

Scenario 143

TRANSPORT MAFIA IN KARACHI

Karachi accommodates 10pc of the population of Pakistan and 22pc of its urban population. In addition to population, there are other reasons for Karachi's importance. It is Pakistan's only port city [till October 2016 at least]. It contains 32pc of the country's industrial base, generates 15pc of GDP, 25pc of federal revenues and 62pc of income tax. It contains powerful federal institutions in the form of the Karachi Port Trust [KPT], the Civil Aviation Authority [CAA], Naval Base, Steel Mills, Railways, Customs etc.

The federal, as well as Sindh provincial government, both own lands in Karachi; thus they all have a say in Karachi's development. The city government controls only 31pc of Karachi's land. Coordination between the different land owning agencies is almost non-existent. Karachi contains 62pc of Sindh urban population and 30pc of its total population; whereas the second largest city of Pakistan, Lahore, contains only 7pc of the population of the Punjab province.

Karachi's large scale industrial sector employs 71.6pc of the total industrial labour force in Sindh; the city produces 74.8pc of the province's total industrial output and contains 78pc of its formal private sector jobs.

According to the 1998 census only 14pc of Karachi's population was speaking languages local to Sindh as their mother tongue while 48.25pc spoke Urdu. The Urdu speakers are the post-1947 migrants to Karachi. As such, a predominantly Sindhi speaking province has an overwhelming majority of non-Sindhi speaking ethnic groups in its capital city. The fact remains that the whole data of Karachi's residents and migrants changed after Nine Eleven event and more rapidly altered after Operation Zarb e Azb of Gen Raheel Sharif was launched in mid 2014.

GOVERNMENTS' ZERO PLANNING:

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

The conclusion appeared from the above was that the link between the nature of city governance, technology used for transport and affordability, housing, land-use, access to livelihoods especially for women, health and family well-being, on the one hand, and quality transport on the other went on deteriorating with the passage of time. In fact, transport had never been seen as a part of a larger city planning exercise during successive governments in the past 30 years at least.

Public transport sector in Karachi has been a spectator example of lack of governance and indiscipline since decades, affecting lives of millions of commuters. With chilling winds blowing in winters, commuting in Karachi by perching on a roof-rack of overcrowded minibus in Karachi was an experience that could only be called a nuisance; however, the Karachi commuters brave this hassle every day.

The performance of City's transport department could be unquestionably placed on the lower tread. The successive governments simply have been neglecting the transport sector, a key to swift socioeconomic progress and prosperity in any society. Karachi's urban public transport is even worse than rural transport of many poor and backward African nations.

Nowhere in the world are commuters seen travelling on rooftops of minibuses in any mega urban city, saving poor Karachi. In the pre-partition days Karachi owned a respectable public transport system with an efficient tram system running in downtown area. Even three decades back the city had a good public transport system with Karachi Circular Railway [KCR], a surface-based rail system, and a big fleet of Karachi Transport Corporation [KTC] buses. However, this valuable rail and road-based public transport infrastructure was systemically damaged for ulterior motives.

Later, the public transport needs of the city were catered by thousands of makeshift motorcycle rickshaws called *Qingqis*, and very old, shabby and smoke-emitting buses and minibuses that often run overcrowded with passengers travelling on their rooftops – but then even these species were seen gradually disappearing due to worst law and order situation in city.

In Karachi, the public transport sector is governed by private transporters since long, who buy junk and road-unfit buses from different provinces of Pakistan and ply them on Karachi streets. The state transport and traffic departments do not stress on engine's fitness of these junkyard - class vehicles because their owners know the art how to keep the palms of corrupt government officials greased.

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

Far back, on 24th September 2003; an Amsterdam-based corporate establishment, Jacob & Associates BV Netherlands, had offered its services in undertaking the Karachi Community Transport Project but immediately after there were threatening calls for them from elements sponsored and patronized by certain officials in the city government and transport mafia. The organization's Executive Director in South Asia region told the media:

"The project would offer a fare structure 62 per cent on the lower side than the existing one, besides concessional fares for students, senior citizens and workers."

The organization had been performing in South Asia since 1997 and its initial assignments included study and research on social and economic problems, political instability in the country and influence of criminal elements on the society, as well as recommending a sustainable solution to the problems. About the organization community transport project, it was planned that after four years of pilot operation, it could be handed over to the Karachi's city government, free of cost with its assets and entire fleet of buses — expectedly 300 new and reconditioned non-Air Conditioned buses.

Netherlands's organisation held that commuters of the port city had virtually been held hostage by the transport mafia since long. The citizens' problems were there due to neglect on the part of the successive governments which had turned a blind eye towards the whole situation. Even the relevant departments had declined to oblige the organization for providing the data or making out rout outlines.

Announcing measures to replace out-dated cabs and rickshaws with CNG-fitted air-conditioned cars, with mark-up-free funding, this project was expected to go a long way towards alleviating poverty in the city. The main objective was to offer an affordable and efficient radio-taxi service within discounted fare structure.

Alleviating apprehensions of local transporters, the organisation held out the assurance that it was not going to indulge in any competition with the local transport services as it did not intend to introduce its own transport service. On the contrary, they aimed focusing on reducing miseries of commuters belonging to lower classes without eyeing at financial gains.

Once, the federal capital in association with Sindh government had initiated a multi-billion fantasy, "The Mass Transit Project" but never seriously implemented it; 50 buses were initially arranged to cater for about 16 million people then. Obviously, all this development was a threat to city's

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

Transport Mafia who had hijacked Karachi's transportation system for more than 30 years.

