- KUND: Floods, Fighting Destroy Wildlife
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- Pak Climate Vulnerability Highlighted at COP 16
The Largest Land Mammal
After the dramatic extinction of dinosaurs, the largest land mammal that once ruled Asia, the ancient giant was first discovered in 1910.

International Human Solidarity Day
Adviser to Sindh Chief Minister on Information and Archives Sharmila Farooqui has underscored the need to tackle natural and human-made disasters.

Global warming causes flash floods in Pakistan
The latest research showed that global warming caused by emission of greenhouse gases in industrial countries was to blame for flash floods.

Climate Change Increases Planet’s Vulnerability to Persistent Organic Pollutants
Cancun (Mexico), Climate change increases the planet’s vulnerability to persistent organic pollutants (POPs), a UN research team concluded in a major study previewed here today.

Speakers for protection of forests in KPK
Speakers at a function have demanded of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to take effective steps for protection of forests.

KUND: Floods, fighting destroy wildlife
Disaster struck out of nowhere. The flash floods were so sudden that wardens at one of Pakistan’s most famed parks could do nothing to save their animals.

Address poverty to improve food security, says report
Federal Minister for Environment Hameedullah Jan Afridi said that social and economic sectors always had a strapping impact on environment.

India thirst for Water
India who is craving for United Nation Security Council bid always remained a clear violator of human rights and treaties.

Pakistan seeks standing as a ‘most vulnerable’ climate nation
As negotiators at U.N. climate talks work toward setting up a functioning climate assistance fund, flood-hit Pakistan is trying to position itself as one of the world’s most climate-vulnerable nations.

Environmental tribunal disposes of 400 cases
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) has filed 488 environmental degradation cases against industrial units in which 400 have been cleared.

Pakistan develops new seedless kinnrow variety
The scientists of National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) have developed a new seedless variety of kinnrow.

Forestry and fisheries department neglected by donors
Promotion
The forestry and fisheries department is probably the only sector severely damaged and destroyed by the recent devastating floods that has managed to miss donors’ attention.

Karachi Zoo echoes to the cries of newborns
From little baby turtles taking a ride on their mother’s shell to a fallow deer grooming its young, the cries of newborns fill the air at the Karachi Zoological Garden. This year, the zoo saw a significant increase in the number of animals born.
After the dramatic extinction of dinosaurs, the largest land mammal that once ruled Asia, the ancient giant was first discovered in 1910, by the English paleontologist Sir Clive Forster Cooper.

Dawn Editorial
20 December, 2010

In Balochistan, Cooper discovered bones of extra ordinary size. He suggested that the mammal was the of a size of dinosaur and named it as Baluchitherium or ‘the beast of Balochistan’. But for almost a century, the creature remained an enigma because no further investigation was carried out.

In early 1990s, eminent French paleontologist Jean-Loup Welcomme set out on a journey towards Balochistan in order to find the fossils of the mysterious creature. He followed the footsteps of Cooper and finally discovered that Dera Bugti was the place where Cooper had first unearthed the bones of Baluchitherium. Welcomme came to Pakistan under a project named, “Mission Paleontologique Française au Balochistan”. Pakistan Museum of Natural History was another stakeholder in that project.

Welcomme contacted Nawab Akber Khan Bugti and told him the story of that spectacular discovery. Bugti not only gave him the permission for further excavations but helped him with every day needs and workers. In 1997, Welcomme discovered the first finger of the Baluchitherium in a stony valley near Dera Bugti.

The giant of the hidden valley

After the first clue, Welcomme and other mammalian experts unearthed an array of amazing fossils. The team discovered uncountable fossils in merely 200 square meters area, which could be consider the best exposed bone-beds on Earth.

They found many remains of male and female Baluchitherium simply lying on the ground, which was quite rear event. Perhaps the massive creatures were swept away by a river and had accumulated on the banks. Scientists also found traces of crocodile’s teeth on bones which suggested that the Baluchitherium was also a common pray of crocodiles.

In 2003, the French team carefully examined every major and minor bone and finally put them in proper place, building a composite skeleton of the Baluchitherium. The skeleton suggested that the giant creature was five meters tall and weighed 20 tonnes, almost as massive as the size of three very big elephants!

Scientists got the rough idea of the Baluchitherium’s height by looking its bones. But defining the mass of any extinct mammal is a tricky job. Teeth and specially bones are very helpful to identify mass of any mammal.

Over decades of investigations, scientists have devised many techniques to find the mass of a mammal by looking at the length and diameter of its bones. These methods can be successfully applied to
rica or Europe. Simply put, it could be called a cross road for African mammals.

Amazing fossils of ancestors of elephants and lemurs also discovered in Balochistan, strengthened the hypothesis that many animal groups have Asian origins. We can assume that this place was an evolutionary highway for the kin of today’s many advanced animals. Surprisingly the French team discovered some 20,000 fossils of mammals only from and around the areas of Dera Bugti.

Two important discoveries are worth mention here, one is the mystery of lemur. Bug-eyed and slow moving lemurs now only live on the island of Madagascar. Before 2001, scientists had believed that only Africa was the birthplace of lemurs. But a Lemur fossil discovered in Pakistan changed the paleontology text books.

Laurent Marivaux, another French expert discovered a 30 million year old fossil of a lemur from Balochistan. Dubbed as Bugtilemur Mathesonii, it is now the oldest fossils of lemur anywhere on the planet. Bugtilemur triggered a new debate among scientists that lemurs may have Asian rather than African roots.

The details of that discovery were published in the prestigious research journal, “Science”, in which Marivaux said, “The discovery was totally unexpected and the time has come for the Asian scenario to receive more serious attention.”

Gifted writer, Nigel Calder, wrote in his book;

“By the boldest interpretations of genetic geography, modern humans may have emerged in South-central Asia- perhaps somewhere east or southeast of the Caspian Sea on the Kazakhstan-Balochistan axis-because that is where the indigenous populations are most “intermediate” between genetic extremes of Africa, Australia, and the Americas.” Time Scale: page 58

The evidence of the above statement came from other finding of Jean Loup Welcomme. He discovered another fossil valley called “Paali” in Balochistan.

After working on the Baluchitherium, Welcomme tried to find out about the whole environment it shared. The team discovered the diversified fossils of fish, turtles, crocodiles, rodents and other small mammals. He studied 40 sites that described 12 distinct levels of different geological ages. He also discovered prehistoric trees, flowers and leaves.

Amazingly, the team found shark teeth, fish and shells which suggested that around 32 million years ago an epicontinental sea had appeared in the heart of Balochistan, which was a rare phenomenon.

Is Balochistan a cradle for humanity?

Prehistoric Balochistan can also be considered an exact place of migration of mammals coming from South East Asia on the road to Africa or Europe. Simply put, it could be called a cross road for African mammals.

Cont: Baluchitherium: The largest land mammal

assess the bone-mass relation of the mammals.

In the geological time scale, Baluchitherium roamed Asia in Oligocene epoch or 30 millions years ago. According to plate tectonics, some 200 million year ago, the sub-continent was locked – it was a part of the great Gondwanaland which comprised South-America, Africa, Sub-Continent and Australia.

This block has been dismantled into parts and slowly moved towards Asia. 55 million years ago, one part of the Indian plate hit the Asian plate and 43 million years ago the contact between the two was complete. This collision brought about the Great Himalayan Mountains. The Indian-Asian plate collision changed the whole climate of the region.

Heavy rains and erosion turned Balochistan into a lush green rainforest like today’s Amazon. The conditions were suitable for a hornless rhinoceros or Baluchitherium to flourish. The lush forest provided enough vegetation for the bulk-eater mammal to survive. Baluchitherium – the mesmerizing largest land mammal – lived for 11 million years, 35 to 24 million years ago.

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Baluchitherium: The largest land mammal

Gested that Balochistan could be the motherland of all animal groups including humans.

But further excavation are needed to find more astonishing results because scientists have been screening other areas for decades but only five per cent of Dera Bugti has been searched so far. It is important to unearth Balochistan’s paleontology scenario, because its open fossil beds are ready to reveal the treasure to the whole world. For instance, only Paali area holds the secret of more than 10 million years of ancient life on the planet.

Why did the Baluchitherium become extinct?

The answer lies in the same conditions which developed a stage for Baluchitherium to flourish. Some 22 million years ago, the movements of Asia and Africa destroyed the most important prehistoric sea, the “Tethys”. The disappearance of the sea gradually changed the climate of Asia. Balochistan turned into stony desert from a green valley.

The vegetation disappeared and Baluchitherium became extinct in the battle of survival.

Fortunately, Nawab Akber Khan Bugti kept the Baluchitherium bones in 10 metallic containers. After he was killed, the fossils were recovered and sent to the museum of the Geological Survey of Pakistan and still remain there.

Pakistan is an ‘el derado’ for fossil hunters. However, serious attention is also required to highlight the discoveries from Pakistan. It has been a decade since the complete skeleton of the largest land mammal was discovered from Pakistan. Beautiful series of postal tickets could be issued or the Baluchitherium could be declared the symbol of Balochistan.

International Human Solidarity Day

Daily Times

20 December, 2010

KARACHI: Adviser to Sindh Chief Minister on Information and Archives Sharmila Farooqui has underscored the need to tackle natural and human-made disasters through result-oriented policies based on environment conservation and human safety laws.

“Swift actions are needed to be taken to develop nature and human health in Pakistan. The world is facing larger natural and human-made disasters but Pakistan faces largest of them because of lack of awareness about environment laws among people and civil society organisations,” Sharmila said in an interview to PPI in connection with the International Human Solidarity Day being observed on Dec 20 (today).

Sharmila said the poverty and illiteracy is also major factor in this regard, while we all must express solidarity with people affected by natural and human-made disasters and make a renewed commitment to save people, earth, oceans, rivers and other sources of nature on war-footing basis.

She said the International Human Solidarity Day demands people in the world must remain in peace and safe from manmade disasters like bombings, collapse of substandard high rise buildings, plane crashes.
After the Flood

Cont: International Human Solidarity Day

due to non-checking of faults, horrible traffic accidents, sea and smoke pollution etc.

She asked the government, environment, non-governmental and civil society organisations to develop coordination among themselves and conserve biodiversity by launching gigantic projects of national development without any discrimination of caste, creed or color.

