



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

January-April, 2000 Vol. 10/No. 1

INSIDE

- Devolution of Power
- Shehri AGM
- Building Bye-Laws
- Healthy City Project
- Kirthar National Park
- Shehri Park

TOWARDS A NEW SYSTEM OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE

As the debate over the recently announced "Devolution of Power", (District Government) plan continues, Shehri-CBE in collaboration with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, holds a public consultation session to facilitate public involvement in this process

On the 23rd of March 2000, the Chief Executive of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, had announced a District Government Plan, promising transfer of power to the people at the grass roots level.

This plan had been prepared by the recently instituted National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB). The plan has presently been put before the public for

such as workshops, seminars, peoples assemblies, teleconferences and via the internet.

Shehri-CBE in collaboration with



debate and consultation.

The finalized plan will be announced on 14th August, 2000, by the Chief Executive of Pakistan. Debate on the merits and demerits of the plan has continued through various forums

the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, availing of this opportunity, held a public consultation on the proposed plan on 24th June, 2000 at Hotel Marriot, Karachi. The mode adopted for gaining public input was Working Group Sessions.



PROPOSED PLAN: A BRIEF

The government announced a plan for devolution of power on March 23, 2000. The plan for devolution of power is part of a seven-point "national reconstruction" agenda. In a first step towards restoring national democracy, the Chief Executive has expressed a desire to establish "the fundamental tier of democracy, the District and Local Governments".

The government proposes a complex structure to achieve "the fruits of grass roots democracy". A proposed structure was presented to the nation by the National Reconstruction Bureau on March 23, 2000. The government has committed to finalizing this document by August 14, 2000, and to bring a process of local government elections by December, 2000.

The structure builds on the basic administrative unit of the district. The primary legislative body will be the District Assem-



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](http://www.onkhura.com/shehri)

EDITOR
Farhan Anwar

MANAGING COMMITTEE

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

Amber Ali Bhai
Treasurer : Hanif A. Sattar

Members : Navaid Husain
Khatib Ahmed
Dr. S. Raza Ali Gardezi

SHEHRI STAFF

Administrator :
Mrs. Mansoor

Co-ordinator :
Sadaf Khan

Asst. Co-ordinator :
Mohammad
Rehan Ashraf

SHEHRI SUB-COMMITTEES

- i) Legal
- ii) Media & Outreach
- iii) Anti-Pollution
- iv) Parks & Recreation
- v) Gun Free Society
- vi) Conservation & Heritage
- vii) Fund Raiser

Contributions are welcome

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.

Composed by :
SHAH GRAPHICS
Tel : 62 61 49

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

Of Sages and Utopias

A couple of thousand years ago, in a place called Athens, there came a succession of men, who created a revolution in human thought and laid the foundations for the great scientific and philosophical advances of the modern ages. This, they did by opening the gates of human intellect.

Among these giants in human mankind was Plato, disciple of the great "corrupter of minds", Socrates. Plato wanted to create a utopian world, ruled by the strongest and the wisest among men. In his monumental work, the *Republic*, he spells out the shapes and contours of such a perfect society. First, he sets the stage, by throwing himself a challenge. Socrates, who serves as the mouthpiece of Plato in the *Republic*, forces a friend, Thrysmachus, the Sophist, to commit himself to a definition of "justice".

"Listen then", says the angry Sophist, "I proclaim that *might is right, and justice is the interest of the stronger...The different forms of government make laws, democratic, aristocratic or autocratic, with a view to their respective interests; and these laws, so made by them to serve their interests, they deliver to their subjects as "justice", and punish as unjust anyone who transgresses them.*"

Plato addresses this challenge of hard "immoralization", by pointing out that justice is a relation among individuals, depending on social organization; and that in consequence, it can be studied as part of the structure of a community, than as a quality of personal conduct. In short, only in a utopian world could the term "justice", have any relevance.

Coming now to the real world. We survive within the confines of what the "strong" and the "mighty", decide for everyone. The G-7, the WTO, the UN Security Council, the World Bank, the IMF and the likes, devise the rules of the game as they see fit to serve their own utopian visions. Within the struggling nation states like ours, the ruling classes devise their own little mechanisms for human subjugation. In the real world, Plato's philosopher king does not exist and the wisest among men do not rule only the strongest and the most ruthless. So who will deliver our utopia to us? But perhaps human history has always been like this. The truth is that there is no utopia. Those who search for utopias, often become disillusioned and disoriented.