In a seminar at Urban Resource Centre Karachi, it was disclosed that serious flaws in infrastructure, ineffective implementation of relevant laws and lack of awareness among people claimed 1,100 lives during year 2011 in road accidents in the city; the *daily 'Dawn' dated 19th January 2012* is referred.

The federal health ministry had established the *Road Traffic Injury Research and Prevention Centre at the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre* in 2006. A related road injury surveillance project was devised and initiated in collaboration with the NED University of Engineering and Technology Karachi and supported by Indus Motors.

The centre has been involved in road traffic accident data collection and analysis since September 2007, suggesting every possible measure to the government bodies and people in general through different campaigns for removal of the flaws and to ensure minimum road accident vulnerability. It was, however, observed that the federal or Sindh government never bothered to implement the suggestions placed before them from time to time – thus the situation continued deteriorating.

The concerned departments had identified certain key risk factors that increased the possibilities of the fatal road accidents manifold and also sounded cautioned on the total number of deaths due to road accidents recorded officially across the city. An un-official token system by private transport and non-implementation of bus stop rules were also the reasons that caused more road accidents. Use of wrong ways, sharp curves on roads, little use of indicators by motorists and helmets by riders were few other reasons that lead to fatalities.

According to the World Health Organisation [WHO], 1.3 million people died of road accidents every year in South Western Asian countries, where Pakistan was on the top in terms of fatalities.

The WHO in collaboration with the United Nations had once launched a programme in 2011 called *Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-20*. The fears were high that if Pakistan did not move with the required pace and measures to address the road accidents menace, the global number of fatalities could jump up to five times; Pakistan was going to be the major losers; and the apprehensions proved true.

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

Perhaps the most visible manifestation of an on-going urban governance crisis is to be found in the transportation sector of Karachi - a city of 20 million people, has yet to be provided with a decent, state-of-the-art and viable urban mass transit system. Rapid population growth and the failure of planning and implementation agencies in Karachi to adequately develop and manage the requisite urban infrastructure; un-attending the issue could have many adverse consequences for the city.

Several plans and studies had been carried out by various governments; including the MRV Master Plan 1952, the Karachi Rapid Transit Study 1974, the Karachi Transportation Master Plan 1985, the Karachi Mass Transit Study 1990, the Karachi Circular Railway [KCR] Improvement Study 1990, the Karachi Mass Transit System [KMTS], Priority Corridor 1 of 1994, the KMTS Priority Corridor 2 of 1994, the BOOT Contract on Corridor 1 in 1996, the KMTA and NMTA Implementation Plan 1997, and the Study for Karachi Transportation Improvement Project of 2010 – but alas, no government, political or military, could address the issue seriously.

Once, the PML[N]'s government of 2013 focussed on revitalising the KCR system. In 2014, the government revealed a plan to introduce the Bus Rapid Transit [BRT] system. These initiatives were hailed by the intelligentsia in the sense that the authorities finally assigned priority to the need it deserved. However, soon it was seen flopped in terms of lack of coordination and institutional interference by numerous hidden hands spread by the known transport mafias of Karachi.

It was obvious that the KCR in itself was not able to become the prime organiser of public commuters in Karachi. The city has been expanding a lot since the time the KCR was originally laid out. Even then, KCR, with the basic infrastructure already in place, could offer a logical mode of rapid mass transit system. If implemented sincerely it could help in greatly reducing the traffic load and congestion in the city, particularly in the inner city area – but the successive governments never moved out from paperwork and discussions.

The KCR could play an important part of larger and multifaceted urban mass transit system in Karachi city. How the KCR system could find synergy with the RBT system, with the two complementing each other, was kept ambiguous as the institutional contexts were different and the BRT plan started taking shape, allegedly because of PML[N] government's routine 'business deal', while the KCR planning had already been completed much earlier. The governments were not at all serious to take the said planning ahead.

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

It was also not made clear that how a smooth transition was possible from the pathetic and mostly un-regulated private sector control of public transportation modes run by various transport mafias, such as mini buses and *Qingqis*, to supposedly, better regulated and institutionalised management models of public transport of KCR or RBT.

In the planning documents there were not enough explanations that how the given institutional mechanisms would coordinate with other public sector entities, such as land development, gas, water and power utilities; as re-engineering and remodelling were required at each step. Such situations might have been considered in the city known for a serious disconnect between multiple land owning agencies – however, there was no estimated leads available that what would be done if some rogue brings a stay order from Pakistani rogue courts; stay orders are often available just for Rs:5000 [£40] only but could take decades to get finally vacated.

There was a dire need of fresh relevant legislation on this aspect because Pakistan is known for such gimmicks where a chief minister, ruled his province for full term of four years on High Court's stay order; where two federal ministers, Kh Sa'ad Rafiq and Kh Asif, continued to tenet for the full term of PML[N] government since 2013 on stay orders.

However, all the loud shouts, fresh planning documents and renewed implementation strategies also died their own death in power corridors because till ending 2016 at least, there was not a single step taken forward; as usual in Karachi politics.

Till ending 2013, the population of Karachi, by rough estimates, was about 22 million and the Karachi Municipal Corporation [KMC] departments were expecting it 27.5 million by 2020. Public transport is crucial to any development and one of the basic civil rights a government owes to its citizens. Sadly the public transport in Karachi consisted of a system of sub-standard coaches and minibuses and operated under the complete management of private owners. Around 14,520,000 persons used to travel on those sub-standard public vehicles daily [*on workdays*] from one place to other.