Sharmila said natural calamities could not be tackled by an individual person, organisation or government alone because of the fact that it requires collaborative efforts by all stakeholders of the society based on honesty and faith.

The adviser said to get real development in the country, all departments must boost up coordination with each other for gaining the desired results of peace and prosperity. “The environment and health departments are closely linked to each other in view of human health. For example, smoke pollution, which is an environment issue, also affects health of people in the big cities like Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Lahore and Islamabad.” The smoke pollution causes various diseases like cancer, so it is the need of hour to ensure strong collaboration between the health and environment departments,” she said.

The PPP government is making hectic efforts to provide clean water, quality education, better roads and adequate health facilities in rural and urban areas, she said. The adviser said the government had initiated various projects of electricity, water and health supplies to develop the environment and human health in the deserted area of Thar.”

Sharmila said: “The Human Solidarity Day tells us to show the unity in diversity and also reminds governments to respect their commitments to international agreements, raise public awareness about the importance of solidarity, encourage debate on the ways to promote solidarity for the achievement of the millennium development goals including poverty eradication and take swift actions to encourage new initiatives for poverty eradication.”

We must work to draw the attention of people and nations of the world towards promoting environment conservation and getting socio-economic development, which is only way to survive on this planet, she said.

Sharmila asked the social and welfare organisations to come forward with concrete measures and join hands with the PPP government for developing local communities and conserving environment in urban and rural areas. She also asked the international environment and donor organisations to help Pakistan in safeguarding nature and human health. The PPP regime is committed to working with the international community to save nature and human health.

The adviser informed Pakistan is one of the most vulnerable developing countries of the world to suffer from various possible natural disasters like drought, floods, cyclones and earthquakes, therefore, the government and civil society organisations need to devise their effective strategies to meet the challenges of possible natural disasters that could hit the country in the future.

In the mountainous region of the north, in places like Swat valley in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province – where the floods originated – landslides not only washed away coniferous forests but also denuded the fertile top soil. “This loss of soil cannot be replenished even over decades,” laments Akbar. The loss of forest cover and soil in turn allowed the nesting places of large and small mammals to be washed away, while displaced bird species were forced to re-locate. Swat was a storehouse for huge quantities of timber belonging to the government. “All of it was washed away by the deluge and the government incurred huge losses,” says Tahir Qureshi, a forester and expert on coastal ecosystems working with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). He fears more forests will be cut to compensate for the loss.

As for the impact on wildlife, Akbar says that birds and animals kept
which killed over 2,000 people in Pakistan in July and August 2010,
greenhouse gases in industrial countries was to blame for flash floods
The latest research showed that global warming caused by emission of
Global warming causes flash floods in Pakistan
floods will increase, rendering “these protective embankments coun-
calms like floods.

According to Hussain Bux Bhagat, a conservationist associated with the
provincial wildlife department of Sindh province, wildlife in the river-
ine forests – including birds, reptiles and mammals – also suffered
severely: “The floods were a death blow for the hog deer and grey and
black partridges and we fear their populations may have been reduced
by between 30% and 40%.” In particular, high numbers of grey par-
trdge, which nests on trees and doesn’t leave its habitat, “starved to
dead”, he says.
In addition, natural springs in the hilly areas have been destroyed,
while water quality has deteriorated and may take some time to nor-

Further south, on the Indus plain, the nature of the damage was some-
what different, though nonetheless serious, as the river banks were
eroded, causing damage to protected areas situated either inside or
along the River Indus.
The drifting of between 60 and 100 endangered Indus River dolphins
into shallow water was a serious loss. “In all, there are an estimated
1,200 to 1,300 blind dolphins left in the River Indus and 950 in the
dolphin reserve between Guddu and Sukkur barrages,” says Bhagat.
“In January, when the de-silting of canals take place, we usually carry
out rescue of dolphins that have strayed into canals during that pe-
riod. So far, no dolphins have been reported dead.”
Among the many lessons offered by June’s disaster, the most glaringly
obvious is the need for better flood-plain management. Around the
world, says Akbar, flood plains are properly managed to preserve local
ecology and to save precious human life and property from natural
calamities like floods.

Since the time of the British occupation, protective embankments
have been constructed at distance of about 15 to 20 kilometres along
either side of the River Indus. But with changes in weather patterns
caused by global warming, the severity and frequency of storms and
floods will increase, rendering “these protective embankments coun-

The absence of a credible land-use plan has been underlined by the
summer’s floods. According to Akbar, anyone can construct a building,
cultivate land or establish housing project anywhere. “In hilly areas and
even in the plains, multi-storied buildings were constructed right at the
dege of river banks. Similarly, steep slopes had been brought under
cultivation, which is [an] extremely vulnerable [state].” Panhwar adds:
“Lack of an explicit land use policy resulted in inhabitants along the
rivers taking advantage of these areas.”

Flooding is both bane and boon for local ecosystems, however, and the
recent deluge has brought benefits as well as tragedy: the brackish Lake
Manchar (in Sindh province) has turned into a freshwater lake again,
says Akbar, while all saline and saline-sodic soils submerged by the
flood are now salinity-free and have become productive soils. “[The
flood] has given the mangrove and the riverine forests a new lease of
life, as the fresh water and silt deposition will help both the natural
artificial regeneration,” adds Qureshi of the IUCN.
In addition, aquatic biodiversity all over the Indus plain has increased:
“The floods have been a boon for dolphins and freshwater turtles,”
Bhagat says. Akbar adds: “One can find fish species in the Sindh region
which were never found earlier in those areas. The same is the case
with plants. New plant species are appearing due to dissemination of
seeds from upstream to downstream areas.”

The land lost to sea intrusion has been recovered in the deltaic region;
due to the deposit of millions of tonnes of silt brought by the flood, new
mud-flats have appeared that will benefit the mangrove forests. More-
over, the riverine belt is almost free from encroachers: “The challenge
for the provincial governments would now be to prevent future en-
croachments on riverbeds,” says Panhwar.

Global warming causes flash floods in Pakistan

The latest research showed that global warming caused by emission of
greenhouse gases in industrial countries was to blame for flash floods
which killed over 2,000 people in Pakistan in July and August 2010,
environment analysts told Xinhua on Friday.

Continued...
Cont: Global warming causes flash floods in Pakistan

The worst flood in Pakistan's 63-year history made 20 million people homeless and devastated one-fifth area of the country.

According to sources, the government of Pakistan has planned to turn the tables on cash-rich industrial countries, mainly responsible for greenhouse gases emission, in the United Nations by presenting a linkage between global warming and devastating floods.

Pakistani representatives also raised the issue at the UN Climate Change Conference in Cancun, Mexico from Nov.29 to Dec.10 this year.

To discuss the global warming effects on Pakistan, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) held a conference on "SERVIR-Himalaya Inception cum Needs Assessment Workshop" in Islamabad last week.

SERVIR is an earth observation, monitoring and visualization system that integrate satellite and other geospatial data for improved scientific knowledge and decision-making.

Basanta Shrestha, from Nepal, explained that the SERVIR- Himalaya initiative was developed in partnership with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and with the support of US to improve environmental decision-making in the Himalayan region.

Dr. C. Inayatullah, a regional coordinator of ICIMOD Pakistan, told Xinhu that efforts would be made to build the national institutions to use remote sensing and geographical information systems for science-based decision making to cope with the disasters risk reduction and to better utilize the natural resources.

"There are about 39 million people living in the mountainous areas of Pakistan and their survival depends upon the judicious use of natural resources and ecological sustainability," said Inayatullah.

During the floods in July-August 2010, Pakistan space & upper atmosphere research communication (SUPARCO) and ICIMOD worked together in rapid response, satellite based information and maps for guidance.

Environmental economists believed that the recent floods had clearly proved that Pakistan was one of the worst victims of the global warming despite it discharges just 0.4 percent of world greenhouse gases.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report has already identified South Asia as a most vulnerable region with the bad impacts of global warming.

Hameedullah Jan Afridi, the minister for environment of Pakistan, wanted UN to be productive and substantive in the matter and make the world agree to reduce emissions by improving the governance and creating a new global climate change fund.

But international commentators are of the view that there has been no sign so far that major emitters are offering to do more to combat climate change.

Inayatullah also pointed out that due to global warming snow-clad areas in north Pakistan are melting fast, posing a big threat to the country in the future, especially in summer.

Rawal Lake pollution: CDA blames Pindi authorities

16 December, 2010

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) is blaming Rawalpindi authorities for causing the current increase in the level of pollution in Rawal Lake.

Briefing the National Assembly Standing Committee on Environment, CDA Chairman Imtiaz Inayat Elahi said that all sources of pollution from the capital territory including Bari Imam, Diplomatic Enclave, Bhara Kahu and Quaid-i-Azam University had been plugged. However, pollution continued to flow from Rawalpindi. The major source of pollution was the Murree area.

He also sought the committee’s help in asking the Punjab government to take early steps in this regard as the lake was the main water reservoir for Rawalpindi and its pollution was a serious health hazard for the population of the twin cities. The committee, headed by MNA Mohammad Asad, decided to hold a joint meeting of authorities from Rawalpindi, the Environment Ministry and CDA to fix the responsibility for the lake’s pollution.

The CDA chairman said that solid waste dumping, outflows from poultry farms and small industries, development activities and tourism were the main sources of pollution in Rawal Lake. The supreme court had already taken suo motu notice of the issue and the case was now in court.

Continued...
systematic and authoritative review of the impact of climate change on the release of POPs into the environment, their long range transport and environmental fate, and human and environmental exposure.

POPs are substances that are persistent and toxic and can affect generations of humans. Exposure to POPs is known to effect health and can be the source of cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders and cancer. Some POPs are also considered to be endocrine disrupters and by altering the hormonal system, can also damage human reproductive and immune systems.

Global warming increases emissions of POPs and exposure via the food chain. Climate change, and the changes in temperature, impact the exposure of humans and wildlife to POPs and will also affect biodiversity, ecosystems and vulnerability.

Among the major conclusions of the study, increased emissions and...
Are animal rights even an issue?

By Amna Mela
17 December, 2010

A couple of years ago, a relative of mine met a government employee whose job is the eradication of stray dogs.