Life is a constant struggle between the forces of good and evil. The choice is for us to make, which side of the divide do we wish to strengthen. □



Chairman, NRB, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Syed Tanveer Hussain Naqvi

Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Syed Tanveer Hussain Naqvi, Chairman NRB and Mr. Omar Asghar Khan, Federal Minister for Local Bodies & Rural Development, Environment, Labour were the guest speakers. Mr. Farhan Anwar, Executive Member, Shehri-CBE acted as workshop moderator.

Mr. Farhan Anwar, outlined the major objectives and methodology of the workshop.

Mr. Anwar also discussed certain aspects of the plan such as the structural and administrative arrangements.

Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Syed Tanveer Hussain Naqvi, appreciated the initiative of Shehri-CBE in arranging the session. General Naqvi said that the plan provides choices to the people. In response to a concern being raised that the elected representatives and the civil service may clash with each other, he said friction may be inevitable, however, the disputes will be resolved through checks and balances within the proposed system. He said that a mechanism for conflict resolution will be provided.



Federal Minister for Local Bodies & Rural Development, Mr. Omar Asghar Khan

C-Pg. 1 (Plan Brief)

bly of 66 seats. Of these, 50 would be elected directly, while 10 women, 3 peasant/workers, and 3 minority members will be elected directly. Those elected directly will also be the Union Council Chairperson. The Assembly will be presided over by a Deputy Chief Mayor, who will be elected directly by the people of the district. The Deputy Chief Mayor will contest the seat on a joint ticket with a candidate for the Chief Mayor. The latter will be the district head, elected by the people, and responsible for setting the direction and heading the district administration.

The district administration will be made up of 13 departments, headed by District Officers, and coordinated overall by a District Coordination Officer, who will work under the Chief Mayor. District Officers will be appointed by the Chief Mayor and ratified by the District Assembly. The Assembly will also be able to remove District Officers with a two thirds majority. A key legislative power of the Assembly will be to approve district development and annual plans, the district budget, creation of new taxes and making new-by-laws. They will also be able to form specialized committees to oversee specific issues and to generate policy input. Police will remain a provincial subject, while the district judiciary system will be reformed, including withdrawal of judicial and quasi judicial powers from administrative departments.

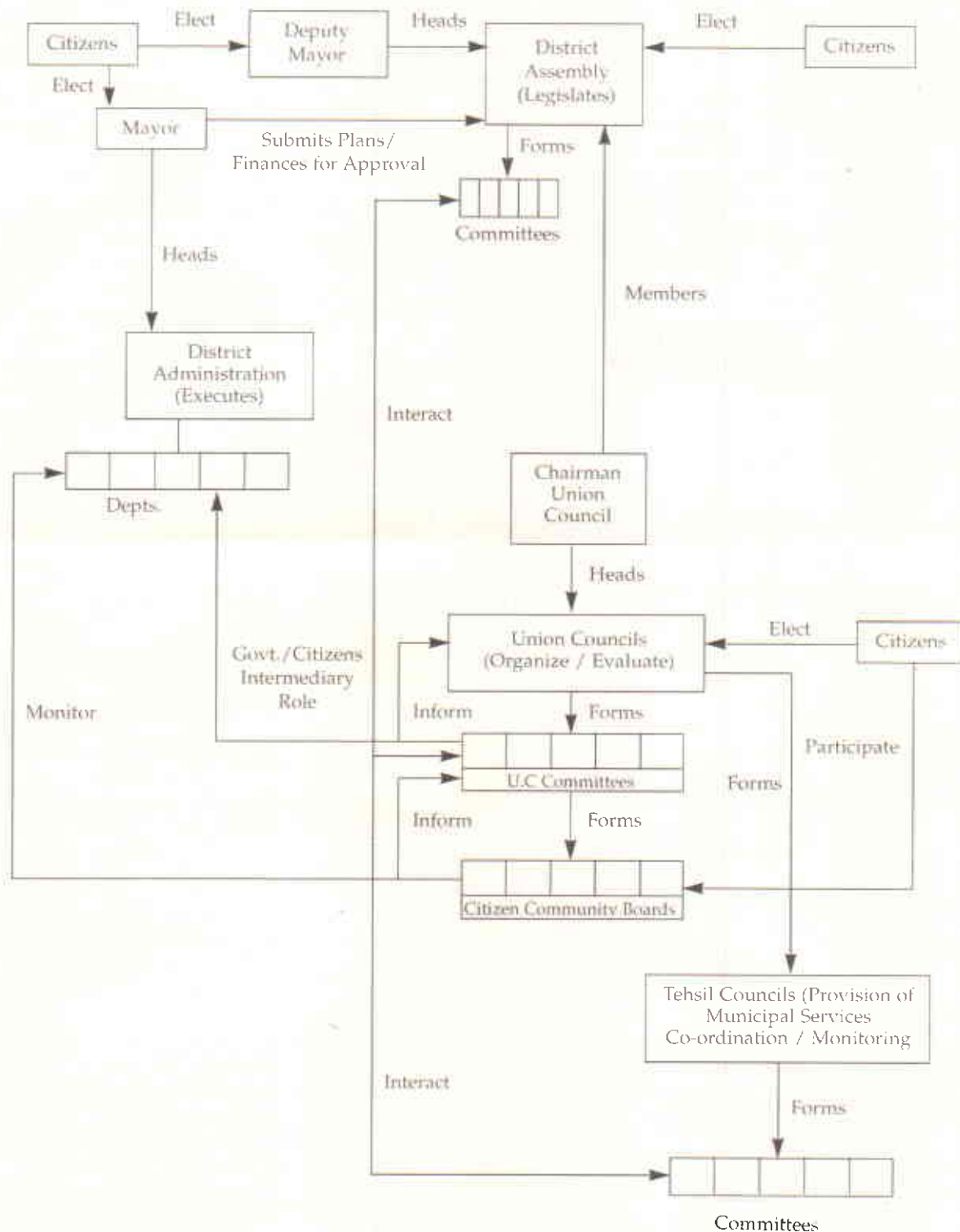
The district structure will be supplemented by a system of Tehsil Councils and Union Councils. The Tehsil Council will provide municipal services to the Tehsil and monitor the functioning of district government officials at that level. It will be headed by a mayor, elected from a Tehsil Council, which in turn will be made up of 34 members elected by Union Councilors, 5 women seats, 2 minority seats and peasant seats.

