



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 1999 Vol. 9/No. 2

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What fate, the Kirthar National Park?

As the complex problem of balancing conservation needs and development provides the basis of the ongoing debate over the fate of the rugged terrain and precious wildlife of the Kirthar National Park, Saleka Enver of Shehri sets the issues in their proper perspective and raises some pertinent questions in this Shehri Special Report.

Attack and defence strategies are being formulated, while strategic retreat is also an option. Alliances are being formed and battle fronts are being surveyed as the combatants manoeuvre for tactical positions. No, it is not India and Pakistan that are preparing for (yet another!) military confrontation, rather it is the conservationists and developers who are locked, eyeball to eyeball in a different kind of war theatre — The Kirthar National Park.



As the fate of this magnificent nature reserve, which offers a panorama of pristine arid land of vast spaces, clean air, wide undulating valleys and rugged hills hangs in balance, we try to identify as to who are the combatants and what are the causes of tension and conflict in this classic debate which promises to test the limits of conservation needs and

resource development in our country.

Kirthar National Park is a protected area spread over 1192 square miles (see box) situated in Pakistan's south eastern province of Sindh, 80 kms north of Karachi city.

Kirthar, designated as a National Park in 1974, also figures in the United Nations listing of National Parks of 1975. It was the first Pakistani park to be listed as such.

So, why is such a sanctuary subject to a national controversy? It is so, because of events which began to unfold in July 1997, when the Ministry of Petroleum (Directorate General of Petroleum Concessions) granted the Dumbar Block Exploration License to Premier Exploration Pakistan Ltd.

As the Dumbar Block encompasses more than 90% of the Kirthar

Kirthar National Park Basic Facts

Kirthar was designated as a National Park by the Sindh Forestry and Wildlife Department in 1974, following a study on Pakistan's wildlife and protected areas by Guy Montfort and Dr. Duncan Poore in 1968. It is the first of Pakistan's parks to be included in the United Nation's listing of National Parks of 1975, a status reaffirmed in 1997.

The park, spread over 1192 square miles, offers a varied terrain rising to 3294 feet at Karchat mountains and sinking



C-Pg. 3

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Interested contributors should contact the SHEHRI office for writers guidelines. SHEHRI newsletter readership is from students, professionals, environmentalists, policy makers, NGOs and other organizations.

Views expressed herein do not necessarily express the views of the Editor/Editorial Board.

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EDITORIAL**Castles In The Sand**

The noted economist, late Dr. Mahbul-ul-Haque once said, "No illiterate society has ever become an industrial tiger". Pakistan, despite shouldering the shameful, humiliating and utterly disgraceful burden of being one of the most illiterate nation in the world, hopes to bare its fangs in the not too distant future.

A thinking mind does not sympathize with the thought processes of our successive ruling elite, who possess the audacity of making such claims, instead it is both insulted and outraged at this blatant disregard of the sensitivities of a battered and bruised society.

As the village girl travels miles to gather a bucketful of polluted water, as another miserable child dies for lack of proper health care and as another desperate unemployed youth takes to drugs and crime, we are told that the light is shining brightly at the end of the tunnel.

For a nation to prosper and progress, it needs to get its priorities right and set clear and achievable development goals. Investment in human development through provision of high quality mass education and health care facilities is followed by initiation of policies and plans for industrial and technological growth, fueled by the energy and drive of a highly trained and robust workforce.

We talk of technological growth, but where are the technicians and scientists? We talk of developing software parks, but where are the software developers? We talk of entering the 21st century, yet have we checked whether we actually boarded the train which travelled through the 20th century?

To describe the directionless state of our aimless march, one is tempted to quote a couplet of Mirza Asad Ullah Khan Ghalib.

رومیں ہے رخس عمر کہاں دیکھیے تھمے
نے ہاتھ باگ پر ہے نپا ہے رکاب میں



National Park and Mahal Kohistan Wildlife Sanctuary, this move was initially resisted by the Sindh Forest and Wildlife Department (SFWD), who are responsible for the areas management. SFWD expressed grave concerns about the negative effects of any oil and gas exploration activities on the parks wildlife and environment.

