fellow members to devote more time and energy towards solving the problems of the city. □



L-R: Khatib Ahmed, Treasurer Shehri and Roland de'Souza member legal sub-committee, Shehri



The participants showed a keen interest in the performance of Shehri



## Seminar on "The environmental challenge in Pakistan: Role of media"

A seminar on "The environmental challenge in Pakistan: Role of media" was organized by Shehri-CBE in collaboration with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, on the 2nd of May, 1998 at the Hotel Marriott, Karachi.

Mr. Farhan Anwar, Editor, Shehri-Newsletter, who also conducted the seminar proceedings, gave a brief introduction on the need and objectives of the seminar. He stressed the importance of identifying the problems being faced by environmental print journalists and people related with the electronic media in pursuing their work and enhancing the quality of their production. Mr. Anwar, while expressing dissatisfaction with the present state of environmental journalism in the country, touched upon the need of according a special status to environmental journalism and asked the speakers and participants to come forward with practical suggestions to improve the present condition.

Ms. Dhumnai Cowasjee, Acting Programme Director, Communication Unit, IUCN Pakistan, said that the basic duty of environmental journalists was to raise public awareness among the people on

the importance of the issue of environmental preservation and its vital link with their daily lives and nations overall development process. She felt that it was upto the decision makers in the print media to realize the importance of the issue and to make it "headline news".

Ms. Cowasjee provided various facts and figures to highlight the strong link between environment

journalism in Pakistan with particular reference to the electronic media. She felt that successive governments in Pakistan, particularly the last martial law government did not practice media friendly policies which inhibited the growth of free press in the country. Another serious inhibiting factor has been the absence of a proper communication policy which could have provided greater autonomy to the media.



The media was well represented in the seminar.

and development. She stressed the need of objective analysis and a broadening of the focus from environmental reporting to development reporting and cited the examples of the Indus Highway and Kirthar National Park projects as cases of successful journalistic campaigns.

Ms. Shireen Pasha, Chief Executive, "Film Makers", gave a historical perspective of environmental

Ms. Pasha said that our National Conservation Strategy (NCS) should now be followed by a communication strategy. She regretted the fact that while in the developed world, innovative scientific and analytical approaches are being applied to make media more

reflective of the needs and requirements of the people, no such process is underway in our country, where media is not dealing with real issues and the reporter have mostly lost touch with the people.

She urged the need of introducing good dramas dealing with real and live issues. She regretted that dramas have gained a monotony, projecting similar issues and



(L-R) Farhan Anwar, Dhumnai, Cowasjee, Shireen Pasha and Azra Syed



(L-R) Ghulam Mohiuddin, Qamar Ali Abbasi, Mohsin Ali and Javed Jabbar

characters. Environmental, development and social issues need to be effectively tackled via dramas through extensive research and analytical input.

**Ms. Azra Syed**, environmental reporter, *The News*, Karachi, emphasised the need of better training facilities for environmental journalists. She also felt that environmental news should be projected more prominently to achieve greater impact. She felt that poverty was the basic root cause and all other issues are related to this main problem.

**Mr. Ghulam Mohiuddin**, Feature Writer, *Daily Jang*, Karachi, said that it is upto the decision makers in the media business to accord environmental news the importance it deserves. Improvement in the quality of work will certainly follow suit. He said that the Urdu press was rendering a valuable contribution towards the cause of environmental preservation. He highlighted the gravity of the situation and said that even in a large urban centre like Karachi, there were many localities in which people were living in extremely sub-human conditions, deprived of all the basic services of life.

**Mr. Qamar Ali Abbasi**, Station Director, Radio Pakistan, in his characteristic humorous style touched upon various serious subjects. He said in our country the crisis was so severe that even

in the urban areas people were enjoying a quality of life close to village life when compared with the developed nations of the world. He informed the participants about the constructive and important role, Radio Pakistan was playing in raising awareness and consciousness of the people on the issue. He felt that a greater resolve and sensitivity has to be exhibited by us if we are to effectively tackle this grave challenge.

