



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

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Citizen's Activism: Drawing the line?

The recent second armed attack on the life of Navaid Husain of Shehri and arrest of Omar Asghar Khan of Sungi, has brought into sharp focus, the real threats posed to the NGO movement in Pakistan, the issue of the government sector – NGO/CBO relationship and in its perspective, the overall crisis of governance. SHEHRI discusses these issues and calls for the initiation of urgent action to resolve the crisis.

The NGO movement in Pakistan, if it can at all be termed as a proper movement, has had a chequered past. Although social issues like education, healthcare and human rights have been tackled in the informal sector since the early days of independence, matters relating to the degradation of our natural resources and built environment, have only fairly recently attracted the attention of NGO's and CBO's in a big way.

Social welfare, infrastructure development/maintenance and natural resource conservation are subjects, which quite naturally, should form the cornerstone of the internal policy framework of any people responsive government. It is the basic responsibility of the government of the day in any country to ensure that its citizens receive proper education, healthcare and housing facilities, alongwith easy, and as far as humanly possible, cheap access to safe drinking water, power and road networks. The larger urban centres require special attention, as they are faced with problems of a more complex nature. They should be served with properly functioning sewerage, drainage

and transportation systems, as well as with efficient and people friendly law enforcing agencies.

The fortunes of any government in the developed world, or for that matter, those of functioning democracies and representative governments anywhere in the world, rise and fall, as a direct consequence to the level of satisfaction they have been able to provide to their subjects, with regards the above mentioned issues.

However, in a major portion of the world, governments, due to a mix of historic, economic, social and political reasons, fail to ensure effective and positive governance, and at levels, which vary and differ from one country to another and from one region to another, the basic needs of the citizens remain largely unfulfilled. Localized activist NGO's and CBO's, mostly come into being, as a direct consequence of a weak government, or worse, an inactive and apathetic government. NGO's thus raise the level of awareness among the citizen's, and can either work with the governments in a participatory, supportive and watchdog role or can

unfortunately come in direct conflict with the government of the day. The latter role, though is undesirable, but can often not be avoided also.

In our country, particularly in the large urban centres, the relationship between the various governments and local NGO's/CBO's has been to say the least, unsatisfactory and strained. Shehri's own difficult and at times, acrimonious struggle in issues related with illegal constructions, land and coastal pollution and general



Navaid Husain: Testing the limits of citizen's activism?



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EDITORIAL

Destination unknown?

The decision of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation to dump the projects of Women's Sports Complex, Gulshan-e-Iqbal and Indoor Gymnasium, Kashmir Road, has yet again brought to fore, the continuing policy of inconsistency being pursued by our successive governments - a fact which has done much to destabilize the society and shake investor confidence in our abilities to govern in a mature and responsible manner. Such decision making, which unfortunately does not seem to base on considerations of merit and fairplay, is being displayed at all levels of governance i.e. local, provincial and federal. Over the years, our bureaucracy has become inefficient in its functions and corrupt in its dealings - attributes which leave the rusty bureaucratic machine poorly equipped to withstand the persistent pressures of political interference. On the other hand, the democratically elected politicians, by taking arbitrary decisions on issues of public concern, are doing little to fulfill the expectations of their respective electorate. Rival political entities are expected to exhibit differing opinions on many issues, which get reflected in their policy decisions. However, the country needs to be steered more or less on a stable course to ensure progress and prosperity. We seem to make it a point to turn the wheels of the nation in opposing directions as turns are taken at the driving seat. What a way to approach an appointed destination. Maybe we are not sure of our ultimate destination anyway.

advocacy work, bear testimony to this fact. Even the few successful participatory and collaborative projects, have been achieved at great pains, the sustainability of whom can not be guaranteed.

The reasons are many. Over the last 20 to 30 years the workings of our local bodies and other civic organizations have been heavily politicized. As a result, rampant corruption has become the rule of the day and professionalism among the officers has been eroded to the level, that the number of professionally competent and honest government officials can now be counted on our fingers. Also, political instability has ensured that there is no continuity in government policies.