By profession, he is a dog shooter. He roams the streets searching for strays, and shoots them on sight. Sometimes the first bullet only maims, and he must walk towards the dog to shoot again. He did not choose this job because it was to his liking; he entered this profession because it was all he could find as a means to feed his own family.

After all these years of violence day in and day out, he is psychologically scarred. He still goes to work each day because he doesn’t have the luxury to say no to a steady paycheck. But when he is offered a meal, he refuses. He no longer has the stomach to eat solid food. Most days he can only force himself to have a rusk with his tea. Nor can he sleep at night.

‘Human rights come first’

In a country where justice for humans is hard to come by, animal rights is seen as a somewhat “Western” concept. “Leave it to the Americans to love their pets more than they love each other” some say. “We can’t focus on animals when we need to worry about humans first” say others.

Worldwide, people rail against the cruel and unhygienic mass slaughter of animals as depicted in the documentaries “Food Inc” and “Earthlings”. The Quran gives us specific instructions on how to slaughter animals in a way that spares them pain and provides us with meat free of blood and pathogens.

Another attempt is PETA’s campaign against people who wear fur. Our religion also forbids the killing of animals for sport or luxury goods. Organisations in America protest against puppy mills, where dogs live their entire lives in chicken wire cages for the sole purpose of breeding puppies to sell. Our religion forbids breeding for profit so such situations would not arise.

Islam safeguards animal rights

Although they have more watchdog organisations than we do, Amer-
Cont: Are animal rights even an issue?

Islam is not the perfect model for animal rights. I can, however, say that Islam teaches us to care for animals so much that we have been told not to keep birds in cages. If God created these creatures with intellect and emotions and gave us specific instructions as regards their treatment, who is anyone to say they don’t matter?

Our government is slaughtering animals by shooting them with guns and strychnine poisoning. At this point, what right do we have to call Pakistan an Islamic Republic, unless we mend our ways?

Before this story was narrated to me, I was unaware that our government not only allows this practice, but calls for it and rewards it. In 2005, Karachi City Nazim, Niamatullah Khan requested the EDO Health Dr Khalid Hussain Shaikh to provide the “required number of capsules for killing stray dogs”, against which Mahera Omar, founding member of PAWS (Pakistan Animal Welfare Society) urged her fellow Pakistanis to petition against. This method is cruel, ineffective, and detrimental to the environment.

Animal abusers are violent people

My father once had the misfortune of seeing a dead dog lying on its side, with bullets wounds on its body. Once shot, the strays are left to rot on the street, sometimes reportedly picked up to be used for their fat, which is converted to oil and sold to street vendors.

Syed Rizvi, President of Engineers and Scientists for Animal Rights has pointed out that:

“The way in which we treat animals also impacts upon how treat each other... in extensive research conducted by Ken Shapiro PhD (Harvard) of Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PSYETA), a direct link was made between violence in society and animal abuse”.

According to the PAWS website, “the Government plans to spend Rs200,000 to give bonuses to “best performing employees”. Even civilians are rewarded for bringing in a severed tail. As member Saba says, if this money was spent instead on the method supported by the World Health Organisation that recommends a long term strategy of catch/neuter/vaccinate/release as the only effective and humane method for dealing with rabies and stray populations. The first beneficiaries of this particular effort would be humans as this decreases health risks for us.

Government’s rhetorical speeches

On World Animal Day on 5 October, Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani spoke of our religious duty to care for the well-being of animals, but did not touch on the subject of animal rights violations in Pakistan, let alone offer any solutions. How will there ever be an improvement when our leaders don’t even admit there is a problem?

One cannot be a good human being without a moral compass which demands the humane treatment of animals. No one is being asked to adopt a pet or to keep a dog inside their home. All I ask is that we petition for these atrocities to cease, or at the very least, admit we are wrong in allowing them to occur. The biggest problem we have as a nation regarding animal rights is that many of us don’t even consider violations to be an issue.

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Speakers for protection of forests in KPK

12 December, 2010

PESHAWAR: Speakers at a function have demanded of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to take effective steps for protection of forests, ensure regular plantation of saplings and save mountains from degradation.

These demands were raised in a meeting held at Patan, Kohistan, on Saturday in connection with the International Mountains Day, says a press release issued here. National Integrated and Development Association (NIDA), Pakistan, an NGO, arranged the function in collabora-
Floods, fighting destroy wildlife

KUND: Disaster struck out of nowhere. The flash floods were so sudden that wardens at one of Pakistan’s most famed parks could do nothing to save their animals.

Leopards, deer and bears all drowned as the murky waters quickly engulfed them.

Kund park, a tourist spot located where the Kabul and Indus rivers meet 100 kilometres (60 miles) northwest of Islamabad, lost all its wildlife including 100 endangered species in this year’s flood crisis.

It was the worst single natural destruction of wildlife in Pakistan, where experts say the floods, military offensives against the Taliban threaten natural habitats and species, some of them already endangered.

"Floods destroyed everything. It killed all the animals and species in this park. It was a great loss to wildlife," said Mumtaz Malik, formerly the top wildlife official in northwest Pakistan.

"None of them were rescued. Nobody expected such a catastrophe." Among the dead were two leopards, 70 deer and 24 bears, said Ayan ud-din, one of the caretakers at Kund. Peacocks, ducks and pheasants were also lost.

All the animals drowned while locked in cages and enclosures. The bears had been rescued from human cruelty, only to die in Pakistan’s worst natural disaster after monsoon rains swept north to south in July and August.

"When we came back, only two bears were alive. They were shifted to another bear centre in Punjab," Inayat ur Rehman, manager of the bear centre, said. The floods had crippled the park’s perimeter and destroyed the bear centre. The sanctuary started out as a research station in 2000 to provide veterinary care and shelter to 27 bears formerly used for baiting. Fifty turtles kept for research purposes were also washed away and killed.

The state of wildlife receives little attention in Pakistan. Militant groups have carved out sanctuaries in the mountains and valleys -- all of which is affecting wildlife, experts say.

"Bombing and shelling in Afghanistan and in the Pakistani tribal areas have disturbed the resident wildlife," said Malik.

Authorities say they have no access and are unable to enforce wildlife protection law in the semi-autonomous tribal belt, so instead they piece together details from local tribesmen and hunters.

According to conservative estimates, from 500,000 to a million birds migrate through Pakistan each year, flying south from Siberia to pass the winter in central and south Asia.

Birds search for natural habitats along the Indus and the Kabul, the two major flyways of waterfowl and other water birds migrating through Pakistan in November and December from breeding grounds in Siberia and Central Asia.

"These situations have forced birds to change the routes that they have been using for generations," said Asad Lodhi, deputy wildlife conservationist in the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"Unrest is definitely a cause. Arms and ammunition bring destruction and these birds are so sensitive that they change their routes," Lodhi said.

Fakhar-i-Abbas, head of the Bioresource Research Centre in Islamabad, says that out of 650 bird species in Pakistan, about 275 are winter visitors.

"Complaints about a reduction in the number of these visitors started early in the first decade of this century," he said, listing drought, flooding, fighting and pollution as possible causes.

But the lack of accurate statistics means that the reasons cannot be confirmed, he warned.

Hundreds of hunters prey on waterfowl during the hunting season from December to March, and kill a large number of birds, experts say.

The most notorious hunters in Pakistan are sheikhs and princes who flock to Pakistan each year to hunt the houbara bustard bird with falcons, arriving by private charter jet from the Middle East.

Their wildly extravagant parties are allotted private hunting grounds in Sindh, Baluchistan and Punjab provinces by the government.
City’s stray dogs deserve mercy

Daily Times

By Muhammad Aayan
17 December, 2010

LAHORE: While travelling through the city, one can notice donkeys getting beaten up by their masters, skinny horses pulling carts for their owners and birds diving to the land to find something to feed on.

Another common sight is stray cats and dogs trying to find food in garbage heaps. Cats, with the advantage of easily barging into houses, have a fair chance of scoring a meal as compared to stray dogs, which are continuously being killed by the district administration as they are considered to be the cause of many diseases.

No one in the city can argue with the administration, as there is no organisation or group that is willing to work for dogs. Cyanide is usually used to poison stray dogs, and in some cases they are shot dead.

On the other hand, birds are caged to be sold to the public at different spots around the provincial metropolis. The buyers set them free as sadqa. “Many of the birds die due to the cold weather during the night and the same happens in the summers when it is really hot,” said Asim Khan, a vendor, who frees a sparrow for Rs 25 each. “Sometimes I catch crows and parrots but it’s really difficult, however this is how I feed my family,” he said. Asim termed the death of these birds as a simple business loss, which might seem practical to a hunter but inhumane to a commoner.

Pakistan Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) is active in Karachi but they have not been able to set up a permanent care or adoption centre in their city. They are not functional in Lahore but there are individual groups that intend to work for animal care.

Amal Uppal, a student of NCA told Daily Times that hundreds of people are willing to make a contribution for animals of the city but there is no single platform that can be used in this regard. “The dogs can be neutered instead of being poisoned. In Karachi, there is an island off the coast known as Kutta (dog) Island. People ship stray dogs there. They have no food, are surrounded by water they cannot drink and have no shade, as the island is devoid of any form of vegetation. The animals kill each other for food, die of the heat or thirst or die trying to swim back to a shore that is too far away,” she said. Uppal has made a page on Facebook by the name of ‘Against Kutta Island’ and vows to persuade people to stop this practice.

According to a Daily Times survey, there are more than 600 puppies on the streets of the city out of which only 20 percent survive. Most of them become victims of the cold weather, starvation or die in accidents. The district administration is unable to determine the exact number of stray dogs and cats but it is close to 8,000 among a population of ten million.

Pakistani zoo plans renting two pandas from China

Pakistan Wildlife News

09 December, 2010

On the rising public demand, administration of the Pakistan's biggest Zoo in the eastern city of Lahore has decided to rent a pair of pandas from China very soon, local media reported on Thursday.

According to daily Dawn, in these days the zoo administration is trying to get sponsorships to pay rent for pandas and has launched an appeal for funds on its website and through the media.

Pandas are the property of the Chinese government which gives the animals to zoos on rent.