As per KMC's data of 2012, there were 12,400 permit holding public buses [*the term bus here includes transportation vehicle including mini buses and coaches on average having 26 seats each*] operational on roads in Karachi, making out one bus for every 1,171 people and 45 passengers per bus seat. These tightening figures gives a fair idea of frequent scenes where people could be seen hanging by one hand on doors, windows or sitting on top of roofs, putting their lives in danger.

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

In addition, there has never been any consistency in the schedule of buses in Karachi; transporters decide when and how many buses they would bring on roads on any given day, the citizen have no choice but to adjust accordingly. If it's a CNG closure day, transporters will bring less number of buses to the roads to save money which will results in a huge number of people waiting at bus stops in awkward situations.

The transport mafia, the private bus owners do not accept any direction when it comes to fare charges nor there is any standard formula defined to decide bus fares. Citizens of Karachi are bound to pay whatever has been asked from them or sit at home. The fare is always increased with the increasing petrol rate but when petrol prices drop, the prices of bus fare hardly ever come down proportionately.

Till ending 2013 at least, on an average vehicle meant for 26 passengers to sit, there were about the double on board who were standing inside or on door or sitting over the roof; on average about 40 passengers were on board. Thus a bus collected Rs:800 @ Rs:20 a one sided trip and all 12,400 buses collected Rs:9,920K for one trip. Given that a bus completed 10 such trips in day the figure came up Rs:99,200K was the amount of money citizens of Karachi paid on account of bus fares in one day.

The public buses in today's Karachi are not owned by any government authority, thus they possess a danger to the citizen at various levels. Most of the drivers of these buses are not trained for driving large vehicles; sometimes under aged boys could be seen driving these buses with no knowledge of traffic rules and conduct, often over speeding and overtaking other vehicles in a very dangerous manner. Mostly these reckless and inexperienced drivers were responsible for fatal road accidents in Karachi, making Karachi roads one of the most dangerous ones to commute on.

[More than 1100 per year lose their lives in Karachi due to road accidents and more than 35,000 accidents occur every year leaving many injured or disabled.]

BUSHRA ZAIDI CASE [1985]:

Beside the aforementioned direct effects, Karachi's public transport system has also been giving rise to many major conflicts in city. The Bushra Zaidi Case is monumental in this regard, where a road incident lead to the start of ethnic riots, resulted in 50 casualties with 300 people injured within a

week. Since then there exists a strong divide in this city over particular ethnic lines, all this hatred have roots in this transportation system.

[Bushra Zaidi had died on 15th April 1985 in a road accident in Karachi.

Referring to Saba Imtiaz & Noman Ahmed's feature published in the '*Express Tribune*' on 8th March 2012, her name launched a thousand protests and forever altered the city's history. Bushra, the 20-year-old Sir Syed Girls College student, whose death in a traffic accident was a turning point in the lives of everyone bearing the title and honour of being Karachiite.

"There were two N-1 minibuses racing and one of the bus drivers couldn't apply the brakes in time," such was collective memory that many people believed that Bushra was killed while alighting from the bus and not as a result of being hit by one.

Some described that the bus had knocked over a group of students, and three others were injured along with Najma. Bushra and her sister Najma were crossing Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan Road at the time. Najma was badly injured – her leg was fractured – but Bushra had expired; both sisters were taken to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital before the college staff arrived at the scene.

The students of the Sir Syed Girls College tried to protest but the principal Atiqa Baig closed the college gates. The girls forced their way out and were joined by female protesters from the nearby Usmania College and adjacent Government Degree College for Women, Nazimabad. They gathered at Golimaar Chowrangi and boys from colleges in the vicinity also joined them. The boys toppled and then torched the bus involved in the accident.

The state responded. The police first baton-charged the protesters and then unleashed an intense bout of teargas. The shells fell inside Sir Syed Girls College and even inside an ambulance; four people were allegedly killed by bullets and pellets, 80 injured were taken to hospital - curfew was imposed in the area by the military administration with immediate effect.

Students boycotted classes, put up barricades and pulled down hoardings; there were scenes of total panic in Nazimabad and Li-aquatabad, where the protests spread, and educational institu-

tions were shut down for three days. The curfew was lifted for a few hours in select areas so people could buy food.

The ire of the protesters inevitably turned on the transporters. This sector was dominated by Pashtuns. Here again there was a discrepancy in the story and confusion. Ghous Ali Shah, the then chief minister in 1985, held that the man who was caught and tried in the Sessions Court for his role in the accident, was originally from Azad Kashmir. And then, according to the president of Karachi Transport Ittehad, Irshad Bukhari, the crime was committed not by a Pashtun – but by a Punjabi-speaking driver, who later spent 10 years in jail.

However, Bushra's death precipitated ethnic riots and violence. A week on, the toll reached 50 with 300 people injured, according to an account by the Associated Press [APP]. Every ten minutes someone was being brought to the hospital with gunshot wounds from some area of Karachi; this was the treat for the second day of the riots.

The IG Police at the time was Agha Saadat Ali Shah who had got the said accident case investigated by SSP Munawar Ali. Bushra Zaidi's family, who had no political affiliation, had left the city since the mid-1990s as reported. Bushra's father was working in Oman when his daughter was killed.

Under threats and intimidation, one Tahir Siddiqui of a printing press in Nazimabad's printing market, was compelled to make out and print a pamphlet which contained inflammatory messages against Pashtuns and the same were later distributed in the Nazimabad area. No group was named on them.