Projects started with much fanfare by one government are deemed unnecessary and wasteful by another and dumped unceremoniously. Only the poor taxpayer suffers. The dumping of Ladies Sports Complex, Gulshan-e-Iqbal, and Indoor Gymnasium, Kashmir, Road, are some recent examples.

For a long period, no local bodies elections have been held, an important contributing factor in the decay of these institutions.

NGO's are increasingly finding themselves assuming roles and entering areas of work, which should have been the domain of the government sector.

NGO's, conscious of this malaise, have now become increasingly vocal in their criticisms of these organizations. As a participatory approach between government and NGO's has in general failed, mostly due to non-action and a show of disinterest on the part of the government officers, NGO's are increasingly finding themselves assuming roles and entering areas of work, which should have been the domain of the government sector. This is where conflicts arise and people with

vested interests and much to gain try to take the easy way out. Navaid Husain and Omar Asghar Khan are living testimonies of this serious crisis of governance.

Of late, NGO's have also started forming alliances in order to magnify the impact of their efforts by putting up a more united front. Issues like the Karachi Mass Transit Project (KMTP) privatization of KW&SB, Anti-Terror-



ist Bill, child labour and other human rights issues have been thus tackled by local NGO's and the help of the judiciary has been sought in stopping illegal constructions and industrial / vehicular pollution, so that pressure is built on the government to ensure transparency in their workings and uphold the rule of law.

There is much talk these days of strengthening the role of the NGO's in local governance and management. However, it should be realized that NGO's also work under certain severe constraints. Very few NGO's are staffed with skilled and qualified technical staff, needed to effectively tackle the momentous challenges facing our large cities, such as Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad etc.

There are financial limitations and not least the issue of safety and security, as has been so forcefully and regrettably exposed by the murderous attack on the life of Navaid Husain.

The functions of activist organizations and the government sector, which should ideally be supportive and complimentary, are constantly overlapping and coming in conflict with each other. In an environment filled with crime and violence, where breaking of the law has become the rule rather than the exception, and where scant regard and

respect is paid to the mechanisms of justice, citizen's activism and advocacy work has indeed become a hazardous and life threatening practice.

Where can one, if it is at all possible, draw a line on citizen activism?

There is an urgent need to initiate debate on this issue. The role of the citizen's organizations and the government sector, in the future development and upkeep of our large urban centres has to be properly defined and if possible collaborative mechanisms between the two sectors be provided legal cover in certain specific functions.

We have to somehow revive our dying civic organizations on a war footing basis, if we care to nurture any hope of keeping our cities manageable. A good beginning can be made

by the holding of the long delayed and thus long awaited local bodies polls. The government organizations should realize that if their planning processes are divorced from the present ground realities, no permanent



and positive change can be brought about. The process of revival has to be transparent and people responsive, so that the confidence and trust of the citizens in our civic bodies is restored. This is essential, as the NGO's neither can, nor should replace the government sector in a city the size of Karachi.

The government should also provide due recognition to the invaluable role of the citizen bodies and instead of creating hurdles in their way, support them wholeheartedly in efforts which are sincerely made in the common good of all concerned. We know it is a big ask, but it is our only hope of ensuring a decent, humane and quality standard of living for our coming generations. □

DEAR READER'S

As you are aware, Pakistan is celebrating its 50th year of independence. To mark the occasion, Shehri Newsletter would be carrying special articles, interviews and profiles throughout the year, highlighting the past present and future environmental and development scenario of the country - Ed.



SHEHRI ACTIVITIES

Legal Sub-Committee update

The legal sub-committee of Shehri has been busy trying to bring about transparency and accountability in the working of KBCA, and other related agencies. As reported in our January - March 1997 issue, the Overseer Committee has been duly notified and since then meetings have been held on the first Tuesday of each month in the KDA Conference Room at the Civic Centre.

The Overseer Committee has already taken a number of good steps to help the public:

1. A Public Counter has been established permanently for the benefit of the aggrieved public, where on the payment of prescribed fee, the plans and documents of any project can be obtained, and other information and assistance is also provided. Besides the KBCA staff - there is Mr. Younus Bhatti, stationed by the Overseer Committee (his salary is met through donations) to help the citizens.
2. Public warning notices against illegal constructions have been made mandatory for KBCA to publish through the media within 10 days. (this helps people to know the true status of any construction)
3. The amendments suggested in the Sindh Buildings Control Ordinance '79 are being studied, and changes are being made. It is a long and tedious process as the old faces, do not like change. When completed the amendments will be made law, through due process.