Iqbal Khalid, director of the zoo, told about the panda plan and said they had completed paper work to get the pair.

"Once it gets a sponsor, the zoo administration will submit a request to the Chinese government for the animal, which is popular around the world. Chinese officials will visit the zoo to inspect housing and health facilities for pandas," said Khalid.

He further said that a housing facility for pandas would be made at...
Continued... The zoo also planned to have the country’s famous film actress Reema Khan as ambassador of wildlife in captivity who will adopt some birds and animals at a ceremony. She would help the administration raise awareness among the public about wildlife issues.

The Sindh Environment and Alternative Energy Minister Sheikh Muhammad Afzal was the chief guest of the ceremony. While addressing the ceremony the provincial minister said “Pakistan is rich in natural resources as well as intellectual people; however these resources in humans or mineral.”

The Vice Chancellor of Hamdard University Professor Dr. Nasim A Khan, who is the author of the book, has contributed a lot on how these treasures of energy resources can be properly utilized. Environment and Alternative Energy Secretary Mir Hussain, KPC President Imtiaz Khan Faran, NED University former VC Jameel A Khan also addressed the occasion.

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PTA criticises rise in interest rate

By Staff Report
02 December, 2010

KARACHI: Pakistan Tanners Association (PTA) has criticised increasing in policy rate by 50 basis points to 14 percent for the next two months by State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), effective from December 1, 2010.

Chairman PTA, Khurshid Alam said this increase in the interest rate would be the last nail in the coffin of manufacturing sector including leather industry as the industry is already on the verge of collapse due to several reasons.

He said the central bank has adopted a wrong way of dealing with inflation as 50 basis point by increasing 14 percent interest rate would generate more inflation, increase joblessness and cost of doing business, which would ultimately hit the economic growth. He said at the time of these hard days when the leather industry is in the dire need of some special package, the increase in interest rate would only prove counterproductive to economy recovery. He said export and smuggling of live animals — about 100 trucks from Afghanistan and Iran borders is still going on.

The government should impose ban on permit and certificates for export of live animals as some of the government officials are also involved in this harmful activity which is causing shortage of live animals, precious raw materials hides and skins and increase prices of meat, he maintained.

He said the prices of sacrificial animals are also going up while PTA proposed government time and again to increase export duty from 20 percent to 50 percent with minimum prices proposed on export of raw hides, grain wet blue and wet blue split leather to check the excessive export of wet blues hides and skins.

Alam said two-day gas load shedding in Punjab, frequent electricity load shedding, increase in PoL prices, high mark-up rates under EFS and proposed imposition of RGST are peril for export oriented manufacturing sectors.

He appealed to the Governor SBP to immediately review its decision of increasing interest rate in order to save the already disturbed leather industry due to the prevailing dismal economic situation in the country.

Pakistan floods released stored toxic chemicals

The floods that tore through Pakistan earlier this year, affecting 20 million people, released some 3000 tonnes of dangerous chemicals into the environment. A report due to be published next year will warn that the event was not a one-off.
Its findings were presented at the climate negotiations in Cancún, Mexico, yesterday.

The long-lived chemicals, known collectively as persistent organic pollutants (POPs), include several banned pesticides and the insect repellent DDT. They are dispersed around the planet by atmospheric patterns, do not degrade naturally, and are linked to hormonal, developmental and reproductive disorders, and increased risk of diabetes, cancer and dementia.

Climate Change and POPs Inter-Linkages, published by the UN Environment Programme, is the first study to look at how climate change will affect POPs, which are regulated under the UN Stockholm convention.

It found that climate change increases the risks posed in several ways. Both measurements and models show that as evaporation increases with warmer temperatures, more of the chemicals are released from the land masses, rivers and lakes where they are stored. Once in the atmosphere, they can travel great distances.

Likewise, glaciers lock away POPs, preventing them from causing more harm. But data shows that as they are melting with global warming, their toxic load is being re-mobilised.

Storms and extreme weather events like this year’s floods in Pakistan are another factor in the release of POPs into the environment, when disasters release stockpiles stored in drums. Pakistan is a recent signatory of the Stockholm Convention and in 2009 it filed a preliminary audit of its POP stockpiles, stating that there were at least 6000 tonnes of the chemicals locked up in stores around the country.

According to Pakistan’s audit, about half of the stores were in low-lying areas near bodies of water, including the areas that were flooded this year. Michael Stanley-Jones of UNEP yesterday told New Scientist that aerial surveys after the floods found that the facilities had been destroyed by the force of the water crashing through the flooded plains.

Similar events took place after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, said Donald Cooper, executive secretary of the Stockholm Convention, adding that more and more intense extreme weather events like this year’s floods and fires put the hundreds of thousands of tonnes of of stockpiled chemicals around the world at risk.

"Throughout Asia and Africa there has been a large accumulation of old pesticides, many of which are POPs," says Cooper. In a bitter twist or irony, the pesticides were often sent by rich nations as aid, in response to a past food crisis. Excess pesticide could not be sent back and so was simply stored for an indefinite period.

Referring to recent floods in different parts of the country, he said that the disaster was the result of climate change and global warming.

He maintained that Pakistan had been utilising all possible resources to fight environmental problems, adding that the Environment Ministry had been actively coordinating with world community and other national and international organisations for evolving a comprehensive plan to confront all environment-related problems.

He further said that the world community was admiring contribution of Pakistan in environment sector. He also stated that the government was committed to provide healthy and clean environment to the coming generation for which it would leave no stone unturned.

During the meeting, issues related to sixteenth meeting of the conference of parties came under discussion.

Environment Secretary M Javed Malik, Additional Secretary Kamran Ali Qureshi and other officials of the ministry attended the meeting.
Address poverty to improve food security, says report

By Dorothy Nakaweesi & Agencies
03 December, 2010

A new report has called for an urgent need to address poverty as the best way to achieve food security in developing countries. The report conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) says that if poverty is properly addressed poor countries will be able to adapt to climate change.

According to the report, families with sufficient incomes have the capability to cope with drought, floods, and other climate shocks.

Poverty first

Mr Gerald Nelson, a senior IFPRI research fellow and the report’s co-author said: “Many have made a case for addressing climate change to fight poverty; however you must address poverty first as a key part of climate change adaptation.”

This year’s severe drought in Russia and devastating floods in Pakistan offer a glimpse of a future negatively affected by severe weather. The report finds that between now and 2050, staple-food prices could rise by 42-131 per cent for maize, 11-78 per cent for rice, and 17-67 per cent for wheat, depending on the state of the world’s climate, economy and population.

According to the report, climate change will cause lower rice yields all over the world in 2050, compared to a future without climate change. One of the climate change scenarios result in substantial declines in maize exports in developed countries, but small increases in yields in developing nations.

Harmful impact

Wheat yields will fall in all regions, with the largest losses in developing countries.

Using sophisticated computer modeling, the study assesses the harmful impact of climate change on food security through 2050.

It presents 15 different future scenarios based on various combinations of potential income growth, population growth, and possible climate situations that range from slightly to substantially wetter and hotter.

The study highlights poverty for three reasons. First, because the bigger consumers’ incomes, the greater their ability to afford higher food prices caused in part by climate change.

Second, better-off families cope more easily with uncertainty. And third, farming families with higher incomes are better positioned to invest in new technologies that might be costly at the outset but improve productivity and resilience in the long run, thereby boosting incomes.

The report also finds that improving crop productivity can counteract the negative effects of climate change on food production, prices, and access.

“Investments in agriculture deserve high priority because without improved farm productivity, it will be impossible to meet the increasing demand for food from rising incomes and a growing world population,” Mr Mark Rosegrant, director of IFPRI’s Environment, Production, and Technology Division and report co-author.

Mr Rosegrant added: “Greater productivity also means that more of this growing demand can be satisfied from existing land, limiting the environmental damage that results from plowing new fields from forests and savannahs. And productivity growth leads to the rural income growth needed to improve food security.”

Pakistan calls for reforming Int’l environmental system to deal with climate change threat

05 December, 2010

UNITED NATIONS: Citing the recent devastating floods, Pakistan has called for “urgent reforms” of the International Environmental Governance (IEG) system aimed at protecting the countries that were vulnerable to climate change. “In the wake of several environmental emergencies including in particular the growing threat from climate change, Pakistan agrees that status quo is not an option,” Senate Chairman Farooq H. Naek said while intervening in the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at UN Headquarters in New York.
Cont: Pakistan calls for reforming Int'l environmental sys-

“Urgent reforms are needed and a collective action at the global level is vital to protect the smallest, poorest and vulnerable countries like Pakistan,” he said while participating in a discussion on: “Rethinking sustainable development within the current global economic and environmental framework.”

“Only very recently, Pakistan has paid a huge cost to the vagaries of climate change,” Naek told the hearing. Jointly organized by the UN and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Annual Parliamentary Hearing provides a forum for interactive discussions between members of parliament and high-ranking UN officials, representatives of member states and experts drawn from think-tanks and civil society organizations.

Pakistan, he pointed out, was engaged in the ongoing discussions to forge a common understanding on the future of International Environmental Governance, which suffers from overlapping functions. Stating that the overall state of environment and the ability to meet the challenge remained, the Pakistan chief delegate said that time was ripe to give serious consideration to elevate the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) into an International Organization as opposed to a programme.

On the question of decoupling economic growth to prevent degradation in environment, he said Pakistan also shared the perspective and the need for it.

“In our view, it is pivotal to make use of some old and new technology which remains climate friendly, such as nuclear, geothermal and bio fuels.

Pakistan also believes that there is a need for significant investment in the carbon storage and capture technology.” While recognizing the need for innovative sources to generate finances, Naek said limiting them to carbon taxation would neither serve the purpose nor meet the enormous amount of finances needed to stem the challenge of climate change and environment.

Country’s coal reservoirs to generate 50,000 MW electricity

06 December, 2011

Islamabad: Nuclear Scientist Dr Samar Mubarakmand has said that Pakistan’s coal reservoirs are enough to generate over 50,000 Mega-watts (MW) electricity annually. Talking to a private news channel he said, the country is enriched with one of the biggest coal reservoirs of the world in Thar and second largest reservoir of gold and copper in Rikodik (Balochistan) besides best human resource of the world. “We can produce gas as well as diesel from coal reservoir of Tharparkar which is more than 175 billion tonnes.