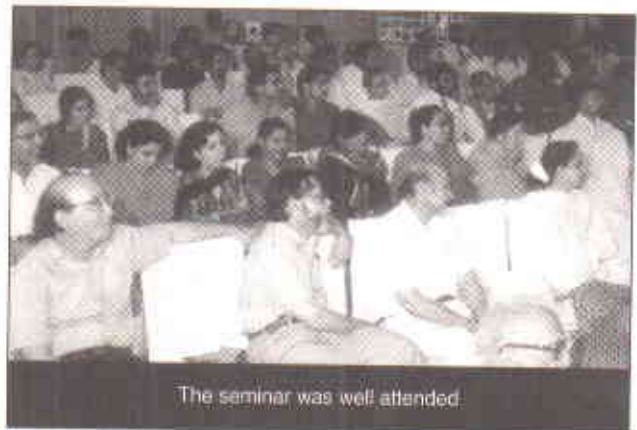
**Mr. Mohsin Ali**, General Manager, Pakistan Television, Karachi Centre, said that the initial team of television professionals were committed to their profession, enjoyed their work and took it as a mission. Now all that has changed for the worse. He regretted that documentaries, which are an effective way of highlighting environmental and developmental issues are not receiving due priority in PTV policies these days. He expressed the need of reviving documentaries, in which PTV had in the past gained international acclaim.

Mr. Ali felt that insufficient funds were also a constraint. In this connection, he felt that increased level of private sector involvement and sponsorships can help in improv-

ing the situation.

Mr. Mohsin Ali, praised the initiative taken by Shehri and asked the Shehri members to assist PTV in planning strategies for improving the quality of environmental news coverage and reporting in PTV.

**Mr. Javed Jabbar**, Founding Chairman, South Asia Media Association, who presided over the seminar proceedings, in his concluding remarks appreciated and lauded the role of Shehri in raising debates on important and pressing issues. Mr. Jabbar said that although data collection process on such issues was now better than before, proper and objective analysis was missing. He also regretted the absence of media monitoring within newspapers. In this connection he suggested the formation of a "Citizens Media Commission" to monitor the role of the media. He also proposed the formation of a "Media Environment Forum".



The seminar was well attended.



Mr. Jabbar emphasised the importance of Radio, due to its mass and grass root level reach. He stressed the need of revitalizing the role of documentaries. He felt that it was very important to carefully and realistically analyze the scope and impact of the media in influencing public opinion. In this context he

gave examples of "No smoking campaign" in USA and "Nuclear Disarmament" campaign in Europe, which despite the universal appeal of the issues failed to achieve the desired results.

He also expressed the need of opening up the media sector to pri-

vate initiative. In this context he informed that there were 1300 radio stations in Turkey.

The speeches were followed by a question answer session, following which Mr. Farhan Anwar gave the vote of thanks and concluded the seminar. □

## **Shehri attends seminar on "The development of Asian municipalities and the role of private initiative and civic participation - Limited government and civil society in the context of megalopolis development in Asia" (Colombo, Sri Lanka, May 29 - June 3, 1998)**

The purpose of this seminar, organized by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation was to bring a greater understanding between citizen representatives of various Asian countries on issues of civic governance, role of civic organization and civic society, in the light of their own varied experiences, which they shared during the course of the seminar.

The seminar participants were drawn from FNF partner groups from Pakistan, India, Nepal and Thailand.

The Pakistani delegation was represented by Farhan Anwar, Victoria de'Souza, Muhammad Nauman of Shehri, Jameel Yousuf of Citizen Police Liaison Committee (CPLC) and Kaiser Bengali of Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI).

These groups were to interact with the officials of the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) including the Mayor of Colombo, Mr. Deshbandu Karu Jayasuriya. This activity included group discus-

sions, visual presentations and field visits to the Colombo Municipal Council and to the various projects of the CMC.