Besides the forum of the Overseer Committee, Shehri has written to all levels of the Judiciary, excerpts of the letters are reproduced for information. This was done to make them aware of the advantage taken by the builders and KBCA, when injunctions are granted by the Courts in favor of the builder which restrain KBCA from performing its statutory duties.

Due to this effort the Judges are now becoming more specific in the wording of the injunction.

Shehri has held meetings with the Commissioner Karachi Division, Mir Hussain Ali, the result is that:

"The Commissioner directed the setting up of Vigilance Committees in each sub-division, with the SDM, DSP, concerned DCBs/KBCA, and representa-

THE PROBLEM

1. The public safety of buildings under construction is the responsibility of the KBCA. They ensure this by:
 - a) licensing professionals architects and engineers, who design and supervise the construction work
 - b) approving the architectural & structural plans of the proposed building
 - c) periodically inspecting & checking the construction work on site
2. However, when a builder starts to construct a building illegally in violation of approved plan and obtains a status-quo order (or an order restraining the KBCA) from a Court of law, all these public safeguards are nullified, as:
 - a) the KBCA-approved architectural/structural plan is no longer being followed,
 - b) the licensed architect & engineer withdraw their services or are suspended by KBCA,
 - c) KBCA cannot inspect or check the illegal construction

This dangerously constructed, unsupervised-under-law, building could fall, as "Faiza Heights" did in North Karachi recently.

3. The construction thus becomes a public hazard, both to the workmen and the future occupants, as the illegal builder continues to construct without lawful supervision, owing to the Court's restraining order against the KBCA or in spite of the Court's status-quo order.



tives of citizens / Shehri, to have fortnightly meetings to monitor and tackle the ongoing illegal construction. SDM will head the Committee" (meeting held on 30-07-1997)

Later, two meetings were held in the office of the DC East, Mohammad Hussain Syed (he has declined to hold further meeting, we have written to the Commissioner to investigate) in which all concerned of the DC East, Citizens and KBCA were present. After much deliberations it was found that the information provided by the KBCA to the Deputy Commissioner office was insufficient to arrest/stop the violation of the construction and all that the SDM/police department do is, arrest a few poor site workers. To stop this, a form has been designed. (Anybody interested in the form, can get a copy of it from the Shehri Office)

The KBCA will now have to fill and complete the form and provide it to the police/SDM at the time of filing an FIR or seeking maintenance of status quo order. The Deputy Commissioner East has further suggested that in all "cases" the District Administration must be specifically directed to enforce the court orders.

On the other side of the fence the Ministry of Housing and Town Planning, the KBCA and other related agencies are continuing with their illegal activities i.e. changing land use.

To give you an example of how they operate.

(1) List of the plots which the Ministry of Housing & Town Planning has illegally commercialized is published (see page 7)

Matters have a way of getting to the top. To stop/legalize all this on Sept 9th, 97 the Government of Sindh reimposed a ban on High rises. [reproduced on page 7]

The right noises were made. There after the Ban was lifted [reproduced on page 7]

Illegal conversion were made again. The residents of the areas concerned on receiving this information, immediately wrote to the relevant people. The Chief Secretary's response was immediate. We have asked him to take further action and examine all these cases as they will only add to the hardship of the residents.

Furthermore the residents should keep up their vigilance in reading the Public Notice's published in The Dawn, The News and Jang or any other newspapers that they try to slip it in, where they invite public objection.

THE CONSEQUENCES

- The Court has restrained the KBCA from taking statutory demolition/sealing action mandated by law on a building where the KBCA has already declared, through a notice issued under Section 7A of SBCO 79/82, that the construction is unauthorized and illegal.
- The builders can now continue to construct illegally and dangerously (without statutory and licensed supervision) with the implied permission of the Court.
- The KBCA also now does not own responsibility for the safety of continuing construction.
- The KBCA (who, along with the district administration and police, are actually colluding with the builders) can now sit back happily, blame the Court for the continuing illegal construction and pretend to be "helpless".
- Even criminal prosecution action by the KBCA and police grinds to a halt, ostensibly because of the Court's order in a civil suit ! The Court becomes the scapegoat !
- The KBCA legal advisors, do their utmost to stretch out the legal proceedings over months/years (which, in any case, tends to be excessively prolonged owing to the overload of cases and paucity of Judges) by not filing counter-affidavits, concealing facts, and generally putting up poor defense.
- The builder, without a Sale NOC from KBCA, starts to sell flats and shops, thus defrauding the public.