The reservoir is enough to generate 50,000 MW electricity annually for 500 years with 100 million barrel diesel production. With the start of diesel production, the country can save nine billion dollars import bill of the commodity. Even, the country will also be able to export diesel, he informed.

Dr. Samar said, the country was confronting many challenges including energy shortage which could be fulfilled with proper planning and hard work.

To a question he said, after studying world experiences of utilization of coal reservoirs, a project was formulated which was approved by Planning Commission of Pakistan. Funds were allocated for the project and a technical team comprising top scientists of Atomic Energy Commission and others was constituted so as to effectively utilize and convert coal reservoir of Thar into gas. He informed that work on Thar coal project was in full swing as it is in drilling stage and hopefully within two to three months coal-gas production would be started.

This is a pilot project which was launched just to prove performance and efficiency of such projects, he said. To a question he said, technical manpower of Pakistan must be utilized properly and in an effective manner so that the country could meet challenges of modern era. To another question he said, the country has enough technical capability in mining and exploration of copper and gold.

Elaborating further he said, currently, electricity generation from underground gasification of coal, which is also environment friendly and inexpensive, is spreading like a wildfire throughout the world as over 50,000 MW electricity is being generated in five continents. To another question he said, under a program, top universities of Pakistan were being upgraded and attached with world renowned and best universities. External campuses of world best universities, like working in many other countries, are being established in Pakistan so that Pakistani students could be provided best higher education opportunities in the homeland.
Indian thirst for water

India who is craving for United Nation Security Council bid always remained a clear violator of human rights and treaties. World is not oblivious of its human rights violation in Kashmir. Kashmir is not the only victim; India is a country alleged for disturbing the regional balance and distressing its neighbors by putting different troubles for them. The most common and serious issue is of water.

India deserves to be called a thief that steals from its neighbors, sticks its thumb at them and behaves like the local bully. Its water terrorism is well documented and reported by the international media too but result is a cloudy judgment due to India’s economic strength and its significance in the region. Indian water terrorism has created severe problems for its neighbors Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan.

India has dispute with Bangladesh over Farraka Barrage, with Nepal over Mahakali River and with Pakistan over 1960 Indus Treaty to turn the agricultural land of its neighbors into barren. Pakistan is the most effected victim of India’s water terrorism due to illegal occupation of Kashmir by India because all of the rivers providing water to Pakistan, route through Kashmir.

India is active in building dams on all rivers flowing into Pakistan from occupied Kashmir to get back the control of water of western rivers in violation of Indus Treaty. This is being done under well thought out strategy to leave Pakistan’s link-canal system redundant, destroy agriculture of Pakistan which is its mainstay and turn Pakistan into a desert.

Pakistan’s Commissioner Indus Water Basin Treaty (IWBT) Jamaat Ali Shah has accused India of violating IWBT by constructing Kishanganga, Nimmo-Bazgo and other Hydropower Projects on the rivers Chenab, Indus and Jehlum. Pakistan has warned India numerous times that Pakistan will go to war on the sharing of waters of the Indus.

These threats have been so frequent by people at the political, military, bureaucratic and technical levels that perhaps these threats have lost its meaning now. Jamaat Ali Shah has revealed that India has plans to construct over 100 Hydropower Projects on the three rivers (Jhelum, Indus and Chenab), which would affect not only the flow of water in Pakistan but the environment of the region would also be severely affected. Besides, India had nearly completed the 22-km tunnel to divert Kishanganga (Neelum) waters to Wullar Lake in violation of the Indus Waters Treaty and was working to complete the 330MW project by 2016. The project would severely affect the Pakistan’s right over the river, reduce the river flows into Pakistan and minimise its power generation capacity of the 969MW Neelum Jhelum Hydro-power project near Muzaffarabad in Azad Kashmir.

With the diversion of this water, Pakistan would face deficit of 21 per cent water which would reduce 16 per cent power production causing the loss of about Rs 5 billion in one year.

Pakistan has already showed reservations on the construction of Wullar barrage in Held Kashmir where the Indian plans include storing water and then tunneling it to the Wullar Lake, where it is constructing 800MW power house.

As Pakistan believes that Wullar barrage can be used as a geostrategic weapon, potential to disrupt the triple canal project of Pakistan (upper Jhelum, upper Chenab, Lower Bari Doab canals), to badly affect the Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project, to affect agriculture in Azad Kashmir, would dry 5.6 million acres of land of Punjab’s cultivable land, would dry Mangla dam and would result in load shedding if Pakistan does not get enough water to run its turbines.

Jamaat Shah said that India started the Wullar barrage project quietly in 1985 and Pakistan got information about this project in 1987. Pakistan a raised objection with the result the work was suspended which has not been resumed so far. ‘So far 13 secretary level rounds of talks have been held between the two countries but the issue is still pending’.

Also by taking advantage of its influence over Afghanistan, India has succeeded in convincing Karzai regime to build a dam on River Kabul and setup Kama Hydroelectric Project using 0.5MAF of Pakistan water. It has offered technical assistance for the proposed project which will have serious repercussions on the water flow in River Indus. As Pakistan’s Neelum-Jhelum project is likely to be completed by 2017, India has doubled its efforts to complete the Kishanganga project by 2016, so that it have the Pakistani project declared redundant, since whesoever completes the project earlier, will receive top priority.

At one point, one of the influential editors of the Urdu press Majeed Nizami of Pakistan went one step further and threatened that Pakistan will have to go for a nuclear war over the river waters issue. His perception no more seems like a dream now because India is turning the situation towards war as none of its neighborhood country will like to turn its land into barren due to India’s water terrorism.
Suleman markhor, the National Mammal of Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Suleman markhor, the National Mammal of Pakistan, listed as endangered species in the IUCN Red List of Threatened species has been traced in the Khalifat mountain range in Ziarat, revealed an official announcement by IUCN.

Statement from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges, said that during a survey by IUCN Pakistan, six females and one male Markhor were directly sighted in Khalifat mountain area whereas, two females were sighted in Malikat Mountains. IUCN Pakistan undertook the first ever survey of wildlife focusing on wild ungulates inhabiting the area. The purpose of the survey was to confirm occurrence of surviving population of Straight-horned Suleman Markhor- capra falconeri-jerdoni in the Khalifat Mountain range in Ziarat. The survey was organized by IUCN jointly in collaboration with Balochistan Forest & Wildlife Department and SUSG-C Asia Habitat & Species Conservation Project, Quetta. Five times comprising of wildlife experts from IUCN, Balochistan Forest & Wildlife Department, SUSG-C Asia and local community members conducted this survey at various potential sites of Markhor in the area. The survey has revealed existence of very thin population of Suleman Markhor in the Khalifat mountain range in Ziarat.

During the survey, six females and one male Markhor were directly sighted in Khalifat mountain area whereas two females were sighted in Malikat mountains also confirmed existence of Markhor in the area. Speaking on the occasion, Project Manager Juniper Conservation Project Ghulam Qadir Shah termed the survey a great success, as existence of Suleman Markhor was scientifically authenticated in the area for the first time. According to IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 2010, no reliable information on occurrence of Suleman Markhor in Juniper Wildlife Sanctuary Ziarat has been reported before. He further informed that IUCN Ziarat has planned more similar surveys of the area next year to estimate total surviving population of Suleman Markhor in the area. A participatory wildlife conservation plan will also be developed and implemented in collaboration with the Baluchistan Forests & Wildlife Department and local communities to ensure protection and multiplication of surviving animals.

At a large stage trophy hunting of Markhor can be introduced once its population has been stabilized to promote conservation benefits for the local communities. Qadie Shah appreciated the support provided by Baluchistan Forest & Wildlife department, SUSG and local community members in the successful completion of the survey. Speaking on the occasion Conservator of Wildlife Baluchistan Forest & Wildlife Department Akhtar Hussain Baza, National Project Manager Tahir Rasheed, SUSG-Habitat and Species Conservation project, Quetta viewed this survey as a remarkable achievement and assured their full cooperation in conservation initiatives in the future. Suleman Markhor is the national mammal of Pakistan, which has been listed as endangered specie in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. It is scattered in northern Afghanistan, northern India (southwest Jammu and Kashmir), northern and central Pakistan, southern Tajikistan and southern Uzbekistan. It is found in mountain ranges at the elevation form 600 to 3,600 meters. Habitat fragmentation, illegal hunting, and other anthropogenic threats have severely reduced Markhor population in its natural habitats.

India activists urge against sending animals to Kabul zoo

NEW DELHI: Indian animal rights activists Saturday urged the government not to send animals to Kabul’s war-damaged zoo, after Afghan officials came scouting for an elephant and leopards.

The Afghan capital’s zoo suffered severe damage during the Taliban’s 1996-2001 regime and the authorities are now working to restock with animals donated from India. But the Indian arm of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) urged Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh not to allow animals to be sent to Afghanistan. “The sad state of the Kabul zoo is well known,” PETA spokeswoman Poorva Joshipura said. “Sending wild animals to miserable zoos abroad contradicts our pledge to protect the welfare of our wildlife.”

Kabul’s zoo director Aziz Gul Saqeb told AFP on Thursday that Afghanistan wanted an elephant, a leopard and a snow leopard from India and said the Indian authorities had agreed to help with the elephant’s upkeep.

But Saqeb said his officials faced the prospect of a difficult journey with the animals through troubled Pakistan to landlocked Afghanistan.
Pakistan seeks standing as a 'most vulnerable' climate nation

08 December, 2010

CANCUN, Mexico (AlertNet) - As negotiators at U.N. climate talks work toward setting up a functioning climate assistance fund, flood-hit Pakistan is trying to position itself as one of the world's most climate-vulnerable nations, alongside low-lying Bangladesh, sinking small island states and drought-threatened African nations.

In 2010, Pakistan officials noted, the country suffered not only floods that submerged 20 percent of its territory, affected 20 million people and cost several thousand lives, but also saw record high temperatures slash wheat production and a landslide create a 15-km (9-mile) glacial lake in the north that now threatens to burst and cause flash flooding.