They referred to legislations prohibiting such activities in a protected area. These include the Sindh Wildlife Protection Ordinance 1972, Sindh Wildlife Amendment Act 1993 and the relevant notification of the Sindh Government in 1997. Some NGO's like the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) also raised concerns. (Kirthar qualifies for the criteria fixed by IUCN as a Category II protected area).

The matter remained in the doldrums until recently, the former Governor of Sindh Lt. General

Moinuddin Haider set up a high level committee (chaired now by the Chief Secretary, Sindh) to address the issue and take action. World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and IUCN were also included in the committee. However, IUCN later declined to participate in the process citing its disapproval of some sections of the Committee TOR which suggested moves to look into the possibility of suitably amending the relevant legislations, to facilitate the process of mining for oil and gas in the Dumbar Concession.

Prior to this meeting, Premier Exploration had merged with the powerful Shell Oil Group internationally, thereby adding considerable clout in their operations.

The first meeting of the Committee was held on 24th July 1999, in which the need to meet the pending energy needs of the country was emphasized and it was decided that the Government of Pakistan would appoint an independent environmental consultant through an open bidding process to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to establish the present ecological status of the park.

This is to be followed by an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) which would look into the impacts of exploration activities on the parks environment and suggest mitigation measures. This is how matters stand at present.

However, while

C-Pg. 1 (Basic Facts)

to 230 feet above sea level at Hab Dam, in the south west extremity of the park.

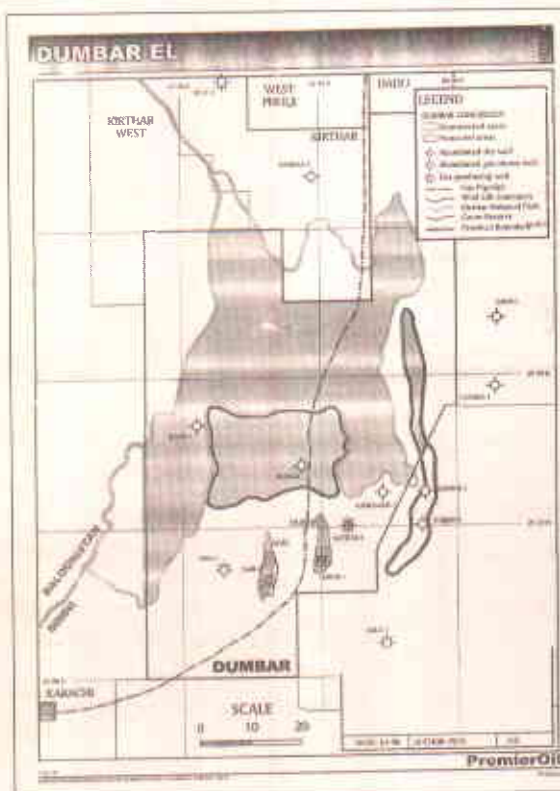
Some 10,500 people live permanently in the park in 93 villages. Twenty of these fall in the Karachi District and seventy three in Dadu District.

Twenty six principal species of mammals are believed to occur in the park including Sindh Wild Goat (Sarah or Ibex) Wild Sheep (Urial or Gad) Chinkara Gazelle, Jackal, Fox, Striped Hyaena, Desert Wolf, Jungle Cats, Leopard, Hedgehog, Pangolin, Porcupine, Badger and Mongoose. The family of reptiles is also well represented here. Large Monitor Lizards, Geckos, Turtles, Tortoises among other species are not an uncommon sight here. About 58 varieties of birds also find habitat in the park.

Apart from wildlife sightings, the park also offers some other unique picnic spots. Hub Dam and lake, Pakistan's third largest Dam after Tarbela and Mangla is located within the park confines.

The largest of the worlds historic forts "Rannikot Fort", also straddles the hills of the Kirthar range. The tombs at Taung, similar in their construction to the famous Makli Hills tombs in Thatta are another attraction, while prehistoric archaeological remains of habitation near Koh-Tarash are also located in the Park area. □

- Saleka Enver





SFWD still has reservations on the issue, the NGO's have openly objected to the steps being taken by the GOP-Oil Companies combine.

Seven NGO's based all over the country, have jointly endorsed a plan of action aimed at preserving the protected status of the park. This group includes WWF, Sungi Development Foundation, SDPI, PILER, Creed Alliance, Aurat Foundation and Shirkat Gah.