1. Reproduced below is the rule relating to change of land use as laid down in the [Kar R & R. T. P] (Schedule D Part II P [Change of land use of residential plots] of Karachi Building & Town Planning Regulations, Town Planning Regulations Part - II)

4. (a) No residential plot shall be converted into any other use except with the approval of MP & EC* (Authority under Sind Building Control Ordinance, 1979) after the recommendations of the Concerned Authority.

(b) The applicant shall apply to the Concerned Authority for the change of land use of the plot with full justification, which shall examine the application in the light of the Planning of the area, commercial facilities in the vicinity, road width, traffic flow and other relevant factors.

(c) The Concerned Authority shall also issue a public notice for the change of land use of the plot/plots in accordance with the provisions of these regulations and the expenses shall be borne by the applicant.

(d) The Concerned Authority shall also convey, the objections from the public, if any to the MP & EC (Authority under S.B.C.O. 79) for its determination.

(e) The applicant shall pay the prescribed scrutiny fee and other charges to MP & EC (Authority under S.B.C. Ordinance, 1979) and the Concerned Authority.

(f) Final No Objection Certificate shall be issued by the Concerned Authority, after approval of MP & EC (Authority under Sind Building Control Ordinance, 1979).

The areas in which these plots have been converted in violation of the ban, are already suffering acute short-

A PARTIAL SOLUTION

1. No restraining order (even "upto the extent of the approved plan", because even this is misused) against the KBCA's statutory mandate be given, as this leaves the continuing construction unsupervised under law, and therefore transfers responsibility of the correctness and safety of this construction to the shoulders of the Court.
2. In extreme and genuine circumstances, a status-quo order may be granted, explicitly instructing the builder that he is restrained from any further construction, and simultaneously instructing the KBCA that they are to immediately inform the Court if this status-quo order is violated. (Additionally, it would be helpful to issue directions to the concerned Deputy Commissioner and SSP to assist the Court in the maintenance of the Status-quo order)
3. The status-quo order must be given only after the builder submits 2 sets (one for the KBCA) of ten different photographs establishing the current stage of construction of the disputed buildings.

ages.

Shehri's reasons to oppose all unauthorized construction is that there should be specified areas for all commercial and residential activity. Flat sites should be clearly separate. Any areas where these conversions take place, must invite public opinion before converting. The areas must enhance their infrastructure facilities viza viz sewerage, water, electricity, roads, solid waste management and other related public services such as schools, hospitals etc. This effect of not maintaining a balance between the infrastructure and increase in plot ratio and change of land use causes acute degradation of the urban environment of the city, which we are witnessing in Karachi everyday.



WHAT GAMES WE PLAY!

Ban on construction of highrises reimposed

By our correspondent

RACH: The government of Sindh has once again imposed a ban on construction of structures beyond ground plus four storeys in Karachi. With the new imposition, the powers to relax rules have also been transferred from the provincial minister for Housing and Town Planning (H&TP) to the chief minister as the notification has been issued by the chief secretary and not secretary of the Ministry of H&TP as was the case in 1993.

holders/owners of buildings were allowed to construct more than ground plus four floors.

In April 1996 the building control authorities of the KDA and KMC were merged and on July 12, 1997, the Minister for H&TP Wassam Akhtar moved a summary stating that the ban imposed on highrises was hindering smooth functioning of his department and suggested withdrawal of letter No. PS/SE/17/M/1994/32 and notification No. SOH (HDA) 8-85/92 regarding functioning of the Karachi Building Control Authority.

On the basis of this summary...

Ban on highrise buildings lifted again

By our correspondent

RACH: The government of Sindh, a surprise move, has once again withdrawn the ban on the construction of structures beyond ground-plus-four storeys in the city.