In May, Pakistan recorded the highest air temperature ever measured in Asia - a staggering 53.5 degrees Celsius (128 degrees Fahrenheit) - and its floods were the largest recorded in history, said Peter Hoen, chief scientist with Munich RE, a company that has pioneered climate-risk insurance.

"We are facing up to the heat on the front lines in Pakistan," said Malik Amin Aslam, Pakistan's environment minister, during an appeal for climate assistance funds at the Cancun climate talks.

"Pakistan is on the front line of the two defining wars of our generation" - terrorism and climate change, Aslam said. Both battle fronts require global cooperation, he added. But one key difference with climate pressures, he said, is that "we don't have an exit strategy for Pakistan. There is no escape from the war on climate change."

Climate change threatens to be a "multiplier" for extremist activity in the country, he warned, particularly if millions of people who have lost their homes and livelihoods to this year's flooding do not get adequate help.

"When you have people on the street without hope, without a future, that creates a breeding ground for terrorists," Aslam said.

Pakistan has not traditionally been counted among the countries most vulnerable to climate change.

Those include small island states at risk of becoming uninhabitable as a result of sea level rise; densely populated and low-lying Bangladesh, which faces sea level rise, salt intrusion, worsening cyclones and a permanent inundation of 20 percent of its land; and the least-developed countries of the world, particularly poor states of sub-Saharan Africa that are confronted with worsening droughts and flooding and have few resources to adapt.

But given Pakistan's problems this year, the emerging climate fund's definition of vulnerability should be updated, the country argues, particularly to take into account countries at risk from factors like monsoon variability, intense summer heat waves, desertification, glacier-related issues and coastal exposure.

Other assessors of climate vulnerability seem to support the claim.

Maplecroft, a risk consultancy that ranks countries by their expected climate vulnerability over the next 30 years, now counts Pakistan in the 20 most climate-vulnerable countries worldwide. Other South Asian countries – particularly India and Nepal – are even higher on the list.

Pakistan's growing climate pressures come as the country is already struggling to deal with other serious problems, including growing food insecurity and extremist violence.

"Pakistan is on the front line of the two defining wars of our generation" – terrorism and climate change, Aslam said. Both battle fronts require global cooperation, he added. But one key difference with climate pressures, he said, is that "we don't have an exit strategy for Pakistan. There is no escape from the war on climate change."

Pakistan: Task starts on micro power project

05 December, 2010

CHITRAL: Speakers at the groundbreaking ceremony of a hydro power station at a village said the utilization of fabulous potential of power generation would bring about a positive change and help wiping out poverty from the area.

The speakers included chief executive of Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) Kamal Hayat, general manager of Aga Khan Rural Support Programme Izhar Hunzai, regional programme manager of AKRSP Sardary Ayub and others.

They said that the electricity generated at very low cost would reduce the mounting pressure on the forests at highlands and hence lead to conservation of environment. The local people depended on forests to get fuel wood for cooking, lighting and heating purposes leading to rapid depletion of woodlands. Enumerating the benefits of hydro power generation, they said that it would also reduce the workload on women.
UN Climate Change Conference

03 December, 2010

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani delegation who is actively participating in the UN Climate Change Conference in Cancun and highlighting country’s point of view with reference to recent advancements occurred due to climate change effects and global warming. The participants of the conference are discussing the issues of mitigation, adaptation, capacity building and technology transfer, said a news release issued here.

Leading Negotiator from Pakistan Farrukh Khan, Jawed Ali Khan, Dr. Aurangzeb Khan, Meera Ghani, Shafqat Kakakhel, Pervaiz Amir, Kashmala Kakakhel, Mukaram Mustafa Khan, Shakeel Kazmi, Moman Agah, Taimur Ali, Amna Shahab are involved in group discussions and projecting viewpoint of Pakistan during debates.

In the Conference of Parties (CoP-16), all the parties shown consensus to adopt decisions conducive for environmental upgradation and mitigating the concerns.

The delegates from Pakistan interacted with their counterparts of other countries and discussed matters relating to common interests and effective planning of environmental improvement projects.

Pakistan and US to cooperate in fighting Cotton Leaf Curl Virus

By Tariq Khattak
December, 2010

Islamabad: Pakistan and United States have decided to cooperate in fighting Cotton Leaf Curl Virus (CLCV) and develop CLCV resistant cotton varieties through comprehensive research work being conducted by Pakistani and American Agricultural scientists. American scientist specialised in Agriculture sector Dr. Brian Scheffler, Research Leader Computational Molecular Biologist, Genomic and Bioinformatics Research Unit of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agriculture Research Service is visiting Pakistan to look into the aspects for research cooperation to fight against this virus to improve cotton crop.

Talking to newsmen here at American embassy today, Dr. Brian said, 9 million dollars, three year project will focus on the development of CLCV resistant cotton varieties and build the capacity of agencies managing the biotech cotton framework and facilitate the implementation of seed laws in Pakistan.

He said American cooperation in agriculture sector is part of Pak-US Strategic Dialogue and the area of cooperation has been identified by Pakistani experts. Dr. Brain during his visit to Pakistan held meetings with cotton sector representatives including Ministry of food and Agriculture, Pakistan Central Cotton Committee, National Institute for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering, Ayub Agriculture Research Institute and visited different Agriculture Research Institutes.

Replying to a question, he said, experts in agriculture sector of both the countries would join hands to find CLCV resistance cotton crop. He said although American cotton seeds are not being cultivated in Pakistan as the environment here is not suitable to these seeds, but America has been facing threats similar to the virus attacking cotton crop, therefore, research in American universities could be helpful in fighting this virus.

Cotton is an important cash crop and lifeline in Pakistan’s textile industry, which has over 400 textile mills, 1,000 ginneries and 300 oil expellers.

Dr. Brian said US partners in this project focused on scientific cotton research and the control of CLCV include USDA Agriculture Research Service, Mississippi State University, University of Arizona and Texas A&M University.

Chitralis walk for environment in Islamabad

http://www.chitralnews.com/index.htm
12 December, 2010

Islamabad: An environmental and peace walk was held in Islamabad organized by Chitral Heritage and Environment Protection Society continued...
The participants of the walk held banners and placards highlighting the need to protect the earth for the survival of humanity.

They cleaned park area and removed waste materials at Shakar Parian to create awareness among the people about negative impacts of environmental pollution on the human life and the need to fight, individually and collectively against the environmental pollution.

Rehmat Ali, the chairman CHEPS while talking to media and the participants laid stress upon the need to work as a team to create awareness about the hazards of global warming and environmental change.

Uphill struggle to preserve cultural heritage of mountains stressed

Dehornber, 2010

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Environment, Forest’s Deputy Inspector General Abdul Munaf Qaimkhani said “Pakistan has a wide range of mountains as five of the 14 highest independent peaks in the world are in Pakistan we need collective efforts to preserve the cultural heritage of mountains.”

He was addressing at a weeklong children art competition titled ‘Pakistan Mountain Fest-2010’ and a youth seminar organised by Development Communications Network (DEVCOM) in partnership with Lok Virsa and WWF Pakistan to observe the International Mountain Day on Saturday at Lok Virsa. Qaimkhani, was the chief guest at the occasion, said the occasion provided an appropriate opportunity to reflect how important it was to empower home-grown communities and help them promote and preserve traditional knowledge, including sciences, agricultural practices, responses to global change, health practices, flora and fauna, oral traditions, crafts and arts. Lok Virsa Executive Director (ED) Khalid Javed was of the view that the culture represented the way life of a community, as it comprised various forms of creative and artistic expressions.

He said the Lok Virsa aimed at focusing on youth as they had a huge potential a country could need for its development. “According to our popular slogan ‘Harnessing Culture for Education,’ we have created eight children folklore societies in various parts of the country including the remotest regions of all the provinces in a view to inculcate consciousness among school children about their indigenous culture and heritage.” He added the project was successfully running with generous support from the Norwegian government. (Pictures courtesy Daily Times & Tribune)

DEVCOM Chairman, and coordinator of the event, Munir Ahmed said the day was observed to increase awareness about the high statistics of natural hazards in mountainous areas and the high vulnerability of communities living there.
As climate change negotiations come to a close in Cancun, Virgínia Suarez-Pinlac is seeing red. The environmental lawyer from the Philippines is worried that a plan for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) constitutes a land grab, transferring natural wealth from the poor to the rich under the auspices of saving the planet.

Last year, she says, an Australian coal company tried to forge an agreement with an indigenous tribe on Mindanao Island in the Philippines, a poverty stricken area known for its high mountains and lush green rainforest. “The company offered poor tribes people money in exchange for their atmospheric space. They don’t want to cut their own emissions domestically. They want to find a way to profit from the carbon they produce.”

Forests help take climate changing carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, reducing global warming - a human induced process linked to wild weather patterns including this year’s deadly flooding in Pakistan and crop destroying wild fires in Russia.

Green-washing

The world is losing about six million hectares of forests each year - an area roughly the size of Greece - due to human activities like logging. REDD is supposed to be designed to allow companies to buy clean air credits from people who live in forests to encourage them to protect the trees. But some environmentalists say that when companies buy credits abroad through what is now a voluntary scheme, they feel entitled to pollute back at home.

“The biggest buyers of REDD credits are the worst polluters - big oil and big coal,” says Bill Barclay, the research director for the Rainforest Action Network in California. “They are looking for a cheap ‘get out of jail free card’ - it’s basically green-washing.”

In the Philippines, indigenous people "didn't understand that they were giving away their atmospheric space to Australians" when they were approached by a non-governmental organisation working with the coal miners, Suarez-Pinlac says.

But REDD and similar initiatives based on trading credits in carbon dioxide are not just about companies purchasing environmental legitimacy from communities who actually take care of forests; the schemes being discussed in Cancun could increase lucrative business opportunities for hedge fund traders and financiers.

"There is a lot of concern REDD will be brought into a carbon offset trading scheme," Barclay says. Carbon trading is based on the idea that a price should be placed on emissions. Companies or countries would have a cap set on the amount of pollution they could spew. Those who curtail their emissions below targeted levels could sell atmospheric space to polluters who exceed their limits.

The European Union has such legislation; the 27-nation bloc has pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 20 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020. And carbon trading figures prominently into this plan, as the EU is by far the world’s largest carbon market. And, while Europe has done far better than other industrialised regions in reducing its emissions compared to the size of its economy, some analysts think the moves are too little, too late.