The purpose of the whole exercise was to give advise to the Mayor on

faced by the cities of Mumbai and Karachi.

It was felt that the city government should be as independent and free from central control in its financial and administrative functions as possible to improve its efficiency. The participants also agreed that an increased level of citizen involvement in civic affairs is needed to bring transparency in the functions of the civic bodies and also in order to share their load.

However, participants differed over whether this role should be institutionalized or not. Solid waste

management was considered to be an issue of prime concern and most groups felt dissatisfied with the way it was being handled by their civic bodies. It was also an area of civic governance which was identified as having maximum potential for private sector and citizen involvement.

The issue of privatization was discussed in great detail and it was felt that although such a process

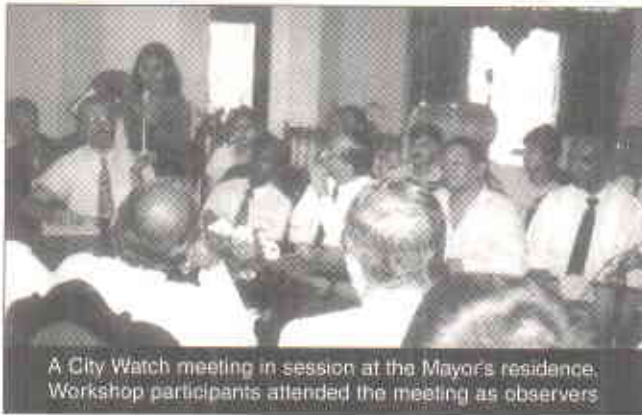


The participants of the workshop with the Mayor of Colombo and staff of Colombo Municipal Council

various civic issues, particularly with reference to the CMC's recently launched privatization programme.

The issues that were discussed during the seminar related to the technical, administrative, legal and political aspects of civic governance. Many similarities were observed between the experiences of various Asian cities, particularly between the challenges being





A City Watch meeting in-session at the Mayor's residence. Workshop participants attended the meeting as observers



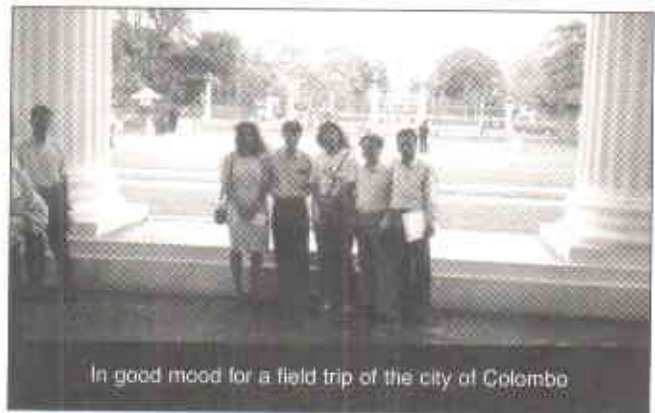
Final preparations before a group presentation

was the need of the hour, it has to be accompanied with strong regulatory setups to protect public interest.

The municipal council of Colombo has initiated a privatization programme which involves the privatization of the solid waste management system with emphasis on composting (83% of the garbage generated in Colombo city is organic in nature). A landfill site is also being developed. Private sector is also being involved in urban traffic management and health care schemes.

The steps taken by CMC for the betterment of the living conditions in Colombo city under the able guidance of the Mayor Mr. Jaysuriya were greatly appreciated by all the participants of the seminar

Dr. Rainer Adam, Regional representative South Asia, FNF, conducted the seminar proceedings, while Ms. Sagarica Delgoda, Country Representative FNF, Sri Lanka acted as the host and facilitator. □



In good mood for a field trip of the city of Colombo

## Update on "Shehri Park"

**A**s was informed in the last newsletter, Shehri participated in Karachi Metropolitan Corporations "Adopt a Park" scheme and adopted a park (ST12, Block No. 5 Scheme-5, Clifton, Karachi) for development and maintenance.