The Union Council will be elected directly by the people: 8 men and 8 women elected directly, 4 men and 4 women workers/peasant, and 1 man and 1 woman minority representative. The Union Councils will form specialized committees to monitor and evaluate performance of government departments. They will act as intermediaries between communities and the government.

The key to direct citizen participation will be in the Citizen's Community Boards. These boards will be created by the Union Council committees at a village/town level to monitor government performance. They will be officially notified and their evaluations will be noted by the government departments. Citizens will also be able to participate directly through Village Councils. □



Proposed Devolution of Power Plan



Plan visualization by Farhan Anwar, Shehri-CBE



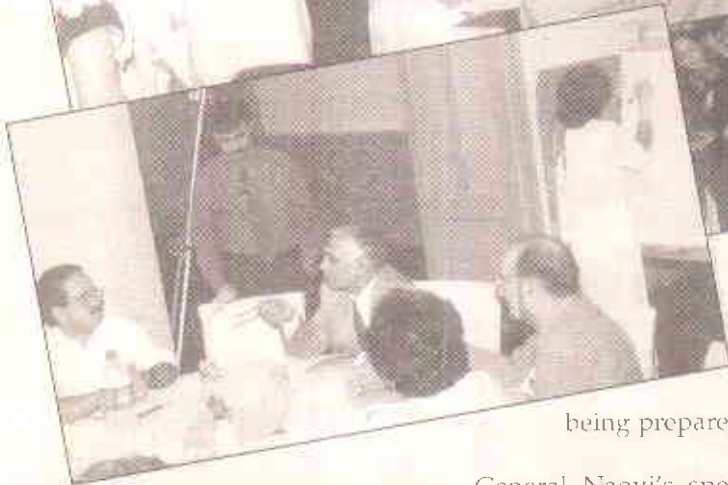
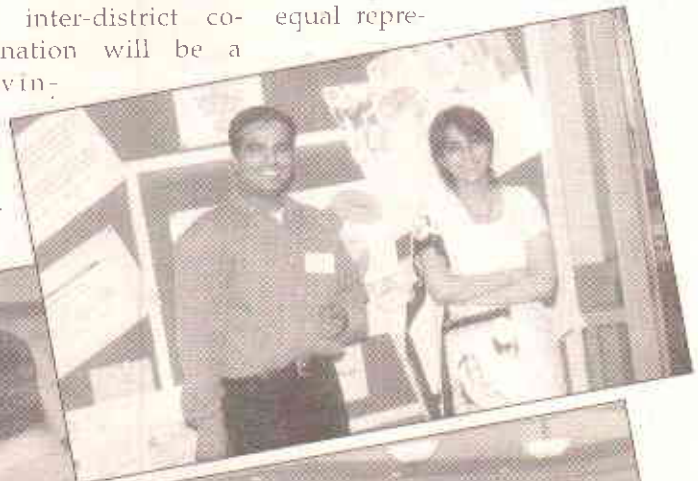
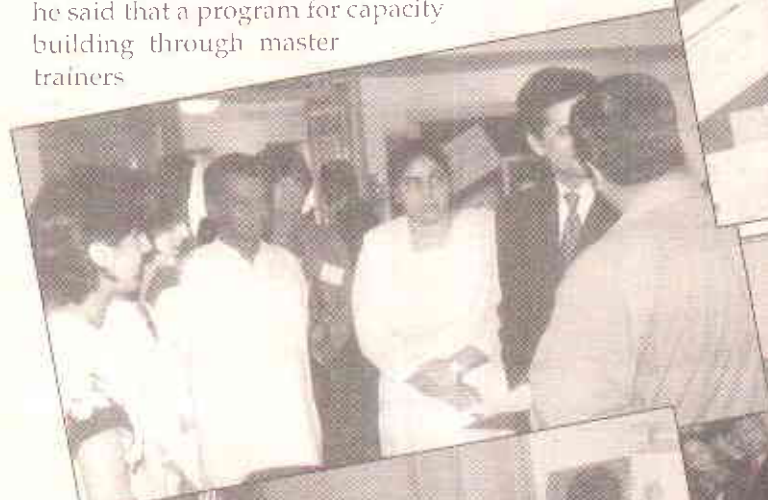
**Executive Member,
Shehri-CBE,
Mr. Farhan Anwar**