The ban was imposed through a notification issued on August 25 this year. Following the withdrawal of the notification, the ban on highrises...

this year Minister for Housing and Town Planning Wassam moved a summary stating he imposed on highrise buildings hindering smooth functioning of his department and suggested withdrawal of the same. On the basis of this summary, Secretary Housing and Town Planning Shah Mansoor Akhtar issued a notification on August 25 whereby both the said notifications were withdrawn consequently the ban on highrises was lifted.

The News International, Tuesday, September 9, 1997

The News on Sunday, September 14, 1997

S. NO.	PLOT NO.	AREA	OWNERS NAME & ADDRESS	CONVERTED ON	LAWS / RULES VIOLEATED	REQUESTED BY OWNER
1.	C-12, Block 10, KDA Scheme No. 16, F.B. Area. Shahrah-e-Pakistan	600 Sq. yds	Abrar Ahmed Siddiqui S/o. Latif uddin Siddiqui R/o A-349, Block L, N.N. Abad	01-7-1997	In relaxation of the ban on Commercialization	
2.	No. 13 Block 3 Dehli Co-op Housing Society	Additional 4 floor	Mr. Nadeem Riaz	02-08-1997	The initial construction illegal, lease increase of plot ratio initial commercialization illegal	
3.	105-A, Sindhi, Muslim H. Society	600 Sq. yds	Mohd. Naeem Attorney of plot	12-07-1997	In violation of High-rise ban lease, plot ratio, etc.	
4.	L-1, Block 3 Scheme 36, Gulistan-e-Jauhar	3000 Sq. yds	Mohd. Bashir	19-06-1997	In violation of Commercialization ban, Public opinion not sought	
5.	1-16, RY-9, I. I. Chundrigar Road	514 sq. yds	Indus Bank through Rahat H. Khan CEO & MD	26-06-1997	In relaxation of rules and ban on high rises	Basement + G + Mezz + 13 Floor
6.	B-148 Block 15 Scheme-24 Gulshan-e-Iqbal	350 sq. yds	Najma Salim, D-10/1, Block 17 Gulshan-e-Iqbal	27-06-1997	Relaxation of ban on commercialization lease	
7.	184 Deh Safoorah Main	1000 sq. yds	Riaz Ilyas sub attorney	21-07-1997	Relaxation of ban on commercialization	G + 10 floor
8.	A-1, Block 13--A Shahrah-e-Faisal	272 sq. yds	Mst. Hajira Bibi sub attorney	4-08-1997	Relaxation of ban on commercialization, Road is not wide enough for Rd widening.	
9.	L-3 B1-7, Sch-24	168 sq. yds	Pervez Iqbal Butt	26-07-1997	Relaxation of ban on commercialization.	
10.	83-A, P.E.C.H.S. B1-2, K.B.W. Road	400 sq. yds	Zafar Ali Rana S/o Khuda Bakhs Bhatti	28-06-1997	Relaxation of ban on commercialization, Lease Violation	High-rise Comm Construction
11.	37 Block 7&8 Darulaman C.H.S. Shahrah-e-Faisal	1500 sq. yds After Amalgamation		10-07-1997	Relaxation of ban, done without any Public Notice. Lease violation plot ratio increased.	Commercial 2 2 Basement + G+10 floors
12.	83 E&83F PECHS, B1-2 K.B.W. Road	800 sq yds	Zafar Ali Rana S/o. Khuda Baksh Mohd. Yousuf S/o Sher MChammad	26-06-1997	Relaxation of Rules & ban on high rises.	
13.	154-A, B,C, PECHS Block 2, Karachi.	3000 sq yds After Amalgamation	Abdul Samad S/o. Mohd. Shafi Legal Attorney	1-08-1997	Relaxation of ban on commercialization. Lease, no legal requirement met.	Comm. Highrise
14.	154-S, Block 2 PECHS, Khushal Rd.	1000 Sq. yds	Mohd. Yasin S/o Abdul Karim	1-08-1997	Relaxation of Rules & ban lease.	Highrise Comm.
15.	FL-10, B1-14, Sch. 24			23-07-1997	Violation of ban lease by Ministry of H&TP	5th Fl. upwards
16.	Plot 9, B1-3, DCHS			04-08-1997	Violation of ban, entire construction illegal	5th & 6th fl.
17.	Plot 9, FT3 Frere Town Clifton.			04-08-1997	Violation of ban lease	Add 3&4th Flr.