Student leader Altaf Hussain had already created the All Pakistan Mohajir Students Organisation [APMSO] by then. Bushra's death became a breaking point for people who had already complained of not just the changes in the city, but also state discrimination. Dr Farooq Sattar of the MQM, while commenting on what Bushra's case did for Karachi, recalled:

"For the first time, Karachi was high on the list of government priorities and things began to change; it led to a commission being set up in the late 1980s by then Chief Secretary Masooduz Zaman, who realised that there was

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

a sense of deprivation and it needed to be corrected with the allocation of resources.

Subsequently, during my tenure as mayor, 100 million gallons of water were added to the city's supply. Improving civic infrastructure, developing a mass transit programme, the water allocations... these were all as a result of the Bushra Zaidi accident."

The MQM was not the only stakeholder that agreed with this, *Jamat e Islami* [JI] was also standing by the MQM in the front line. It was the [bundles of] straw that broke the camel's back; it was evident, but nobody could really foresee or estimate its consequences at that time.

And thus, as one looks back, more than three decades on, in some ways, Bushra Zaidi is the only woman who still echoes in the whole scenario of Karachi's present state of affairs.]

In Karachi's transportation system, another rising concern has been the illegal usage of low quality cylinders for CNG in private public buses. These cylinders are usually meant for general domestic usage and not made for high pressure CNG usage; the same are usually fitted in the passenger area of the buses putting the lives of the commuters in great danger.

MAFIA'S BEHAVIOUR WITH LEAs:

Referring to an analysis appeared on 20th November 2014 in 'DEFENCE PK' while retrieving an earlier essay:

"These overly filled buses are hardly stopped by Law Enforcement Agencies [LEAs] during snap checking, as it is not practically possible to stop each of these buses and check everyone in and out and as they are not regulated by any government agencies; hence their monitoring practically becomes near to impossible, which makes them a security risk.

It is also a camouflaged way for terrorists to travel from one point to other within a city or even transfer weapons or other illegal material such as drugs."

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

The said private buses usually stop rapidly at random stops resulting in road jams, waiting for longer than usual on one stop if there are not enough passengers. This increases the overall travel time for the passengers and also make it uncertain for the passengers to calculate the time to reach their destination if they are in a rush.

Not just the government but also the transport mafia which runs these public buses were not inclined to do any good for the citizens by improving the condition of their fleet. *They also don't let any alternative transport system grow in the city in parallel to them, in order to keep the monopoly in their hands.*

One of the many examples is when standardized, comfortable CNG green buses were introduced by Mustafa Kamal, Mayor of Karachi then belonging to MQM, the buses and their stations were attacked and also criticized on an official level by representatives of these transporters sitting in the Sindh assembly and the Parliament, as they, through their influence, usually always managed to get hold of transport ministry.

[GREEN BUSES: The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation [KMC] had once bought wide-bodied CNG 'Green buses', recruited staff to run them, erected ticket kiosks on different routes of the city, but after a few months these new buses were parked on the pretext of 'need to repair'. No government authority asked who was responsible for the wastage of taxpayers' money.

Green Buses Project was introduced by Karachi's Mayor Mustafa Kamal for easing out the transportation problems and providing them greener and cost effective transport network. The only opposition to this project came from the Sindh Transport Minister Akhtar Jadoon where he went on to give absurdly a statement like, "that the City government's duty should be to clean the drains and not to initiate transport projects".

The whole media termed the statement as 'disgusting' but the Transport Mafia came out in force to oppose to the project; Sindh Minister Akhtar Jadoon was one of those persons who actually had huge stakes in Karachi's transport. It was amazing that how someone who was directly involved in transport business could be given a portfolio of Transport. The Green Bus Project was indeed a threat to their businesses; the monopoly of Transport Mafia was going to be in danger.]

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

MQM had alleged that the same Transport Mafia was involved in car snatching crimes in Karachi as they provided logistical support to the criminals in smuggling those cars to go across borders. Sixty-five thousand cars from Karachi alone from 1992-1998 were jacked from Karachi and transported to Afghanistan only to re-appear in Pakistan with their number plates changed.

It was known to all that once Karachi's 60,000 auto-rickshaws were owned by not more than five people who hailed from Mesud, Jadoon, Afridi tribes in NWFP and used to rent them out to drivers from Rs:250-400 / day despite a Sindh High Court judgment on the ban on two-strokes rickshaws. The president of Rickshaw Association, Hafizul Haq HasanZai, a front man for the transport mafia, oddly maintained that the judgment by Sindh High Court was a "*conspiracy against Pashtuns*" forgetting that Peshawar had not only banned two-stroke rickshaws but strictly got it implemented.

During the years around 2009, the Sindh government started the Green Rickshaw Campaign where loans to the rickshaw drivers were provided in a Presidential Employment Scheme via SEMDA Bank. The transport mafia made sure that the scheme gets scrapped as the new greener rickshaws was a threat to their own fleet of 60,000 rickshaws.

The aforesaid transport mafia hunted down any alternative transportation project in pipeline for Karachi or was supposed to alter the grieved state of transport affairs in Karachi such as big Karachi Mass Transit Plan (1987-1991), Karachi Transport Improvement Project (KITP - 2009), circular railway service in Karachi and Karachi mass transit projects . The same transport mafia had also been responsible and correctly blamed for being the influence behind bans over rapid pillion ridings of motorcycles and Qingqi rickshaws in the city.

However, Mustafa Kamal kept his efforts going to keep the green buses on roads as far as he remained in office; as soon as he left so did the buses. The remaining buses which were 're-launched' by Sindh Government in 2014 after changing their name to SMBB Bus Service, they were same as far as the colour was concerned beside that they were being operated just like all other buses in the city.