Shehri's **Imran Javed** is presently coordinating the parks development programme. The site of the undeveloped park has been properly leveled and 70% of the park area has been cleaned. A major problem that has been encountered is that sewage lines which pass through the park are damaged and KW&SB officials say that the required funds are not available. Efforts are however underway to overcome this problem.

A residents body, comprising of people living in flats adjacent to the park has been formed to oversee and monitor the development work.

Any person, organization, multinationals willing to fund our plans for purchasing/ installing children amusement equipment such as slides and benches etc. are most welcome. □



## URBAN MANAGEMENT

### Challenges of municipal development in Sri Lanka: The case of Colombo municipality

*Mr. Deshabandu Karu Jayasuriya, the Honorable Mayor of Colombo city talks about his efforts to improve the living conditions of the city through active participation of citizens and organized private sector by initiating fresh approaches to city governance. Our own city managers can learn a lot from Mr. Jayasuriya's bold new initiatives and policies*

The development of Local Government in Sri Lanka, can be traced to very ancient times. Historical records of the first to the sixth centuries AD contain numerous references to such matters as the recovery of the rates, taxes and revenue shares, supply of water for irrigation, the existence of administrative divisions and so on.

The affairs of each village were controlled by its natural leaders, and the Village Councils known as the *Gan Sabha*, which functioned independent of the central authority.

There were also larger councils known as *Rata Sabhas* which dealt with matters concerning the whole district or province. The great cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa in the North Central Province of Sri Lanka, had their own Town Councils and Mayors.

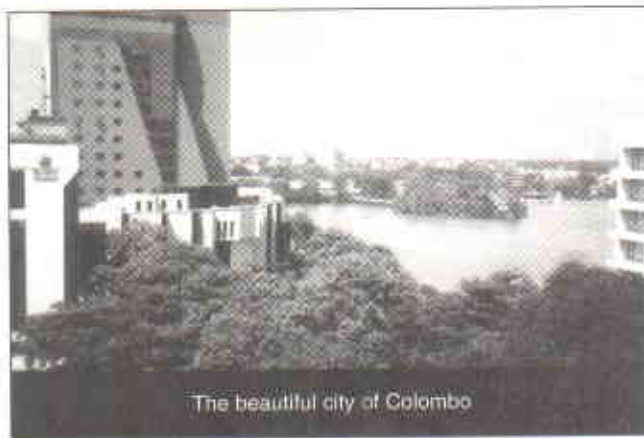
During the periods of Portuguese, Dutch and early British rule, when we were one of their colonies these systems saw a decline and ceased to receive local recognition.

Early British administrators however realised the value of the old system and its association with old customs. They introduced to the towns and urban areas modern machinery of local government, very

much on the British model.

For Colombo, as many cities of the developing world, colonialism played a dominant role in shaping the urban form. Cities were laid out to serve the needs of trade and territorial administration.

It was in 1865, that the Colombo Municipal Council was inaugurated. Its formation marked the first elections to public office held in this country in the colonial era.



The beautiful city of Colombo

Over the hundred odd years since, this city has steadily progressed to be a modern city, throbbing with activity, with a population of nearly 800,000 and a floating population of nearly half a million.

The from rigid, hierarchical, bureaucratic form was the traditional model of public administration in this country. Often have we heard of the poor performance of public bureaucracies, the cumbersome red-tapes, unpleasant officials, poor services and corrupt or

irregular practices. We also witnessed a significant decline in the performance of the public sector due to "politicization". I looked for a change in a profession that saw little change for most of this century. I also realised that there was a need for a shift from the traditional form of Public Administration to Public Management.