They stress that in the presence of clearly worded legislation prohibiting mining activities in protected areas, the government cannot allow for gas exploration activities to take place in the Kirthar National Park and any decision to permit the initiation of an EIA Study would imply agreement with the project in principle, against which the NGO's hold strong reservations.

The NGO group instead propose the preparation of an indepth neutral study which prepares a management plan for the park from the point of conservation. This they emphasize is different from the study suggested by the government, which is activity specific.

IUCN, more or less favour this line of action, however, they appear to leave the room open for possible future development activities in the park, subject to intensive study and analysis of the parks environment and identification of potentially highly sensitive ecological areas. It is quoted from IUCN's "Brief Case Study on Exploration for Gas in Kirthar National Park" (August 1999).

"The study can survey the status of the park, and - based on the findings - possibly recommend certain geographical areas to be

prioritized for conservation. Following these recommendations, a plan can be formulated for management of the park, and subsequent monitoring by an independent body. The plan can also lay out a framework for conducting

that natural gas is a much more environment friendly fuel source as compared to oil.

Premier-Shell also say that the method of drilling that they would employ (deviated drilling) would

WHAT IS A "NATIONAL PARK"

A National Park is a relatively large area (at least 1,000 hectares): where

- One or several ecosystems are not materially altered by human exploitation and occupation, where plant and animal species, geomorphological sites and habitats are of special scientific, educative and recreative interest or which contain a natural landscape of great beauty.
- The highest competent authority of the country has taken steps to prevent or eliminate, as soon as possible, exploitation or occupation in the whole area and to enforce effectively the respect of ecological, geomorphological or aesthetic features which have led to its establishment.
- Visitors are allowed to enter, under special conditions, for inspirational, educative, cultural and recreative purposes. □

(Definition of a National Park as approved by the 10th General Assembly of IUCN, held in New Delhi, November 1969).

development activities in certain zones based on the results of the in-depth study".

Apart from the information available in the two promotional videos prepared on the subject by Premier-Shell Exploration, the group has declined to go public with their position, particularly of late.

They apparently stick to their previously stated position that firstly such a project is the need of Pakistan as Pakistan's existing gas reserves are declining sharply, discovery and development of large gas reserves would reduce Pakistan's dependence on expensive imported sulphur oil, the consumer would pay less for consuming gas as compared to oil and also

drastically reduce the possibility of environmental damage and sensitive ecological areas would be fully protected.

They also hold out the option, that given a chance, they would turn the Kirthar National Park into a functional world class nature reserve.

So where does all this information leads us to and what could be a possible solution to this apparant dead lock? It has to be stated that in the presence of prohibitive legislation, no exploration activity can be allowed to take place in the park. But what if the law is amended, as is evidently the desire of the government?



What tangible guarantees can the Shell-Premier Exploration Group offer that no damage will be caused to the parks ecology and what penalties will be imposed if such is not the case? This is a question which remains to be answered.

Then there is the question of meeting the concerns of the various conservation groups and NGO's.

Is there a precedent to such a situation where the activities of conservation and development go hand in hand? Maybe an analysis could be made of the experiences of the US National Wildlife and Refuge Service, where in the protected nature refuge reserves of the US, "secondary uses", such as mining operations are allowed.

It is also a matter of some concern that the public at large has not exhibited a high level of involvement in this issue. However, there are valid reasons to explain this behaviour.

The best guarantee that a facility like the Kirthar National Park could get for its protection is that it becomes a public issue. But how can it become a mass level public issue when a vast majority of the masses know next to nothing about the park. It is pertinent to ask at this stage of the SFWD officials, what efforts have they made over the years to develop and popularize this park.

Most people do not even know how to get to the park, let alone know whats inside it! and this, when the park is located just a few hours drive from the most densely populated sector of Pakistan - Karachi.

It has been reported that on an average, 2 to 3 persons visit the

park every month! It has also been reported somewhere that the Josimite National Park in California is visited every year by about 4 million people!!

Also, what efforts are made to protect and monitor Kirthar National Park's wildlife and what revenue is generated from this vast nature reserve annually? Surely, the answers to these questions will put us all to shame.