(Prepared by the legal sub-committee of Shehri in public interest)



CONSERVATION

Jheel Park: A cry for help

Parks, playgrounds and other open spaces are becoming increasingly scarce in Karachi's fast growing jungle of concrete. Shehri recounts its association with the campaign to rehabilitate and revitalize an important park of the city and urges concerned citizens to join and contribute in this noble cause.

Parks and playgrounds are a vital component of the recreational facilities that a city provides. Besides fighting pollution by absorbing carbon dioxide and replenishing the oxygen content in the atmosphere, parks also relax and rejuvenate. Parks have, over the years, however, become a scarce commodity in this fast developing jungle of concrete, that is Karachi. In its ill-planned, haphazard development, apartment buildings, multi-storeyed shopping centres and office complexes are choking and often burying amenity plots. Far from developing new parks, land originally earmarked for parks and recreational areas, is being used to construct hideous high-rises.

Jheel Park: A Background

Jheel Park (renamed as Saleem-uz-Zaman Siddiqui Park, which for convenience sake, we will mention as Jheel Park in this article) in Pakistan Employees Cooperative Housing Society (PECHS), like so many other parks in Karachi, had been a silent victim of neglect. The park was conceived and developed by Syed Imam Ahmed, founder of the PECHS Society, as a recreational facility for the residents of the area. It was carved out of barren hillock. Syed Imam Ahmed had also supervised the construction of a platform, which served as a place of prayer, specially during Ramazan for taraviah. With the lakes and the grove of coconut palms swaying gently in the breeze, Jheel Park must truly have been picturesque at the time.

Once a nucleus of community activity and recreation, years of neglect and uncivil attitudes had reduced Jheel Park to a dumping site for the locality's garbage. The once clean spring water had become a stagnant pool, a breeding ground for mosquitoes and other parasites. But the authorities remained unmoved.

They had quite clearly demonstrated their disinterest in doing any thing to improve it.

Shehri's Role in the Development of Jheel Park

A concerned resident of PECHS approached Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment (CBE) about the deteriorating condition of Jheel Park, the only remaining open space in the heavily congested area around Tariq Road. Shehri decided to play ball. An NGO with an urban focus, Shehri has brought together citizens with a shared concern for a better environment. Shehri's is a diverse portfolio; solid waste management, campaigning against illegal constructions,

preservation of architectural heritage and coastal pollution are just some of the issues the NGO's sub-committees have tackled. Having formed a 'Parks and Recreation sub-committee', Shehri had the institutional mechanism to take on the challenge. Jheel Park became the Parks and Recreation sub-committee's first project.



Jheel Park: Longing for a better future

After Shehri arrived on the scene, residents of the area realised, that they too had a role to play, an important one, and got together to form the 'Citizens Society PECHS' to lobby for the renovation of the park. Shehri prepared an initial profile of the project, suggesting several ways to provide better facilities to the visitors. Once the Citizens' Society approved the proposal, the next step was to coerce the authorities out of their inertia to take action. Mr. Saleem Khan, Administrator, Zonal Municipal Committee (ZMC) East at the time, took immediate interest. He even offered the services of ZMC East to work jointly with Shehri on the project.



When work began on Jheel Park in October 1992, the park was a mess. Its two lakes were in a pitiable state. The water in the lakes comes from a natural spring and is sweet. Its founder had once thought that the spring would provide drinking water to the locality. Had the park been maintained and kept clean, this might have been possible. But the negligence of the authorities and the apathy of certain residents who used the premises as a convenient garbage dump, ruled out any such possibilities. To make matters worse, wild reeds and grasses were growing in abundance in the lakes.



Community involvement can do wonders

The larger lake was drained of stagnant water, and the sewage and reeds were removed. Stone pitching of the larger lake was done to prevent the seepage of water, and stone steps leading down to the water were constructed on two sides.