Karachi being among the top five biggest and populous cities of the world is lacking way behind in this context. It's hard to even compare the public transportation structures with other mega cities as there is hardly anything in the city that could be referred to as structure.

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

Institutional arrangements for state sponsored transport programmes for cities are always related to the governance structure at the given time; the same was true for Karachi. As the governance structure mostly remained with the PPP governments, they were mainly responsible for all sufferings in mass transport sector in the city. If some times they went for it, then purchase and operation of the buses were made extremely costly due to hidden kick-backs, corruption and nepotism - thus the service could not be made affordable to the public without the provision of a subsidy.

Without subsidy government programmes operated at loss and were unsustainable. Even where government promised such subsidies, they were not provided. There were also maintenance issues such as the use of sub-standard spare parts replacement which adversely affected the performance of the vehicle. There were also pilferage of funds and loss of vehicles due to riots and political violence.

At times, the governments did not permit the private sector to raise its fares in proportion to the rising cost of fuel so as to keep them affordable for the public. As a result, the formal and informally financed private sector was unwilling to invest in conventional transport modes such as minibuses. The result has been a decline in the number of buses.

The courts also added their share in the transport crisis by ordering all public transport vehicles to convert to CNG. This order was issued without a proper understanding of the availability of CNG or of government plans regarding energy related issues. The various governments in Pakistan, after the order was issued, did not challenge the courts' decision.

There were institutional issues also. The various government departments dealing with Karachi's transport had no coordination amongst them; they always kept serious differences of opinion. In addition, police corruption has been rampant because of which public transport vehicles operated without fitness tests and certificates; unregistered, and as such illegal. Public transport vehicles operated on the roads and all other vehicles that used to pay a monthly bribe to the police could violate traffic rules and regulations at ease causing traffic jams and inconvenience to commuters.

Government programmes were not able to compete with the informally financed private sector for a number of reasons and suffered as a result. The service provided by the informally financed sector had been through cheaper minibuses, low paid and over-worked drivers and conductors, and almost no administrative overheads or paper work. However, this sector had an understanding of the city and its commuters, knowledge of identifying lucrative routes and promoting their interests in dealing with the police.

This deep knowledge of the informally financed sector was never used effectively by the state planners. The sector was confident that it could operate large buses successfully if it could provide loans from banks for the purchase of buses and at discounted rates of interest; its vehicles were provided protection by insurance companies; and additionally if police corruption could be contained.

KARACHI CIRCULAR RAILWAY:

KCR, a defunct inter-regional railway, was once a proposed revival of an inter-regional public transit system in Karachi with aimed to connect several industrial and commercial districts within the city to the outlying suburbs. KCR was primarily planned to serve the Metropolitan Karachi Area and around, with operations extending to several other communities.

Pakistan's first such public transport system - KCR was planned and built during 1964-70, began regular passenger service in 1969 but was shut-down in 1999 due to gross mismanagement.

[KCR started operation in 1969 through Pakistan Railways with the aim of providing better transportation facilities to Karachi and the surrounding suburbs. The original KCR line extended from Drigh Road Station and ended at Karachi City Station carrying 6 million passengers annually. The KCR was in instant success and made a significant profit in its first year of operation.

During the 1970s and 1980s the KCR was at its peak with 104 daily trains, of which 80 trains ran on the main track while the remaining 24 ran on the loop line.

During the 1990s, the private transporters of Karachi approached KCR staff to destroy the whole system through under the table deals and corruption. By 1994 the KCR was in incurring major losses and as a result the vast majority of trains were discontinued with only a few running on the Loop.

In 1999 KCR operations were discontinued. The result was instant gridlock on Karachi streets. During years 2002-05, revival plans for the railway were initiated to fulfil the growing transportation needs of Karachi.

The City District Government Karachi was separately making plans for a revival and construction of a combined 'Karachi Metro'.]

On 1st January 2002; the government of Sindh appointed Engineering Consultants International Ltd [ECIL] as consultants for preparing a Viable Implementation Plan for the Revitalization of the KCR. ECIL was a Pakistani engineering firm with considerable experience in designing infrastructure and communication projects both in Pakistan and in many other countries.

ECIL carried out initial investigations and had developed a concept plan very similar to what many Karachi professionals, NGOs and concerned citizens had been suggesting and pressing for over the earlier six years. ECIL's surveys and proposals clearly showed that a mass transit system for the city could be built around the circular railway and its subsequent expansion along Karachi's major growth corridors.

Why and how a mass transit could be built around the circular railway and with what advantages of such a system. According to the Karachi Master Plan Studies 1987, 45pc of all employment in Karachi was then concentrated in SITE, Landhi and Korangi Industrial Areas, the Port, the Central Business District and Saddar. The KCR and the Karachi main line passed through or adjacent to all these areas except Saddar.

However, it was only seven to twenty minute walk from Saddar, depending on which part of Saddar you wish to go to. It also served a large number of residential areas around; and the fast developing industrial and residential facilities around the Steel Mills. Also, the KCR intersected all the major arteries which carried commuters into the city.

The majority of these intersections had flyovers or bridges over them. If stations were shifted to these flyovers, an effective road-rail link was possible, thus connecting all of Karachi to the rail system. This could also result in the spaces below the flyovers and bridges being used for the benefit of the city as storages, shops and mini-markets.

Karachi's suburbs where most of the city's commuters lived, lied beyond the KCR and were served by the Baldia, Orangi, North Karachi and Korangi corridors. The railway could be extended to these corridors in phases, thus serving all of Karachi. Luckily the width of these corridors made it possible for them to accommodate the railway.