No wonder, apart from a few die hard NGO's nobody seems to be bothered. It is an issue on which the whole of Karachi and the rest of Pakistan should have stood up and said, "we want to save this park"!

The answers to issues where the concerns for conservation and

development clash are not simple. Various complex inter-relationships have to be established and sustained between political, social, economic, technical and environmental facets of the debate.

Is there a precedent to such a situation where the activities of conservation and development go hand in hand? Maybe an analysis could be made of the experiences of the US National Wildlife and Refuge Service, where in the protected nature refuge reserves of the US, "secondary uses", such as mining operations are allowed.

As the pro and anti project camps manoeuvre for position, what has to be realised is that the ultimate beneficiaries of any action taken by the government would have to be the people of the state.

Sane heads are needed at this important hour of decision, capable of maintaining the critical balance between conservation concerns and issues of national development to the benefit of all concerned. □

(Saleka Enver is a Citizen Activist and Member of Shehri-CBE)



Wildlife is not the only thing to be protected. The famous Ranni Kot Fort



SHEHRI ACTIVITIES

Working Session with the Media (Monday, 9th August, 1999, Hotel Marriott, Karachi)

In a working session with the local media, arranged by Shehri-CBE, in collaboration with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, the following agenda items were discussed.

- To discuss issues and concerns related with environmental journalism and seek strategies for a more knowledgeable, focussed and effective role for the environmental journalist.
- To explore modes and mechanisms for an effective and productive partnership between the local media and citizen groups.

Participants to the Discussion

- Local media representatives (print/electronic, belonging to both government and the private sector).
- Core members of Shehri-CBE

Mr. Farhan Anwar, Executive Member, Shehri, who moderated the working session, explained the reasons for arranging the ses-

sion and identified the guidelines for debate and discussion.

Mr. Anwar said that it had to be established what priority environmental issues are receiving from the local print and electronic media and whether environmental news even had a clearly defined status and classification in our journalism.

Another issue which Mr. Anwar highlighted in his introductory remarks, was the fact that the concept of "specialized correspondents", specifically trained and qualified in their area of work is conspicuous by its absence in our journalism. How much does this shortcoming effect the quality of local environmental reporting and analysis was another issue which needed debate.

Also meriting debate was the long standing issue of a pronounced qualitative gap, between the English and the vernacular press,



Mr. Farhan Anwar acted as Session Coordinator

when it came to coverage of social, economic and environmental concerns. The English press coming out far the better in this comparison, mostly by default!

The issue of tight state controls on the electronic media, a mode of communication which had a far greater potential of reaching the masses in a largely illiterate country like Pakistan was another matter which was opened for discussion.

Mr. Anwar, with the help of charts and figures also outlined various mechanisms through which media and citizen groups could forge partnerships, in working for a better, more open and



(L-R) Mr. Qazi Faez Isa, Mr. Khatib Ahmed, Mr. Roland de Souza



(L-R) Mr. Khalid Jamil, Mr. Ghazi Salahuddin, Mr. Shahzeb Jillani



tolerant civil society.

Mr. Ghazi Salahuddin, a senior and respected journalist, associated with the Jang Press was asked to open the general debate by Mr. Anwar.

Mr. Salahuddin identified three distinct barriers which hindered the positive effectiveness of the media in Pakistan. Namely, low levels of literacy, the language barrier and the stunted development of the Urdu Press in areas of social and economic news coverage and analysis.

He felt that since English is considered the language of the ruling classes and symbol of empowerment in our country, this fact has led to the lesser then required intellectual growth of the Urdu press, and since the Urdu press can reach far greater numbers of people, its potential for bringing positive changes in the society is being wasted.

Another drawback is the tight state control on electronic media, which also has a wide reach.

Ms. Sheen Furrakh of the Inter Press Communications, agreed with Ghazi's views and added that while English press fares better then the Urdu and regional language press, the emphasis overall of our media is too much on political issues, crime and scandals.

Mr. Shahzeb Jillani of the News, said that environmental news is not properly defined and receives a very simplistic classification in our press. Related issues like public health, economic spinoffs are not considered. Mr. Jillani said that environmental news is also given low priority and there are not many volunteers when it comes to taking an environmental beat.