The smaller lake was to be developed as an 'Eco-Pond'. A site for a 'Ladies Park', part of the original plan for Jheel Park - was chalked out. The women of the area were particularly active in the whole exercise. Those that were members of the Citizens' Society formed a ladies Club within the umbrella of the Society, to supervise the plantation of trees, plants and hedges in the Ladies Park. A children's playground was also part of the plan. An extensive tree plantation campaign was carried out on the park premises; 230 saplings were planted.

However constant changes in the local government set-up and continued show of apathy by the concerned officials, have frustrated Shehri's attempts to sustain the development work.

Present Status of Jheel Park

Frustrating though it may seem, it has become quite clear that the local government lacks the funds and, more often than not, the initiative to tackle the various civic issues at hand. For one, provincial administration never have the kind of development budgets, that they require. For another, the government agencies' relationship with the general public, has steadily deteriorated, leaving a wide gulf between them. Instead of looking towards the government for the solution of their everyday problems, people have realised that they must adopt the do-it-yourself attitude. The question is, how? Often citizens in their individual capacities do not have the institutional

framework, or the means at their disposal to do this.

Frustrating though it may seem, it has become quite clear that the local government lacks the funds and, more often than not, the initiative to tackle the various civic issues at hand.

NGOs like Shehri can fill the vacuum: by providing a forum where such issues can be discussed and resources pooled, towards a solution. A platform from whence citizens can learn to help themselves. NGOs with their roots among the masses, often succeed, where the government has failed. They can even work with government agencies to produce good results; The Jheel Park project could become a case in point. NGOs are also an effective tool for raising the level of awareness among the people; the forming of the Citizens' Society, PECHS is a clear manifestation of this.

In view of the apparent incapacity of the KMC officials to properly develop and maintain the city parks, Shehri feels that the involvement of private sector, working in co-ordination with the local residents and KMC through an "Adopt a Park" campaign could go a long way in effectively tackling this serious urban crises.

With this view in mind, negotiations were started a few years ago with KMC to facilitate a process, by which Shehri could be awarded, on behalf of the residents the possession of Jheel Park, which could then be developed by Shehri, as a recreation / amusement park, by involving private sector participation. In 1995, the Director General of Parks and Recreation, KMC, had given verbal assurances to Shehri, that such a mechanism could be developed. Presently negotiations with the present set-up of KMC, on formulating the modalities of the process are taking place. Shehri has also prepared a preliminary development and financial feasibility plan for the Park, and would welcome any help and assistance in this regard from concerned citizens. □

ANALYSIS

Looking ahead: The environmental scene in Pakistan

As the country celebrates its 50th year of independence, Farhan Anwar looks at the environmental scene in Pakistan, and identifies the challenges facing the environmental planners of today, as they seek for our coming generations, a better tomorrow.

As the world prepares to enter the 21st century, with mixed feelings of excitement on the part of some and anxiety on the part of others, and while Pakistan busies itself with celebrating its 50th year of independence, it has now become abundantly clear that the world's natural resources are being grossly misused and polluted, and unless they are exploited judiciously, the long term sustainability of human growth and development will be seriously endangered.

The issue of environmental preservation is fast assuming a priority status in the policy frameworks of most nations of the world. Subsequently, efforts to achieve a sustainable development process are in forward gear with ever increasing levels of human and financial resources being committed to meet the challenge. It is indeed a global challenge for the 21st century generation of this world.

This was not always the case. The onset of the 20th century was characterised by the significant inroads, that were made by the major powers in the field of industrial development. Scant regard was paid to the adverse environmental impacts of massive industrialisation and the resulting growth of consumerism. It was not until the early 70's that the first meaningful and comprehensive steps were initiated to

redress this dangerous trend. The lead role was provided by the United States government with the promulgation of its 'Clean Air' and 'Clean Water' acts. Underly-



Our growing urban crisis poses a real challenge for the future

ing the post World War II concern with all forms of pollution was the affluence of the American society.

The increase in production had contributed to an intensification of the degree of actual pollution, while the increase in the standard of living had permitted people the comparative luxury of being able to be concerned about this. The effect of pollution on human health was a major consideration. Coupled with this, the availability of ample public and private resources had given the society sufficient funds and skilled man-

power to provide the potential for dealing with the problem. Soon, the European countries and Japan followed suit and the environmental movement was in full swing.