He pointed out that police will still remain a provincial subject, however, the District Police will comprise of people who reside in that particular district. He added that inter-district co-ordination will be a provin-

common assumption, women participation in community efforts in rural areas is at times higher than that of men.

Mr. Khan said that due to this reason they have been given equal repre-

With regards the subject of political training of elected representatives, he said that a program for capacity building through master trainers



and planners will be prepared.

General Naqvi said that citizens role is being enhanced as citizens cannot decide against themselves. He praised the role of citizens organisations like Shehri and CPLC and said that through the setting of Citizen Community Boards, this role will increase.

General Naqvi's speech was followed by working group sessions. Five working groups were formed and the results of their deliberations were later presented to the Federal Minister, Mr. Omar Asghar Khan.

Mr. Omar Asghar Khan in his concluding speech disagreed with a general impression that in rural areas, women participation will be low. He said that contrary to this

cial subject. For larger cities like

Karachi and Lahore, a separate City District Plan is

being prepared.

tion in union councils. In district councils, their participation is lesser due to the mobility problem. Mr. Khan said that the powers of the district assemblies may gradually be increased, however initially it may not be possible.

Mr. Khan informed the participants that work on electoral reform is in progress. This would include a code of conduct on electioneering. Strong media involvement in the electioneering process will also be sought.

In the end, Mr. Farhan Anwar thanked the participants and guest speakers and concluded the workshop. □

SHEHRI ACTIVITIES

Shehri Seminar Building Bye-Laws

(Saturday, May 27, 2000, Hotel Marriott, Karachi)

A committee was formulated by the governor in May 1999. This committee was headed by Mr. Kaleemuddin, Chairman, Pakistan Council of Architect & Town Planners (PCATP). The task was to update the Karachi Building and Town Planning draft. It was decided that whatever they present should be in the interest of the people of Karachi and the city environment and must not reflect any vested interests.

that they play. These professionals should not escape from their responsibility

- It was recommended that Building Control and Town Planning should be made an autonomous body and other committees be brought under this autonomous body.

In the Shehri Seminar, this draft was put before the public and the



**Director General,
KDA, Brig. (Retd.)
Zaheer Kadri**

that the committee consisted of Architects only. ABAD felt that the builders were not represented and there was inadequate representation of public through Shehri. Thus in order to invite suggestions from all quarters, the bye-laws have been made open for discussion, through this seminar



Guest Speakers

Mr. Nooruddin Ahmed, representative, Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) emphasized that what is really required in the city is the need to channelize the haphazard growth that is taking place. The city is growing at a rate of 6% per annum, 3% by birth and 3% by immigration. He added that the growth cannot be halted, rather it has to be managed and justice is not being done by just fighting over the bye-laws and not doing what is required.

The committee considered the following planning options:

- Placement of definitions with precise meanings
- New definitions were added
- Elimination of ambiguities/ inconsistencies present in the regulations.
- Efforts have been made to choke all ill practices and protect the interest of the buyers
- The planners were given a vital role but they were also made responsible for the role

relevant government sectors for the first time, for debate and consultation.