Ms. Zofeen T. Ebrahim of Daily Dawn, said that there is no concept of "specialized correspondents", in our press and the journalists develop their own knowledge and understanding of the issue as they go along.

She also said that it is difficult for an environmental journalist to develop linkages while working on a story. Apart from accessing some NGO's, there is no available information as to who can offer what in developing a news report or a feature story.

Mr. Bhagwandas of Daily Dawn, agreed with this observation and

said that it is extremely difficult to get relevant data to support a report. Ms. Razeshta Sethna of Daily Dawn was of the view that while

English is considered the language of the ruling classes and symbol of empowerment in our country, this fact has led to the lesser then required intellectual growth of the Urdu press, and since the Urdu press can reach for greater numbers of people, its potential for bringing positive changes in the society is being wasted

covering sensitive social or environmental issues of human interest, a journalist needs to get involved and get a feel of the issue. She said that on such writeups, positive public feedback is received.

Mr. Ali Dayan Hasan of The Herald said that it is difficult to get a high level of professional output from journalists, considering the extremely low salary structures that exist in our media.

Mr. Qazi Faez Isa, Chairman Shehri, raised the issue of

in house surveys within newspapers to assess public opinion and other changing trends in society and asked whether there was such a practice in our newspapers. It was found that such was not the case.

Mr. Iqbal Jamil of Pakistan Television said that news reports on environmental issues were car-



(L-R) Ms. Mansoor, Ms. Razeshta Sethna, Ms. Zofeen T. Ebrahim, Ms. Saleka Enver, Ms. Amber Ali Bhat, Ms. Sheen Furrakh, Ms. Rehana Iftikhar, Mr. Saleem Shehzad, Mr. Bhagwandas, Mr. Ali Hassan, Ms. Mehwish Hussain

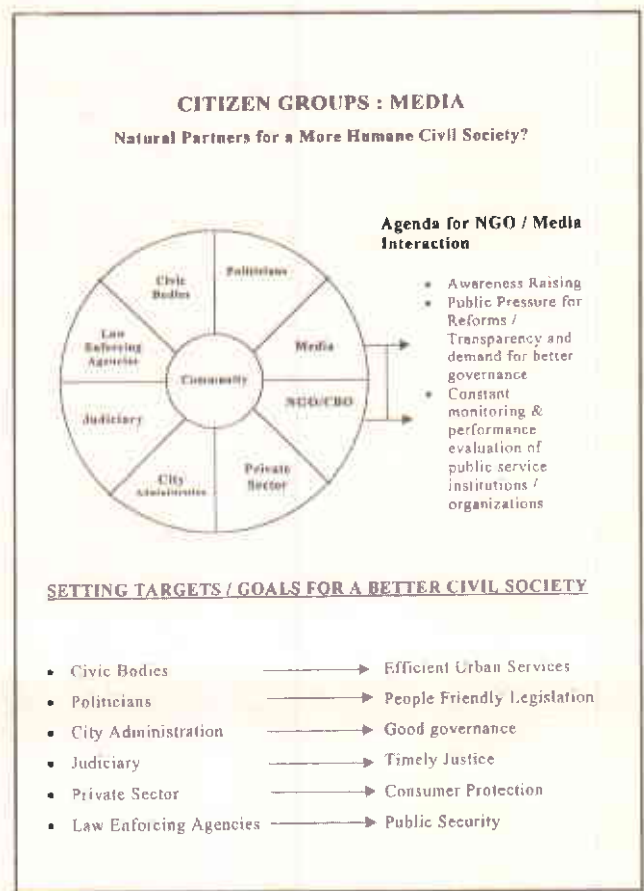
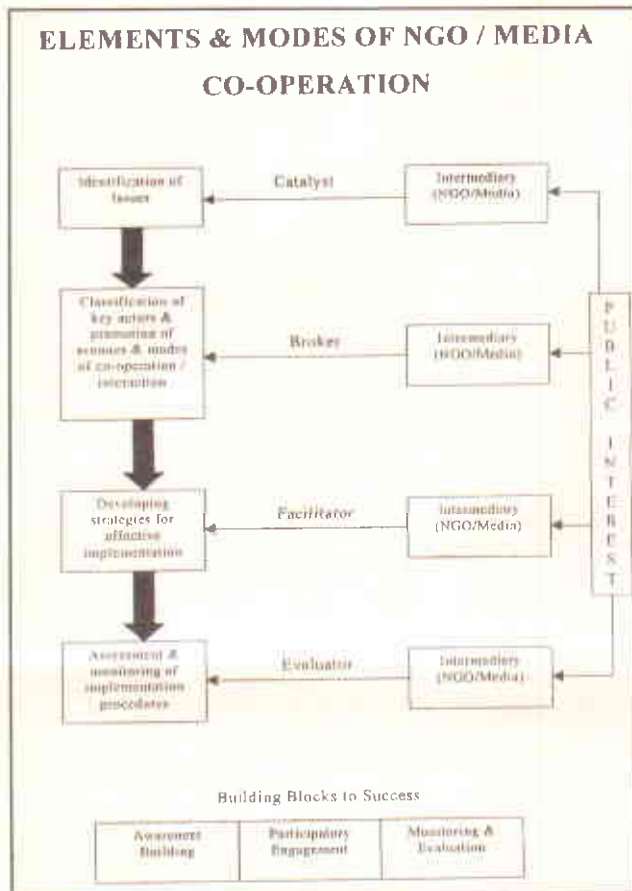