Pakistan was slow to realise the importance of this issue and even when realisation did come, it was initially, not accompanied with the desired policy initiatives and political will. The Pakistan Environmental Protection Council, though formed in 1983, could not meet till 1993.

In the meantime, a major policy initiative was undertaken in 1989, jointly by the government of Pakistan, IUCN and the Canadian government, which was the preparation of *Pakistan's National Conservation Strategy (NCS)*. This comprehensive document, endorsed by the government of Pakistan in March 1992, identified 14 core programme areas for priority implementation which include the protection of watersheds, protection of water bodies, integration of population and environment programmes and management of urban wastes among other themes.

Recently, Pakistan's Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS) were prepared. Subsequently on January 20th 1997, the Federal Cabinet (caretaker) approved the Pakistan Environmental Act, 1997. They were later converted into a bill on 3rd September 1997



by the present legislature. So, it would appear that the basic frame work (though not without serious inherent defects) is in place and actual groundwork should soon follow. Although the future holds many exciting possibilities, there are certain visible hurdles that need to be overcome on an urgent basis in order to ensure the successful implementation of our environmental strategy.

Pakistan is faced with many diversified environmental challenges of an urgent nature. Our principle fresh water resource i.e. the Indus river is being increasingly polluted, the phenomenon of desertification is greatly reducing the productivity of our land, much of the population still receives polluted drinking water while the improper management of urban wastes is adding to the woes of our urban populace.

To effectively tackle such problems, we require highly skilled technical manpower and considerable financial resources. We have been found wanting on both fronts. While there may be quite a few varied mechanisms available to raise the required funds, such as the mobilisation of the private sector, technical manpower is not something which can be arranged that easily.

The developed world is combating the menace of environmental degradation by making use of modern technological innovations. In our country, sectors such as Science and Technology (S&T) and Research and Development (R&D) have never taken off due

to official neglect, as the required level of financial commitment was never made. Environmental engineering is a relatively new discipline, and thus our proficiency in this field even lesser than other fields of modern technology. Very few institutions of higher learning impart specialised training in this field and even those that do, suffer from dearth of modern facilities and are served by a teaching staff which lacks the proper training and experience.

Since we have been introduced to this discipline of engineering only very recently, there is an alarming shortage of trained senior level experts in the private sector, who could help nurture the talents and capabilities of fresh entrants, while at the same time contributing positively themselves. However, a significant development is the entry of an increasing number of fresh environmental engineers in the job market, who are aiming to make a positive contribution in this field after having received specialised training abroad. However, they still lack the precious on-job training experience in a stimulating environment, which is a disturbing factor and casts serious doubts on their ability to effectively tackle the complicated challenges that confront them.

As environmental engineering tackles the dynamics of man's interaction with the environment, it addresses a wide range of technical, social and economic issues. There is the constant search for more effective pollution control technologies, which could save and protect our land, air and

water from the ravages of environmental degradation.

In Pakistan, there is a great need of developing indigenous technologies, so as to reduce our dependency on expensive imported technologies, an issue which poses a serious threat to the economic viability of our environmental drive. Pakistan, owing to its diverse geographical, ecological and social mixes, offers exciting prospects for somebody involved in their preservation. The state of our natural and human resources needs to be assessed thoroughly, so that a realistic and practical course of action can be evolved. Increasing pollution in our cities due to the issues related with rapid urbanisation, poses a stiff challenge for our city planners.

Fresh ideas and new approaches are needed, which can only be brought in by a fresh new work force. A good environmental engineer, apart from being technically sound, should also be socially interactive, with a keen insight into the economic realities of an environmental issue. He may also be required to play the role of a judge, balancing his or her views between the economic benefits and environmental concerns of the nation's development process. Expert help and guidance is required urgently from such environmental engineers, by our industries, municipalities and also the policy makers and regulatory agencies. As things stand today, we have to virtually start from scratch.

Over the years, a fairly vocal, active and diversified NGO movement has also taken roots in the non-formal sector, mainly owing to the impotency of the public sector to effectively tackle our environmental concerns.

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