Mr. Kaleemuddin said that the population of the city was on the rise and the socio-economic and cultural patterns have changed. Therefore there is a need to up date the building bye-laws in order to ensure planned growth. He further added that he felt that various interest groups were not adequately represented in the committee. The Association of Consulting Engineers felt



**Mr. Nooruddin
Ahmed, Pakistan
Engineering Council**



**Seminar Moderator,
Mr. Roland deSouza**

Mr. Nooruddin said that the center of the city is always re-planned in most mega cities. In Karachi, the cancerous haphazard growth has created problems and solution cannot be to stop growth rather it should be channeled. For example if we take a zone bounded by P.E.C.H.S., Shahrah-Faisal and Shaheed-e-Millat and decide to convert it from a low density area to a high density area, then planning has to be done accordingly.

The speaker said that up till now, the practice has been to take bits and pieces of old bye-laws and amend them. This is not in keeping with the requirements of the growing city and new bye-laws will have to be framed to address the growing needs.

He put forward the following suggestions to stop haphazard commercialization:

- Determine areas where multi-story buildings can be constructed and then the government should do the required planning.
- Redevelop the Saddar Shopping area and declare it a traffic free zone.
- Have multi storied car parking facilities and a shuttle service in the area.

The speaker said that he feels that the bye-laws are being kicked

around and nobody seems to own them. He suggested that perhaps Shehri is a good platform to bring all the actors together.

Brig. (Retd.) Zaheeruddin Kadri, Director General, KDA, stated that the Karachi Development Authority and the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation have chalked out a plan to provide better parking facilities to motorists. It would discourage the trend of haphazard parking on roads and help restore the traffic flow.

Regarding the city's master plan, he said the KDA's Master Plan department had started a belated exercise of framing the city's Master Plan-2000.

"Although it was prepared in 1993, it was never notified", he said.

Speaking about building bye-laws, the KDA chief said, uniformed building bylaws were necessary for the entire city, to discourage haphazard growth in the city.

He said dozens of agencies having land in the city and each having its own rules and regulations for building and town planning had been adding to confusion.

He said one of the salient features of the proposed building bye-laws would be that all the 15 land-holding agencies would be bound to implement them in letter and in spirit.

He said the committee formed by the former governor for updating the Building Rules and Regulations and Town-Planning Bye-Laws would complete its exercise by June and the same is likely to

be notified by mid July.

"Unified building and town planning regulations are needed for Karachi to ensure an organized growth and development".

Mr. Mumtaz Hashmi, representative, Karachi Building Control Authority (KBCA), stressed upon adopting a professional approach in the matter and said that the change or conversion of land from residential to commercial usage be done only in zones declared to be commercial.

Further, technical committees should be setup and unqualified persons should be discouraged. The speaker suggested that minimum standards should not be relaxed.

The speeches were followed by a further enlightening question and answer session. The speakers answered general queries as well as personal inquiries.

A question was put forward by Mr. Shafi Mohammadi, former judge, Sindh High Court. He asked whether KBCA, KDA or private influential NGOs are responsible for deciding if some building under construction is legal and illegal.

Qazi Faez Isa, Chairperson, Shehri-CBE, responded to the question by saying that if KBCA was working efficiently, there wasn't any need for NGOs to go to court. He accentuated that the judge has the power to probe and he should exercise his judicial mind and decide upon the case.

Mr. Roland de'Souza, member Shehri, conducted the seminar and concluded it with a vote of thanks. □



10th Annual General Meeting Shehri-CBE

(Saturday, May 20th, 2000, Shehri-CBE Office)

AGENDA

1. To confirm the minutes of the Ninth Annual General Meeting.
2. To adopt the General Secretary's report of Shehri's activities in 1999.
3. To adopt the audited statement of accounts for the year ended on December 31 1999.
4. To appoint and fix remunerations for the auditors for the year 2000.
5. Any other business with the permission of the chair.

Agenda Item # 1

Mrs. Amber Ali Bhai, General Secretary, Shehri read out the minutes of Shehri AGM 1999, which was held on April 3, 1999. It was proposed for adoption by Mr. Syed S. Haider, a member and seconded by another member, Mr. Derrick Dean and the minutes were confirmed.

Agenda Item # 2

Mrs. Amber Ali Bhai read out the Annual Report of Shehri activities along with the details of the accounts for the year 1999. It was proposed by Mr. Farhan Anwar and seconded by Mr. Farooq Fazal and the Annual Report was adopted.