ried out by PTV. He however, agreed with the general perception that it was not a high priority issue on PTV and said that it was generally considered as a "boring" news item!

This interesting revelation, raised the question, "How

newsworthy is environmental news"?

It was suggested by Mr. Sultan Hasan that NGO's and other citizen groups have to somehow sell environmental news to the media by making it more



Conclusions Drawn

1. Environmental issues are not properly classified in a wider perspective .
2. Properly trained and qualified "environmental correspondents", do not exist, even in larger publication houses.
3. Efforts to mould vernacular press towards mature, analytical and knowledgeable coverage of social, economic and environmental issues have not been very

successful but should be continued with, as Urdu and regional language press has a far greater access to public as compared to English press.

4. Environmental journalists have not developed enough linkages among NGO's, academic and research and development organizations as are required for knowledgeable coverage of issues.
5. There is lack of supporting data and information on environmental issues.
6. There is a gradual decline in

both the quantity and the quality of the coverage of environmental issues on PTV. Better standards were maintained in the past.

7. There is sufficient freedom for environmental journalists to make their presence felt within the media, provided they themselves are committed and knowledgeable enough on the subject. Maybe we need role models among environmental journalists like the late Ms. Zulekha Ali.
8. There is a need for greater interaction among the media and citizen groups. □



knowledgeable, interesting and appealing and maybe even "sensational"!

There was some disagreement on the level of "advice" and guidelines that come to the reporters and feature writers on which issues to cover and how to cover.

There was however, general agreement that there exists a reasonable level of latitude for journalists to effectively cover issues like environment according to their wishes, provided they themselves were committed, and knowledgeable enough on the subject.

It was also agreed that greater and continuous interaction between NGO's and media is essential for better dissemination of environmental concerns.

In the end, Mr. Farhan Anwar thanked all the participants and concluded the session. □

PARTICIPANTS TO THE DISCUSSION

MEDIA

Mr. Ghazi Salahuddin
 Ms. Zofeen T. Ebrahim
 Ms. Razeshta Sethna
 Mr. Bhagwandas
 Mr. Syed Ali Hasan
 Ms. Mehwish Hussain
 Mr. Saleem Shahzad
 Mr. Shahzeb Jillani
 Mr. Shahid
 Mr. Iqbal Jamil
 Syed Sultan Hasan
 Ms. Sheen Farrukh
 Ms. Rehana Iftekhhar

Daily Jang, Karachi
 Daily Dawn, Karachi
 Daily Dawn, Karachi
 Daily Dawn, Karachi
 Herald, Karachi
 Herald, Karachi
 The STAR
 The News, Karachi
 Evening News, Karachi
 PTV, Karachi Centre
 Senior Journalist
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 Inter Press Communication

SHEHRI-CBE

Mr. Qazi Faez Isa
 Ms. Amber Ali Bhai
 Mr. Farhan Anwar
 Mr. Khatib Ahmed
 Mr. Roland de'Souza
 Dr. Syed Raza Ali Gardezi
 Mrs. Mansoor
 Mr. Mohammad Rehan Ashraf
 Ms. Saleka Enver
 Mr. Akhtar Mirza

Chairperson
 General Secretary
 Executive Member
 Executive Member
 Executive Member
 Executive Member
 Administrator
 Asst. Coordinator
 Member
 Member

CITIZEN POWER ON DISPLAY!