"We still aren’t seeing key reductions that climate scientists say are necessary," says Rachel Cleetus, an economist with the Union of Concerned Scientists in the US.

'Carbon cowboys'

Environmental scientists estimate that the world needs to see emissions cuts of at least 25 to 40 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020 and 80 to 90 per cent by 2050 to stop catastrophic climate change. While Cleetus supports carbon trading as one of many policy tools for tackling global warming, she says: "The carbon market only gets at one market failure: the lack of a price on carbon. We need to get renewable energy strategies in place."

Hedge fund brokers and the speculators Barclay calls "carbon cowboys" believe the free market is the best tool for tackling climate change and better than an extension of internationally mandated emissions targets set out by the Kyoto Protocol which expires in 2012. "The lack of a post-Kyoto agreement means that countries won't have legal responsibilities to reduce emissions. They will have voluntary..."
The 2009 Copenhagen Accord, an attempt to extend the Kyoto Protocol, does not include binding targets. However, rich countries responsible for most greenhouse gas emissions pledged to create a fund worth $100bn per year by 2020 to invest in clean technologies and to help mitigate the effects of climate change in the global south.

Eric Bettelheim, an author and CEO of Forest Landscape Development, a company that invests in products that "have a carbon and commodity value" believes turning nature into a tradable resource is crucial for protecting it.

"Everyone who is rational about this realises global warming will probably never be solved without the participation of businesses and markets," Bettelheim says. "Progress will be made on the recognition of forest carbon credits from developing countries as being good currency in the [carbon trading] system."

He accuses certain environmentalists and political leaders - specifically Evo Morales, the Bolivian president - of having an "anti-capitalist agenda".

Morales, whose country faces a major climate crisis resulting from pollution it did not create, wants reparations from the rich industrialised countries in the form of "climate debt".

Bettelheim's view on leaders like Morales is shared by politicians with some of the worst environmental records. The US refused to ratify the original agreement while Russia, Japan, Canada and Australia have indicated that they will not sign onto a second commitment extending the Kyoto Protocol past its 2012 expiration date.

Before becoming Canada's prime minister, Stephen Harper called Kyoto "a socialist scheme to suck money out of wealth-producing nations".

2010 in running as warmest year ever

This year is on track to enter the almanac as one of the three warmest years on record globally, along with 1998 and 2005, according to a preliminary analysis by the World Meteorological Organization. The year may even claim the record.

Not only that, but 2010 stands a decent chance of capturing the record, depending on temperature data from November and December, according to Michel Jarraud, secretary-general of the WMO. Global
average temperatures for the first 10 months of the year are running slightly ahead of those for the same period in '98 and '05, he noted during a press briefing at UN-sponsored climate talks in Cancun, Mexico.

Preliminary temperature data for November are comparable to temperatures seen in November 2005, indicating they have remained near record levels as the year winds down.

Even if 2010 fails to capture the top spot, the first decade of the 21st century already has gone into the books as the warmest since 1850, when the instrument record began.

The data are part of the WMO's annual roundup of global weather activity, especially extreme events such as floods, heat waves, deep cold snaps, and severe storms.

Some climate scientists caution that any one year’s worth of events is driven more by natural variability than by long-term warming triggered by the released of carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels. But when 2010’s extreme events are seen in that broader context, they appear to fit long-term patterns the climate models have generally projected for a climate system responding to increasing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases.

A range of studies have documented an increase in extreme heat events, a decrease in extreme cold events, and an increase in rainfall and snowfall intensity globally during the past 50 years, atmospheric scientist Gerald Meehl, with the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, told the House Energy and Environment subcommittee last month.

On the basis of physical principles alone, "we could expect to see just these kinds of changes in extremes in a warming climate," he testified.

In the US alone, he noted, the past decade saw high temperature records being set twice as often as low-temperature records, whereas in a climate without the additional greenhouse gases humans have pumped into the atmosphere, the ratio would average over the long term about 1 to 1. So far in 2010, the ratio was closer to 3 to 1, he said. Meanwhile, precipitation intensity has increased over the past 50 years, traced to the additional moisture the atmosphere can hold when it warms.

Some of the events in 2010 the WMO found noteworthy:

- Unusually heavy monsoons in Pakistan that brought the worst flooding in that country’s history. The floods forced 20 million people to leave their homes and covered a significant portion of the country’s farmland. At least 1,500 people were killed in the flooding, according to international relief groups.

- A record-smashing heat wave in Russia last summer. Moscow posted its highest temperature on record, at just over 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and recorded 33 consecutive days during which temperatures topped 86 degrees F. Both the heat wave and Pakistan floods resulted from the same large-scale weather pattern that stalled over that part of the globe, Dr. Jarraud notes.

- An unusual northern-hemisphere winter in which Canada posted its warmest and driest winter on record — some 7 degrees F above the long-term average — while the US recorded its coldest winter in 25 years, with storms dumping heavy snows across much of the continent, including a season record snowfall for Washington, D.C. Central Russia also experienced a colder-than-normal winter, although not outside historical experience. Likewise for much of Europe. But Canada’s unusual warmth also extended east across Greenland and the Arctic above Scandinavia, offsetting the chill at lower latitudes. A large portion of Asia, as well as North Africa and northern Brazil, also experienced above-normal temperatures for the December-to-February period.

The winter weather in the US and Europe prompted some people in those areas to question whether global warming had taken a break. Noting people’s tendency to gauge global climate change by checking their local weather, Jarraud cautioned, “don’t focus only on one place to draw a general conclusion; you have to look at the global picture.”

The WMO built its interim report for 2010 from data gathered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NASA, and data from Britain’s Hadley Center and the Climate Research Unit at the University of East Anglia. The latter was ground zero for a controversy last year triggered by an unauthorized release of e-mails that spotlighted a seamiest side to scientific behavior. Subsequent investigations found no evidence that scientific results were tainted by practices and attitudes the e-mails portrayed.
Cont: 2010 in running as warmest year ever

Still, the WMO this year has used data from a fourth institute, the European Center for Medium-Range Forecasting, as a reality check on the other three, as well as for preliminary data for November.

The WMO plans to provide a final report on 2010’s weather patterns and how they compare with long-term climate “normals” next February.

Environmental tribunal disposes of 400 cases

09 December, 2010

PESHAWAR: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) has filed 488 environmental degradation cases against industrial units in which 400 have been cleared after completion of legal proceedings through the environmental tribunal.

This was stated by Deputy Director EPA, Dr Amjad Ali Khan in his presentation during a workshop for media persons at Peshawar Press Club (PPC) on Wednesday.

The purpose of the workshop was to highlight the growing environmental implications and create awareness amongst the masses about environmental issues.

The environment tribunal has collected an amount of Rs3.366 million in the form of penalties with Rs 50,000 from each violator. The cases of the remaining 88 were in progress with the environment tribunal. Dr Amjad Ali Khan highlighted the growing causes and environmental hazards through a multi-media presentation. He explained laws related to environmental protection and other precautionary measures for the purpose.

He said that contaminated water is behind many fatal diseases and attributed the growing cases of hepatitis A and B to it. Similarly, he said that poor sanitation is also causing environmental hazards due to a lack of awareness amongst the public.

He said that food served in most restaurants is unhygienic while a lack of proper planning for controlling the growing traffic mess further creates environmental and ecological peril. He said that dumping of garbage and housing waste are also reasons behind the environmental degradation. He stressed the need for implementation of environmental protection legislations.

He said that Hayatabad Industrial Estate near the residential area was established in violation of the environment protection laws while the government is going to construct similar project near Jalozai Industrial Estate and University of Engineering and Technology, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. He stressed the need for establishment of a buffer zone between them.

The EPA official said that the Motor Vehicle Emission rules are not define yet in the country and particularly in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, which is another cause of pollution hazards. Chief Analyst Sham-ur-Rehman said that Pakistan is considered a famine country regarding water reservoirs.

He said the capacity of the Indus River had shrunk due to overuse while Warsak Dam is also touching dead level. The diseases of hepatitis A and B are spreading due to contamination of water.

He suggested remedial steps for controlling the contamination of water included establishment of treatment facilities, proper collection and disposal of municipal waste and optimal use of agricultural chemicals, and incineration of hazardous hospital waste.

“There were four water treatment plants in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa but none of them is functioning properly,” lamented the analyst of EPA.
Leaders call for push towards green energy in UNEP’s ‘Our Planet’ magazine

12 December, 2010

Nairobi, In separate articles in this month’s Our Planet, the flagship magazine of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), British Prime Minister David Cameron and Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodriguez Zapatero underline how a global shift to a low-carbon, green economy can help combat climate change, reduce emissions and create jobs.

While describing last year’s climate talks as a “setback”, Mr. Cameron writes that the 2010 meeting in Cancun represents an opportunity for renewed global commitment on climate change – spurred on by the damaging effects of extreme weather events in Pakistan, China and Russia earlier this year.

“We have to show in Cancun that the United Nations Framework is capable of getting us back on track towards a global deal”, says Mr. Cameron. “We have to make the case for acting on climate change at every opportunity. We should be great advocates of green growth and the tremendous opportunity of a low carbon market already worth GBP3.2 trillion (US$5.0 trillion) and forecast to grow by around 4 per cent a year over the next five years.”

The United Kingdom currently has the world’s largest number of wind energy projects installed, in planning or in construction. In Our Planet, Mr. Cameron writes that developing clean energy projects in the developing world is a key strategy for reducing long-term global emissions.

“We must focus also focus on the huge opportunity of helping developing countries make a direct leap to low carbon – avoiding the high-carbon era that has dominated the developed world – helping to reduce energy costs and improve the standard of living for millions of people”, he says.

A move to cleaner energy is also the theme of Prime Minister Zapatero’s contribution to Our Planet, in which he describes the global financial downturn not as a barrier to change, but as an opportunity for a move towards a more sustainable model for growth, or a “Global Green New Deal”.

“More than three quarters of greenhouse gas emissions, which cause climate change, stem from energy consumption”, says Mr. Zapatero. “A gradual change in the energy model is therefore needed.”