ECIL's proposal had two phases. In phase one, the northern section of the KCR was to be rehabilitated [from City Station to Gulistan-e-Jauhar], and double tracked. Stations were to be shifted to under the flyovers and bridg-

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

es to make the KCR-road link possible. Simply by rehabilitating this section and making it operative, the volume of commuter traffic on the roads within the circle of the KCR, including M A Jinnah Road, the North Nazimabad and Liaquatabad corridors, University Road and Chakiwara Road, could fall to much less than half.

It means that in 2002, there could be at least a reduction of about 7,000 mini bus trips on these arteries alone; Phase-I was designed to take only 18 months for completion.

In Phase-II, the ECIL had proposed a spur of 6kms from Nazimabad Station to Nagan Chowrangi and the activation of the main line rail corridor; in addition, a drive to Korangi from Drigh Road Station was also envisaged. With these spurs in place the vast majority of Karachi commuters were aimed at using the railway as a means of transport thus reducing commuter traffic further on the main roads.

At later stage, routes to Orangi and Baldia were also proposed. Had that plan approved and implemented, the vast majority of Karachiites would have been living within two kilometres of the circular railway, a luxury few cities in the world had such arrangements.

However, there were institutional issues that had to be resolved if the KCR proposals were to be implemented.

Firstly, if full benefit had to be derived from the KCR, it would have to be a part of larger Karachi transport plan so that it could be effectively linked to an inter- and intra-city road transport system.

Secondly, who was going to invest in the KCR and related infrastructure and who would manage and operate it? The rehabilitation of the KCR was opening up the rail corridor to real estate development and speculation; who was there to manage and control its implementation through another Land Mafia?

Thirdly, who would subsidize KCR rehabilitation and in that long run project its operation and management as well, thus making train travel considerably cheaper than the road alternative?

Fourthly, how could the government relocate parts of the informal settlements, slums & Kachi Abadies along the railway line in a manner acceptable to their residents?

Finally, most important question; that how could all that is done in a transparent manner eliminating large-scale corruption which had been a part of all developmental and relocation projects for the city; virtually seemed impossible.

The government of Sindh had, a couple of years back, passed an ordinance creating the Karachi Metropolitan Transport Authority [KMTA] but soon it lapsed. It was suggested that the ordinance be re-enacted and the KMTA made fully functional with funds and technical manpower. Members of professional and academic institutions, interest groups, and NGOs were suggested to be part of its governing body and other special committees. KMTA constituted in such manner could be given the task of developing transport plan for Karachi making the KCR its one part and then deciding how to implement it.

Through the KCR rehabilitation and extension, Karachi had the possibility of developing a less capital-intensive, environmentally-friendly and cheap-to-run transport system than many proposals made to date for a mass transit system for the city. More important was that the KCR rehabilitation proposal could use a valuable existing facility that had often been written off by polarised, might be corrupt too, transport planners for the city.

On 21st February 2003; the whole Pakistani media unanimously roared that the Karachi Mass Transit Project was laying folded in the files and cupboards of the Mayor for over 15 years. It was evident that international transport experts and financiers from Malaysia, China, Germany, Japan and the World Bank were more intent on giving Karachi a mass transit system than the ruling politicians and the city's managers. The Nazim [Mayor] of Karachi later joined the chorus of lip service that the Sindh government had no intentions of reviving the dead Karachi Mass Transit Project [KMTP] and the KCR.

The said projects had meant nothing more than any number of expensive foreign trips for provincial government high-ups over the years. There were usual flurry of committee meetings poring over small prints of drafting, re-drafting, revisions and alterations of plans and proposals; lining up of finances; award and cancellation of contracts; disputes over the control and management of the proposed mass transit system — all amounting to nothing tangible in the end, nothing materially beneficial for the hapless, helpless and unfortunate commuters of Karachi.

There were several feasibility reports in line, some of them prepared by foreign experts, over the past decade or so. Yet no workable solution had been found to address the city's staggering transport problems – the

transport mafia was getting stronger allegedly in connivance with some of the sitting players in Sindh Assembly or in Mayor's office.

In 2002, the Karachi district city government kept sleeping over the proposal presented to it by a consortium, which had proposed six electromagnetic rail corridors for Karachi. The foot dragging on the part of the city authorities was all the more incomprehensible because the consortium was willing to provide 85pc of the funds needed to start the project.

[Under a similar deal with the Punjab government, the consortium was going to recover its cost and expenses on the Lahore project within ten years on Build, Own, Operate and Transfer (BOOT) basis. Why the Karachi Nazim and the Sindh government did not agree to such an agreement; still a mystery.]

Then the reports suggested that the Karachi city district government was pursuing the KCR project, aiming to revive it with the help of Chinese assistance; the project was expected to be completed in four years. That was another fact that by the time the KCR could be revived and made operational, the city's pressing transport problems would have become manifold complicated – but even that revival plan could not be implemented.

By then, after Nine Eleven 2001 era, Karachi's urban growth patterns had changed; the metropolis had started attracting nearly a hundred thousand new migrants from the rest of the country on an annual basis, thus registering an overall high population growth. This phenomenon continued to strain the existing resources and facilities in the city, including public transport, which did not expand at a matching pace.

The revival of the KCR in its original form, even if it was planned to be integrated with the road transport system through feeder services, was expected to fall hugely short of the city's growing needs for a dependable, swift and efficient urban transport system. What Karachi needs was a well thought-out mass transit system that could take care of the existing as well as the projected future needs of the city.