In pursuance of a Supreme Court order, dated May 3rd 1999, M/s. Excell Builders have started demolishing the illegally constructed portion of the infamous Glass Towers. Some 30 feet of the shopping centre-cum-office complex, spread over a length of 200 ft would be demolished, which would otherwise have hindered the widening of the main Clifton Road.



Shehri had been at the forefront of the citizen efforts to redress this flagrant illegality and with the assistance of an environment conscious judiciary, justice has been done-for all

to see. While all environment friendly citizens rejoice in this success, they also realise that the fight for a better environment is far from over, infact it has just begun! □



Members day at Shehri

Shehri management and members get together to discuss ways and means, whereby more active and productive involvement of Shehri members in Shehri projects and programs is ensured and new concerns and areas of work are identified

Mr. Farhan Anwar, Executive Member, Shehri-CBE, who chaired the meeting, informed the members that with the minimal manpower and financial resources available, Shehri had been able to make significant positive impacts in various sectors of urban development in Karachi. However, at the same time, Shehri management felt that with increased involvement of a greater number of Shehri members, the scope and impact of the organizations activities could be substantially enhanced.

The main purpose of the meeting was therefore to explore ways and means whereby members could engage more fruitfully in Shehri programs and projects. Mr. Anwar then opened the floor for debate and consultation.

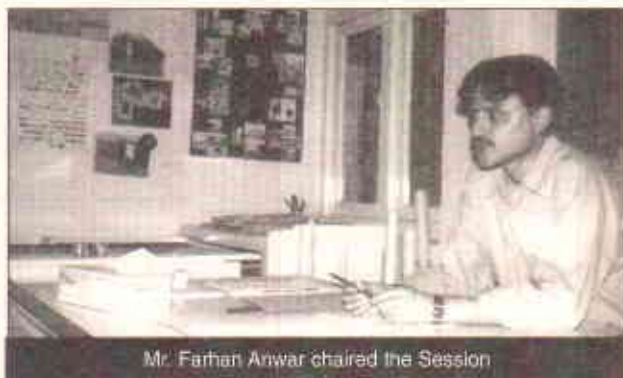
Ms. Saleka Enver said that Shehri needs to enlarge its membership base further. Ms. Amira Javed suggested that Shehri cooperate with the already existing 'Muhalla Committees', in various neighbourhoods to gauge the mood of the public, identify their concerns and prepare strategies for improvement. Mr. Muslehuddin was of the opinion that similar cooperation

could be developed with the 'Cooperative Societies' and volunteered to start such a process in the Bahadur-Yar-Jang locality of Karachi.

Mr. Farooq Fazal suggested that Shehri should encourage its members to come forward with their complaints against various civic agencies, which Shehri secretariat could then forward to the concerned authorities. In this way, Shehri could get more involved with the citizen concerns.

Mr. Mohammad Ali Rasheed put forward the proposal that Shehri should open its sub-chapters in various neighbourhoods. In this way, its membership would increase, more issues could be highlighted and Shehri's reach would multiply substantially.

A large majority of the members supported the idea of forming Shehri sub-chapters, gave their suggestions on how such a process could evolve and eight members volunteered to form Shehri sub-



Mr. Farhan Anwar chaired the Session

chapters in their neighbourhoods. It was therefore decided that a separate meeting with the interested members would be held to further explore the feasibility of opening Shehri sub-chapters in the city.

Mr. Ather Zubairi suggested that Shehri should hold an environment week in the city, where various environmental issues of the city and their solutions should be highlighted through debates, paintings, models, skits etc. Such an initiative would improve Shehri image, develop more linkages with the concerned actors and generate revenue, which could then be used in Shehri projects.