Agenda Item # 3

The details of the accounts were given. Audited accounts were circulated amongst the members. Certain heads were explained.

Such as the rent was not shown for a period of time to adjust the loan given to Mr. Navaid after he met with the accident.

Mrs. Amber Ali Bhai explained that Shehri was dependent on the donor for 75% of the funding for the year 1999. The rest of the 25% was raised from Shehri's own funds. She further divulged that Shehri also raises some amount from the residents for whom the cases are being filed by Shehri. Other members were also encouraged to help the organization raise funds.

The participants were informed that Tax Exemption Certificate has been acquired for a period of one year. As a pre requisite of this certificate, Rs. 50,000 has been kept in government securities.

The accounts were proposed by Mr. Muslehuddin and seconded by Mr. Derrick Dean and the accounts were adopted.

Agenda Item # 4

The remuneration for the auditors, Mr. Ovais Hyder Zaman and Company, Chartered Accountants, for the year 2000 was fixed at Rs. 4,500. This was proposed by Mr. Haroon Khan and seconded by Ms. Azra Aqeel and the amount

was accepted.

Agenda Item # 5

- Regarding the Bahadurabad waste management, a briefing on KMC hierarchy has been obtained. This information was shared with the members.
- Further the members were informed that the organization is seeking to organize activities and have volunteers come in to assist with the work. For this purpose, various schools



Mrs. Amber Ali Bhai, General Secretary, Shehri-CBE, Chaired the AGM

will be approached for school going children of ages between 15 to 18 years.

- The members were given invitations for the upcoming seminar, being held on the 27 of May. Dr. Raza briefed the members on the draft of building bye-laws that have been formulated by the committee constructed by the last Governor and are now open for general public opinion and recommendations. To give a voice to peoples point of view, Shehri is organizing this seminar and the members were encouraged

to attend it.

Certain suggestions were put forward to the managing committee. The details are as follows:

- Mrs. Raffat proposed raising membership fee from Rs. 300 to Rs. 500. Two other members opposed the idea saying that since Shehri is an NGO, the fee should remain the same as it is payable with ease. Further



they said that who-so-ever wishes to pay more can do so as donations.

- Mr. Haider put forward the idea of embarking on a fund raising campaign of the kind done by Aga Khan which raised 2 crore rupees in 4 months time. Since Mr. Haider had been a part of this fundraiser and thus has some experience in the field, he was asked to take up the exercise himself. Thus Mr. Haider was appointed in-charge of the Fund Raising Committee for Shehri. He was nominated by Mr. Dean and seconded by Dr. Gardezi and Mr. Farhan.

- Mr. Nadeem Ahmed suggested that perhaps if the time of



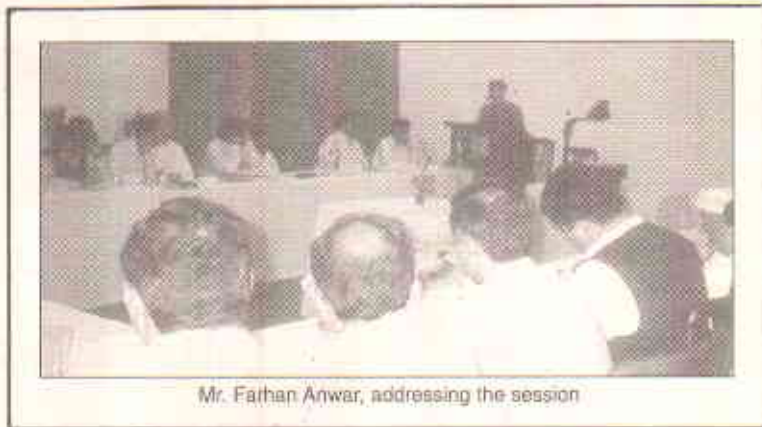
meeting be shifted to 5 o'clock, the attendance can improve.

- Mr. Mohammad Ali Rasheed proposed setting up of a monitoring committee for KMC.