The fact, however, remained that the city managers and the Sindh government had zero will to adopt and implement any such programme, plan or agenda.

Nothing was done by the military government of Gen Musharraf in that regard, too.

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

Much later; a feasibility study for the revival of the KCR was conducted by Japan External Trade Organisation [JETRO] in 2006. UK-based Scott Wilson Railways was appointed to validate the report prepared by JETRO. Japan International Co-operation Agency [JICA], which was funding the project, sponsored a final study prepared by Special Assistance for Project Formulation [SAPROF]. US-based consultants Louis Berger had validated the final report.

In May 2008, a semi-autonomous entity, the Karachi Urban Transport Corporation [KUTC], was incorporated to execute the project. Work on the project was scheduled to start in 2010 and programmed to be completed by 2014 – but the PPP government miserably failed in carrying out the implementation that foreign funded plan; perhaps the most important element – kickback %age – could not be negotiated successfully.

The main hurdle in the execution of the project was the land acquisition. Several households were illegally living along the right of way of the proposed KCR; a resettlement action plan was proposed to identify and provide land for the people affected by the project but the PPP's government could not even get that settlement study completed during its tenure. Thus the land needed for the project was not transferred to the KUTC.

In August 2012, JICA agreed to \$2.5 billion loan to the KUTC to start with, which was meant to oversee the rebuilding process. The plans called for upgrades and rebuilding of the 50 km long intra-city circular line which could operate 24 trains facilitating 700,000 commuters, making 3-minute stops at 23 stations.

The KCR was then re-planned to consist of a loop line from Karachi City to Drigh Road via Liaquatabad. 29 kilometres was to be revived with an additional 21 kilometre dual track from Karachi City to Jinnah International Airport, allowing the KCR to connect to the Pakistan Railway main line. The KCR was expected to hold carry on with additional 700,000 passengers on 246 trains daily – had it been completed.

Pakistan Railways occasionally made its plans open to media telling that the KCR revival project included the transformation of the old system into a viable mass transit system. The total length of the railway line was notified as 50km at the cost of \$1.58bn then. It was estimated that the city's population would increase from 18 million in 2009 to 27.5 million in 2020; hence needed more efficient mass transportation system.

The study prepared by JETRO recommended that the project should be executed in two phases. Phase I of the project was aimed to include a

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

28.3km circular section from Karachi Cantt to a proposed station at Gulistan e Johar; about 9km of this section was to be elevated. Phase II was planned to consist of the 14.8km circular section from Gulistan e Johar to the proposed station at Liaquatabad. This section was proposed with two dedicated tracks along the main line.

Phase II also included a 5.9km airport line from Drigh Road to Jinnah Airport. This extension was worked out either to have an elevated or underground track; other bridges, culverts and underpasses, wherever necessary, were to be constructed for the project in addition.

JICA was providing the entire funding for the project through a soft loan payable in 40 years by the stakeholders of the City District Government Karachi, Pakistan Railways and Government of Sindh [KUTC]. The KUTC was planning an international tendering process for the project to be awarded on turnkey basis. The winning contractors had to operate it for the first two years of operation.

The finally revised and modernised KCR was proposed to follow a circular path, covering Karachi Cantt, Karachi city, Wazir mansion, Liaquatabad, Depot Hill, Drigh Road and Departure Yard. The extension towards the airport could start from Drigh Road and follow the path of the Pakistan Railways towards the Jinnah Terminal airport.

The project plans included the construction of 19 underpasses and three overhead bridges. About 23 stations were planned for the project with features of computerised ticketing and vending machines, automated ticket gates and elevators.

The original and revised KCR had about 22 level crossings. Since the railway line passes through the major commercial areas of the city, these level crossings were needed to be removed to ensure that trains could operate at the proposed 6min headway. The level crossings were expected to be removed and replaced by underpasses or overpasses.

The new KCR was planned to be served by electric multiple units [EMU] with a capacity to carry 1,400 passengers; the maximum speed of the EMUs was suggested to be 100km/h. About 290 trains were expected to operate daily at six-minute headway.

The project featured modern signalling and telecommunication system; an automatic train control [ATC] system had to be set up for the railway.

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

However, another full decade fizzled out due to successive governments' indolence, sluggishness and lethargy.

On 15th July 2013; Railways Ministry finalized its Rs:360 billion KCR project file work, clearing all the reservations of JICA over the issue. Then Railways Ministry asked Foreign Ministry to facilitate the visit of Japanese experts in this regard. JICA had agreed to provide Pakistan with 0.2% mark-up loan for the project, designed to entail 60% shares of PR, 25% shares of Sindh Provincial government, and 15% of City District Government. Karachi Urban Transport Corporation [KUTC]. The project was registered in Security Exchange Commission of Pakistan [SECP].

The proposed new route was to originate from Neepa station of Gulshan e Iqbal, traversing North Nazimabad, Lyari, Kala Pull's Mehran Station, PAF Museum on Sharaih-e-Faisal and back to Neepa Station. The approximately 4-year project was to make its regular debut during last months of the year 2013, entailing an initial estimated expenditure of Rs:one billion – but no news was heard by the poor populace.

The railway option, which has consisted of expanding the KCR and rehabilitating it, was not considered useful by the short sighted PPP's Sindh government. It purposefully declined to provide sovereign guarantees to the bidders or to loan providing governments and agencies because the transport mafia of the Awami National Party [ANP] was its coalition partner.

There has also been an unresolved disagreement between the various state actors in whether to develop and expand the railway network or opt for a Bus Rapid Transit [BRT] system.