Over the past few decades, politics had become an integral part of the Council administration. In order to ensure a good relationship, prior to the Local Government Elections, every effort was made to include several professionals as candidates, whilst allowing grass root level politicians. Nominations were given to those with good "civic record and all candidates were required to declare their assets. This enabled us to ensure an experienced as well as professional team

as Councillors in our current tenure. I also selected my deputy and successor, even before assuming office and gave him the opportunity to acquire leadership skill and the warmth of the Mayoral Chair.

In an effort to minimise wasteful inter-party conflict and political confrontation which has reduced the quality of services, five members of the opposition political parties in the Council were elected as Chairman from the 15 Statutory



Standing Committees. Together they formed the Inner Cabinet. This was a new concept, with 33% of my Cabinet appointed from the opposition.

Another positive step was to depoliticise the administration. The Councillors role was more in setting out the policies, determined by the needs of their electorates. The executives handled the implementation. Though the Mayor was the Chief Executive Officer of the Council, There was a very high degree of delegation to the Deputy Mayor with the Municipal Commissioner acting as the Chief Operations Officer.

More emphasis was given, on training - particularly on public relations and customer focus.

These changes created a new atmosphere to the Council. Officials were made to feel as being part of the institution and a sense of participatory management was evident. Greater involvement of the officials in the activities has created a sense of TEAM SPIRIT with regular dialogue and meetings, managers leading by example, creating a climate of trust, sharing their knowledge and participation with their subordinates, taking care of the employees and above all giving them the assurance that there would be no political interference.

Now the private sector is involved with us in the delivery of many services - maintenance of dispensaries, street name boards, roundabouts, traffic lighting system, common amenities to the poor, preparation of the vision for the city, tree planting campaign, cleaning campaigns, educational activities and so on.

The establishment of the Advisory Committee was a new initiative. The members appointed are those

recognized for their expertise, experience and reputation in the relevant field. Their main role was to devise on the long term, professional development of the services concerned for the betterment of the city and to introduce discussion about international developments in the fields concerned and how they could be introduced to the Council. The City Watch Committee is also a group of civic leaders and professionally qualified persons who would initiate and maintain regular dialogue with us on matters pertaining to the rate-payers, services and other activities.

The under-serviced form an important sector of the city population. 45% of the housing stock in the city are slums, shanties and tenements. A peoples participation program through the formation of Community Development Councils, CDCs, has been established to enhance the community participation and safeguard the amenities provided. Today we have nearly 600 CDCs under the overall supervision of the Council.

For the first time in this City, a *Career Guidance Information Centre* has been established. It has already attracted a large number of young people seeking information on their future careers. This too has been possible due to the support and cooperation received from the Private Sector, the Organisation of Professional Association, the Chambers of Commerce and the Universities.

Among the many NGOs the Lion Ladies are fully involved, with us in the management of the Home for the Aged and the City Orphanage. They visit them regularly providing the inmates with the much needed love and care.

An ambitious program of providing vocational training to 5000

young people in the next 12 months has also received the support of several NGOs.

With a view to bring back the old charm of the City, the Institute of Architects volunteered to prepare the document on the "*Vision for the City of Colombo - year 2005*". The City Watch Committee has initiated action to carry out a complete census of the city - a most needed project as the last census was done over twenty five years ago.

The International Community has shown tremendous interest and has responded favourably towards our efforts to develop the City. The management approach of the Council is to improve the quality of live and health in the City. We want to involve the citizens, the private sector and the NGO's in the creation of a People - Friendly City. This can be made possible through effective leadership, political will and new forms of democratic and participatory governance.

Our vision is that of Colombo being a model city in Asia providing a high quality of life to the people. Our mission is to provide better quality services to the public with effective utilization of all the resources by a motivated and dedicated team.

It is vital that local administration systems are credible in the eye of the political power structure and legitimate in the eyes of the local residents. For this, what is necessary is a proper institutional and political framework for local governance. Because the ultimate responsibility for the design of institutions, procedures and policies rests with the politicians, officials and residents of each City. □

*(Excerpts from the speech of the Mayor of Colombo at the Colombo Workshop.)*