As no further business was to be discussed, the meeting was closed with a vote of thanks to the Chair and to all present. □

Finding the link between conservation and governance

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Pakistan, has recently formulated the Chitral District Conservation Strategy. In order to explore the possibilities of developing linkages and integration with the recently announced District Governance Plan of the Gov-



Mr. Farhan Anwar, addressing the session

ernment of Pakistan, a roundtable conference was held in Chitral on June 7, 2000, Prominent citizens belonging to the civil society and government sector attended the conference. Mr. Farhan Anwar, Executive Member, Shehri-CBE was one of the guest speaker on the occasion. □

Young Shehri Activities

Shehri Youth members visit Citizens Police Liaison Committee (CPLC), Central Reporting Cell (Jan 24, 2000)

An educational and awareness raising visit of the Central Reporting Cell of the Citizens Police Liaison Committee was arranged for the youth members of Shehri (belonging to various higher education city institutes of Karachi) by the Shehri management. Mrs. Mansoor, Administrator Shehri, Muhammad Rehan Ashraf, Asst. Co-ordinator, and Farhan Anwar, Executive Member

At the CRC office Mr. Zabir received the Shehri group and conducted the visit. The visiting team was shown around the various sections of the CRC office which included the data collection/storing, digital mapping, and crime detection facilities.

ods are used to develop crime patterns, detect criminals and document the related information. A Geographic Information



Shehri, accompanied the young members.

kidnapping for ransom. State of the art technologies and meth-

The visiting team was informed, how the CPLC is assisting the police and the citizens in fighting crimes, such as car thefts and

System (GIS) based, digital map of Karachi has also been prepared and is constantly being updated.

After the conducted tour of the facility, a question and answers session was held in which Mr. Zabir attended to the various questions of the visiting team. □



Trip to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Wetland Centre (May 19, 2000)

The Wetlands are called the wet and wild treasure, and with a good reason too. People all over the world have recognized their importance and conservation organizations are working to save them. To save Wetlands for wildlife and people, WWF Pakistan has set up a Wetland Center, at Sandspit, Karachi, reflecting the importance attached to bringing people and wetlands and wildlife together for the benefit of all.

As yet another attempt to educate and involve the youth of our society in the conservation work, Shehri organized a trip to the Wetland Center on the 19th of May 2000. Students of the Karachi Cambridge School were taken to Sandspit on an educational and recreational tour.

The school children were first given an introductory session by Mr. Jahangir Durraneer of WWF. He briefed the students about the biodiversity and importance of the Wetland ecosystem of the country. Mangrove swamps often serve as the border between dry land and seas. They are formed in estuaries and muddy inlets on tropical coasts. Mangroves cover 160,000 out of 600,000 hectares along the Indus delta.

More than thirty species of mangrove plants are found in the world. Only eight species are represented in Pakistan, of which only three types survive today. The species commonly observed include *Avicennia Marina*, *Rhizophora* and *Ceriops*. The cause of the low number of surviving

species of mangroves is said to be due to low rainfall and increasing pollution.

Mangrove forests are one of the most unique eco-systems in the world. They support a wide variety of wildlife, mainly acting as nursery grounds for fish and



crustacean. Pakistan's entire fish and shrimp industry depends upon them. Moreover, mangroves are valuable sources of food, fuel, timber and medicine.

Despite the many uses and importance of these plants, increasingly larger tracts of mangrove forests are being lost. Pollution and dumping of rubbish are taking their toll on the swamps. The three main threats to mangrove forests



are caused by over-grazing, over-fishing and uncontrolled cutting for used as fuel-wood. WWF staff is working to create awareness amongst villagers towards sustainable use of the mangroves.

The replanting of mangroves is being done, involving the villagers so that they see the necessity of the mangrove management program and realize its long-term benefit.



The session was followed by an activity related to the introduction. The students were taken to the nearby mangrove swamps to have a direct observation of the mangrove eco system.

The building of the Wetland Center is a solid example of WWF's Commitment



towards saving the mangroves and Wetlands in Pakistan. With the establishment of this place, right in the middle of mangroves at Sandspit, Pakistan joins the league of countries where work on

the wetlands has been done at an advanced stage.

–Report prepared by Sadaf Khan, Coordinator
Shehri-CBE

OUR NATIONAL SYMBOLS

Recently the National Security Council and the Cabinet have announced the historic decision on Pakistan's national symbols. As notified by the Ministry of Environment, Local Government and Rural Development, Islamabad, the national animal, bird, flower and tree for Pakistan are:

- Jasmine (Jasmine grandiflora);
- Flare-Horned Markhor (Capra falconeri),
- Chakor (Alectories Chukar),
- Deodar (Cedrus deodara).

For a nation, such symbols are of paramount importance because they:

- Deepen and intensify a sense of national identity. They are the visual symbols which the nation can relate to.
- Make for subjects and motifs which are of use to painters, writers, poets, postal stamp designers and researchers.
- Put the entire subject of the flora and fauna in a sharper perspective giving impetus to new social studies, projects and research.
- Provide symbols for emblazonry, heraldry and signage.
- Convey to people in distant lands an

image of the flora and fauna of the country.