On 10th May 2014; it was made open to media by the new incumbent PML[N] government that proposals to revive the defunct KCR were finally complete. The documents being drafted by the Commissioner's Office divulged that 83-foot wide corridor would be built along the loop of the KCR while encroachments along the tracks would immediately be removed.

Karachi's Commissioner, Shoaib Siddiqui, assured that the KCR project would be completed at the earliest; while adding that this was now possible as the political stakeholders of the city had joined hands to revive the project. The proposals were then sent to the chief minister for approval but what happened later – no one knows till today.

The Commissioner had told that the project could cost approximately \$2.6 billion and they were trying to reassess the cost during the budget. He also told that demolition of encroachments had already started around

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

Juma Goth; the relocation plans for the encroachers were on cards. The government had planned to revive an inter-regional public transit system to connect industrial and commercial areas within city to the suburbs.

The Managing Director KUTC, Shamim Sherazi, told that the KCR would cover 43kms from Drigh Road Station and Shahrae Faisal then pass through Gulshan e Iqbal, Gulistan e Jauhar, Liaquatabad, Nazimabad, SITE, Baldia, Lyari, Kharadar and touch Karachi City Station.

The Karachi Circular Railway was constructed and opened to traffic in two phases between 1964 and 1970 till it eventually shut down in December 1999 due to a lack of finances. But later, the successive PPP's and PML[N] governments purposefully ignored various plans of its rehabilitation – most probably allowing their goons to grab the valuable city lands through encroachments and illegal sales; might be the whole system stands ceased to exist today.

QINGQI TRANSPORT IN CITY:

The market response to the shrinking of buses went innovative. The emergence of the Qingqi; the cost-effectiveness of its design; the manner in which it operated complete with informally created terminals, stands, routes, time-keeping; and continuous modifications to its operations and design [on the basis of the changing context in the city], was a tribute to its entrepreneurship and the understanding of transport sector politics.

The emergence of motorbikes and their rapidly increasing numbers was also a market response that had brought about immense relief to Karachi families who own them.

In Pakistan, the Qingqi rickshaws were first introduced in Lahore under the President's Rozgar Scheme in 2001; they started plying in Karachi since the same year. In Qingqi, the open-hooded body is pulled by a 100cc motorcycle and the motorcycle is modified and joined with a two-wheeled, open-ended cart at the back. Unlike regular cars, its wheels are given acceleration with chains instead of a shaft.

On 10th October 2013; to overcome traffic clogs in the city and to speed up the flow on roads, the traffic police imposed a ban on Qingqi rickshaws across the city. The police started a crackdown against Qingqi rickshaws in Karachi everywhere and banned its use as public transportation. The

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

initial ban was only for district South, but police then extended it to the entire city. Initially, police fined those riding the rickshaws [*astounding it was*] but then they started impounding the driver or the owner. Over 200 of such rickshaws were impounded by the police in two days since the crackdown started. The impounded Qingqis were only released through the court pending trials.

Why the ban on Qingqis; very simple to understand that the transport mafia had either politically forced the local police to do that or the hands of some high-up officers were greased. Yes, otherwise by definition, the Qingqi rickshaws were illegal because the same were not being registered as vehicles for hire; the owners got them registered as motorcycles but used them as a public transport carrying six to eight passengers. They had no fitness certificates for Qingqis, moreover, these rickshaws caused nuisance while clogging the traffic flow.

The police claimed that Qingqis had become another mafia in Karachi while admitting that there was a dire need for more public transport facilities. Six-seat and nine-seat rickshaws were also under surveillance, were to be banned too, because they were not having fitness certificates.

The Qingqi rickshaw owners, being members of the All Karachi Qingqi Rickshaw Welfare Association, and other unions condemned the ban. The association's members gathered at Nipa Chowrangi to protest the decision on that evening while terming the verdict completely unfair and cruel.

Admitting that Qingqis were illegal, the association grieved that the traffic police had failed to provide any instructions on how to legalise them. The Qingqis had been running on roads for the past eight years and the association was in continuous contact with the traffic police to devise a plan to get them legalised and attain fitness certificates – however, the police had shown little interest.

On that day, around 40,000 Qingqi rickshaws were plying on city's roads.

The representative body of public transport buses, coaches and minibuses, the Karachi Transport Ittehad [KTI], appreciated the ban. KTI General Secretary Syed Mehmood Afridi told the media:

"Qingqis are illegal, with no registration and route permits and their owners do not pay taxes. These rickshaws cause severe jams on roads of this busy city."

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

They have taken away our passengers who only wanted to travel short distances. Now, the buses only have passengers travelling long distances of up to 50 kilometres.

We transporters are already fed up with the way the transport system is running in the country; these Qingqis are further discouraging us to move forward."

The fundamental issue in dealing with the transport crisis in Karachi is related to governance. It has been noticed that an elected local government during 2001-07 was more effective in accessing funds from the federal and provincial governments for development purposes than the earlier bureaucratic system which was re-introduced and revamped by the PPP and PML[N] governments just for corruption and ulterior motives.

In Karachi, de-centralisation practiced during 2001-07 might have problems because of Sindhi speaking provincial government's relationship to its capital city where the city was predominantly Urdu speaking MQM. A system was required that could empower the city and at the same time could protect the interests of the Sindhi speakers in accessing and controlling Karachi's enormous assets.

But instead, the in-coming PPP's government preferred to deny that system of local government – in total contravention of the provisions envisaged in the Pakistani Constitution – and the impotent superior judiciary has not been able to protect its own jurisdiction and prerogatives.