Mr. Nisar Baloch proposed the holding of walks for generating more visibility and awareness. Ms. Amira Javed suggested greater use



Mr. Khaid Ahmed acted as facilitator



Members participated enthusiastically in the session



of Pakistan Radio and FM-100 channels, as a majority of the people have easy access to this mode of the electronic media.

When the members were asked to prioritize their concerns, most of the members voted for solid waste management, while issues like water conservation and wastewater recycling also got highlighted. In this connection, Ms. Amira Javed suggested that Shehri should conduct



'Public Opinion Surveys' to help it in developing its future projects and strategies.

Mr. Farhan Anwar then concluded the proceedings. As the purpose of this meeting was to get member feedback on Shehri's working, no major decisions were taken.

It was however, decided to hold a further meeting to look into the possibility of opening Shehri sub-chapters in the city. A date for the meeting was not decided. □



Shehri's Work in Karachi's Town Planning and Building Control: Goals and Benefits

Objectives

- Ensure implementation of the rules & regulations of Town Planning and Karachi Building Control Authority.
- Upgrade and unify the rules & regulations of Town Planning & Karachi Building Control Authority.
- Ensure wide dissemination and information and implement transparency
- Tackle corrupt officials in planning, building control, civil administration and utility agencies by constant vigilance and monitoring.
- collection etc., will be available.
- Proper and modern infrastructure, education, health care, efficient public transportation, wide roads and adequate parking, proper open areas, parks, play-grounds schools, commercial areas, better law and order.
- Delivery of lawfuls flats and shops on time and of a proper quality (safety, proper planning, reasonable price)
- No illegalities in the construction and consequently no delay owing to court cases or demolition.

Benefits: To the citizens of Karachi

- Proper and essential utilities like water, sewerage, electricity, garbage
- Rise in citizens confidence, that justice will be done, as per the law.



AWARENESS

Towards a more aware citizen

In his continuing series of articles, Khatib Ahmed educates the common citizen about the manner in which the system of civil governance works in our country

The inertia which has set in, and is the prime cause for inaction on the part of the people to change their condition, can be solved by transforming the perception of the people concerning their own status, and that of the managers/administrators of their affairs—the elected representatives and the paid employees. They must realise their responsibility to actively probe, question and demand redressal in cases of unsatisfactory performance by the government/public organisations.

Know Yourself - The Citizen's Status

The first act of the common citizen of Pakistan should be to realise his own status with regard to the power structure in his/her country. Where does the citizen stand in the hierarchy of powers and responsibilities? Where do the administrators/managers stand?

The Constitution of Pakistan

The country's Constitution contains explicit provisions defining the status of the citizen and also contains other articles, clauses on the need to strengthen local government institutions.

The preamble to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (12th April 1973) states -

Preamble

"Whereas sovereignty over the entire

Universe belongs to Almighty Allah alone, and the authority to be exercised by the people of Pakistan within the limits prescribed by Him is a sacred trust"

Almighty Allah is sovereign Lord. He has entrusted temporal authority, within the limits prescribed by Him, upon the people of Pakistan as a sacred trust (Amanat). So the people of Pakistan are Trustees (Ameen) and Viceregents, empowered to exercise authority in the affairs of the country.



It is indeed a great honour and with it comes greater responsibilities.

"And whereas it is the will of the people of Pakistan to establish an order"

Pursuant to the expression of the people's will to create an order, all state and public establishments have been formed to serve the interest of the people of Pakistan. It therefore follows that the responsibility to manage them

well and maintain their integrity rests on the peoples' shoulders. The need to know, watch over, help and monitor the disciplined working of these establishments is the duty of the citizen.

The citizen's lax attitude in this area of responsibility has been the prime cause of the current state of unsatisfactory affairs. It would be difficult to find a single public organisation which can qualify to be categorised as competently/efficiently managed. Continued passivity is certain to deepen the existing malaise.

If we take the case of local government institutions, then the constitution contains specific provisions to promote local government institutions (Article 32) and to decentralise government administration to facilitate expeditious disposal of business for public convenience (Article 37-i)

Articles 32: Promotion of Local Government Institutions

"The State shall encourage local Government institutions composed of elected representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation will be given to peasants, workers and women"

Article 37(i): Promotion of Social Justice and Eradication of Social Evils

"Decentralise the Government administration so as to facilitate