Jasmine: This symbol out of the four has been once again selected to be the national flower of our country.

Markhor: The animal, markhor is confined to the valleys of the Indus River and its tributaries in the Karakorams and to the valley of the Kunar River (in Chitral) in the Hindukush range. The flare-horned Markhor is a threatened species. However, since the inception of the Chitral Gol National Park in 1984, the flare-horned Markhor is leading a somewhat secure existence.

Chakor: The national bird of Pakistan is found in all the four provinces. It is both a house-pet as well as a bird of wilderness. The partridge occurs in the higher valleys of Swat and Indus Kohistan and throughout Balochistan. Also, a small population survives in the Kirthar Range of Sindh and the Salt Range in Punjab.

Deodar: The tree Deodar, which has been selected as the national tree, grows all over Pakistan and even on the Himalayas at elevations varying from 4,000 to 9,000 feet. It is an important timber tree whose wood is used extensively for building railway sleepers, furniture and general carpentry. □



CONSERVATION ALERT

Kirthar National Park: On the endangered list?

As controversy rages over the proposed gas exploration project in the Kirthar National Park, a citizen campaign has been activated to protect the natural environment of the Park. Following is a statement of concern from the citizen groups.

We the undersigned, representing environmentally concerned organizations, are deeply troubled and outraged by the recent turn of events in the proposed exploration for gas project in the Kirthar National Park, Sindh.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the 'Kirthar Baseline Study', were finalized in a consultative workshop in Karachi on January 21-22, 2000. The primary objective of the Kirthar Baseline Study was to acquire, assemble, evaluate and present baseline data on the relevant ecological, human and environmental characteristics of the Kirthar National Park.

In this workshop, citizen groups, Govt. of Pakistan/Sindh, Premier Shell and Melbourne Enterprises International agreed that the formation of a Project Steering Committee (PSC) and a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to monitor and facilitate the process of independent analysis and evaluation, was required to ensure and safeguard the integrity of the whole process.

A public and unequivocal commitment was made by the Govt. of Sindh, that the initiation or otherwise of any Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process of the proposed gas exploration project in the Kirthar National Park (Dumber Concession Area) would be subject to the findings of the Baseline Study and upon the outcome of the subsequent public debate and consultation process.

However, on January 23rd, only a day after the conclusion of the

TOR Workshop, it sadly became quite clear that these commitments were not meant to be honored, when the Sindh Wildlife Conservator, Mr. Mahboob Alam Ansari, was reported in the press to have stated that 'At a later stage, an Environmental Impact Assessment would be conducted, probably by a Canada based firm'.

Since then, the Premier - Shell Pakistan B.V. and the Govt. of Sindh have gone on to violate the spirit of the agreements reached after a long process of public consultation, aimed at building trust and evolving participatory mechanisms. Despite the fact that most of the Baseline Study field work is reported to have been completed, not a single meeting of the PSC has been called. The TAG is reported to have met only once. Showing complete disregard to their public and solemn pledges, the Govt. of Sindh have contracted a Canadian consulting group, Agra Earth & Environmental to conduct the EIA of the proposed gas exploration project. This process has been activated and is running parallel to the Baseline Study.

It is also the case that field work on the Baseline Study has gone on despite the fact that the Sindh Law Department registered comments and sought clarifications on certain aspects of the contract and the Sindh Govt. signed the contract only after 70% of the study had been completed. This fact alone, casts serious doubts over the legality of the whole exercise.

This undue haste and the bull in a china shop attitude, which seems

to hold no respect for the relevant legal and moral aspects of the whole issue, is extremely deplorable. The process established and the decisions taken have been overlooked at the expense of the resources of Sindh, and at the cost of a maturing relationship between the various stakeholder groups. Gas reserves, if these do indeed exist in Kirthar are not going anywhere. However, seriously damaged is the public trust and faith in the transparency and legitimacy of the whole process.

We demand that the ongoing EIA process should be halted immediately and the TOR of the Baseline Study be formally approved. The PSC be notified and start serving the purpose for which it was agreed to be formed and the technical, financial and management mechanisms being invoked for the Baseline Study should be made transparent and accountable to all the stakeholder groups.

The environmental and related concerns attached to this project are very real, and the importance of involving civil society cannot be allowed to be undermined in a manner demonstrated recently.

Endorsed by

- SDPI, Islamabad
- Sungi Development Foundation, Pakistan
- Shirkat Gah, Pakistan
- WWF Pakistan
- Shehri-CBE, Karachi
- Creed, Karachi
- Piler, Karachi
- KAWWS, Karachi