The three-day conference on applied research on the environment, biodiversity and sustainable development

By Times of Brunei
14 December, 2010

Brunei-Muara - Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) plans to embark on more research endeavours in key clusters such as biodiversity, energy and food security to put the university among the premier research institutions in the region.

Dato Paduka Hj Mohd Daud Hj Mahmud said that by conducting research, universities play a pivotal role in creating innovations and a highly-skilled society that can address key issues that will benefit the country in the long-term.

“We need to create the pool of local researchers either at the local higher education institutions or abroad, and at the same time we need to generate sufficient funds for research and development,” said Dato Hj Mohd Daud at the opening of the first Graduate Science Students’ Research Conference at UBD’s Chancellor Hall yesterday.

The three-day conference brought together 70 participants from Brunei, Malaysia and Pakistan to discuss their applied research on the environment, biodiversity and sustainable development.

Dato Hj Mohd Daud lauded UBD for pursuing strategic partnerships with overseas universities to further their research opportunities.

So far, UBD has collaborated with the University of Auckland on the In-
ternational Consortium of Universities for the Study of Biodiversity and Environment (iCUBE) and Harvard University and IBM on climate change studies.

The permanent secretary said that Brunei’s investment in science and technology research from the National Development fund was encouraging and that it would augur well in terms of elevating the university’s status regionally and internationally.

"The introduction this year of the Graduate Research Scholarship of UBD further reaffirms UBD’s commitment in developing its research capacity," he said.

"(Investment in research) will also attract local and foreign talented researchers to our universities, creating the knowledge-based economy for Brunei in the future."

UBD’s first Graduate Science Students’ Research Conference was designed and managed by the university’s graduate students and offers an environment where they can receive feedback on their research. The topics presented will reflect a broad array of research and there will be six concurrent sessions held during the three days, including a poster exhibition.

Aside from attending research presentations from fellow postgraduates, the delegates will also have a chance to attend workshops on research and patenting, writing PhD proposals and writing for scientific journals. During his opening remarks yesterday, UBD Vice-chancellor Dr Hj Zulkarnain Hj Hanafi highlighted the importance of applied research and said that the institution is slowly shifting away from being solely a teaching-based university and towards more re-

Pakistan develops new seedless kinnow variety

**Daily Times**

*December, 2010*

The scientists of National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) have developed a new seedless variety of kinnow, which is known as kinnow mandarin orange in the world. The production of seedless kinnow on commercial scale in orchards of Sahiwal would probably be started by this year and hopefully show bright prospects of export.

Chaudhry Niaz, a team member of NARC, who discovered the seedless kinnow said, "The new plant can bear fruit in two years, while full production would start in three to four years that will reduce the high number of seeds." According to international standards a fruit having one to five seeds is categorised as ‘seedless fruit’ while a normal kinnow has about 18 to 30 seeds, which people from western countries don’t like as much.

Pakistan is among the top 10 citrus growing countries in the world. The country has vast potential to produce tropical, subtropical and temperate fruits, flowers and vegetables, which are waiting to be exploited. There is a need to focus on horticulture and processing industries for value addition.

Kinnow is known as a special variety of citrus fruit and due to unique climatic conditions it is grown in Pakistan. It has tremendous potential of export to many countries. The twofold increase in exports of kinnow had already taken place by exploring new markets like Russia, Iran and China. About 200,000 metric tonnes kinnow were exported during 2005-06, showing more than a 100 percent increment over the previous year’s exports and a 25 percent of increase over the record ever highest export of 149,000 metric tonnes of kinnow.

In 2008-09 the export was 177 million kilogrammes (kg) that climbed to 361 million kgs in 2009-10 earned $45.5 million and $97.8 million, respectively.

According to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) requirements of exports, it calls for strict compliance with international quality and health safety standards. Besides, best agricultural practices and dedicated production for specific markets both in terms of timely availability in particular tastes, size and colour.

Therefore, the producers and processors need to upgrade their capacities and facilities to produce fruits of international standard. The Agribusiness Development Project was launched with the assistance of Asian Development Bank aimed to provide business development, support services and facilitate the evolution of enabling environment for agribusiness investment.

The tax relief and other support measures announced by the government over the past years in support of the horticulture crop production and agro industry development would also help to improve the competitiveness of the product and would fetch better prices.

The government has declared horticulture as a priority sector and making efforts to improve the value chain and identifying new markets. The quality of product and the shelf life is being improved so that it could be introduced in the high-end markets.
Five seized precious falcons freed into natural environment

29 December, 2010

PESHAWAR: The Wildlife Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wednesday released five precious falcons, seized from poachers, into natural environment.

The Saker Falcons known in local language as (Flacon Cherrug) were released by Provincial Minister for Environment, Wajid Ali Khan here in the open fields near Peshawar Toll Plaza on Motorway.

Chief Conservator Wildlife Department, Saeed-uz-Zaman, Conservator North Wildlife, Mubarik Shah and other concerned officials besides media persons attended the ceremony.

"These falcons were confiscated by Khasadar Force of Khyber Agency at Torkhem border post," informed Chief Conservator Saeed-uz-Zaman.

The wild birds were caught by poachers in Afghanistan who were on their way to Pakistan for onward transportation to Gulf countries where the market value of this specie is in millions of rupees. An Afghan, identified as Khan son of Shazam, is also arrested, he added.

He also informed that all the seized birds are female whose value is more high in market because of its aggressive behaviour. Among the five seized birds, size of wings of one bird was 17 inches which is very attractive for the falcon lovers.

Speaking on the occasion, Provincial Minister for Environment, Wajid Ali Khan said seizure of falcons reflect commitment of Pakistan in implementation of international laws and regulations.

"Saker Falcon is listed on appendix (II) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and under the law its seizure, trade and export is completely banned," apprised the Minister.

He said the Wildlife Department is striving hard for protection and preservation of endangered species. Due to effective measures a number of endangered wild species have now in sufficient population in the province. In this regard he mentioned the names of Markhor, Western Tragopan and some other wild species.

Environment Minister termed the seizure of precious falcon as a big achievement of the Wildlife department.

The department, he added, is also taking measures for providing proper habitat and protection to migratory birds which passed through Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province during migration to India from Siberia.

Pakistan suffers from forest scarcity

14 December, 2010

KARACHI: “In Pakistan, forests cover around 4.2 million hectares of land, which is equivalent to 4.8 per cent of the total land area of the country. Whereas, the global average of forest cover is around 27 per cent for the developed countries and 26 per cent for the developing ones”

This was stated during a workshop organised by LEAD, held at the premises of Thardeep Rural Development Programme (TRDP) here on Monday. The workshop was the third among a series of four workshops aimed at presenting the current status with respect to inter-sectoral linkages before the concerned stakeholders and obtaining their perspectives with the view of finalising the report prepared on the subject. The workshop was informed that it is no wonder that Pakistan is termed

Continued...
Cont: Pakistan suffers from forest scarcity

as a country with low forest cover and suffers from a severe forest scarcity.

The problem is further compounded by the fact that Pakistan’s forests are depleting at a very fast rate, for example between 1990 and 2005 the country lost 24.7 percent of its forest cover.

The reasons behind this rapid deforestation are many, political (instability, wars, corruption, inappropriate law and structures, prices and movements), economy (land use and financial policies, economic growth, globalisation and infrastructure development), population pressures and traditional factors.

To address deforestation and other issues around forestry, Pakistan has in the last 62 years made various forest policies. However, research has shown that implementation of forestry laws remains a serious issue of concern in Pakistan. Added to this dismal scenario is the fact that once a water-surplus country with the huge water-resources of the Indus River System; Pakistan is now a water-deficit country, the participants of workshop noted, adding, at present, the annual per capita water availability in Pakistan is about 1100 cubic meter, below 1,000 m, countries begin experiencing chronic water stress (Population Action International, 1993).

With water scarcity a reality and becoming a mainstream political issue, water conservation measures are high on the development agenda. With a low forest cover and incessant deforestation, the watershed resource is being wasted and there is a need to streamline coordinated efforts between the forest and water sectors.

Flood aftermath: Forestry and fisheries department neglected by donors

By Maha Mussadaq
13 December, 2010

ISLAMABAD: The forestry and fisheries department is probably the only sector severely damaged and destroyed by the recent devastating floods that has managed to miss donors’ attention and has not received a single penny towards its rehabilitation.

The catastrophic floods that managed to destroy almost every sector have also severely damaged the fisheries and forestry department. Forests all over the country and thousands of fish ponds have been damaged in Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), no donations in terms of cash have been made towards the sector.

“Whereas there is full funding in our other sectors such as agriculture and livestock, nobody has shown interest in funding this sector,” said Aly Khan from FAO.

“If there were donations made we would have started some work; this is the only category which has been neglected,” Khan added.

According to the official, there has been mass destruction of land and Sindh will remain a challenge as the damage is possibly more than what is seen. “Sindh is a challenge as it is still under water and the total damage assessment is still ongoing,” Khan said.

About 13,000 fish farms have so far been established across Pakistan. The size of these farms varies considerably; however, the average farm size ranges from 5-10 hectares.

A majority of the fish farms are located in Thatta, Badin and Dadu, the three districts through which the River Indus passes, and are listed amongst the worst-hit districts of the province.

In Punjab, farms are located mostly in irrigated areas or where there is abundant rain and the soil is alluvial. As a result, Sheikhpura, Gujranwala, and Attock districts have larger number of farms and constitute around three quarters of the total number of farms in Punjab.

As compared to other provinces, KP has fewer farms, because of the climatic conditions. However, trout farms are located in Chitral, Swat, Dir, Malakand, Mansehra, Federally Administered Tribal Area (Fata) and other parts of the northern areas.

According to the official, due to the destruction of these sectors exports will also be affected. The fisheries sector of Pakistan contributes about one per cent to the country’s GDP and provides jobs for about one per cent of the country’s labour force.

According to estimates, about 50,000 people are either directly or indirectly employed in the fisheries sector. “Poultry has been damaged in millions and fish farming is a part of it, there needs to be some attention drawn towards this sector,” said Khan.
Experts from Pakistan, India call for implementing Bali Declaration

NEW DELHI: Experts and journalists from Pakistan, India and other regional countries have underlined the need for implementation of Bali Declaration to save the earth from environmental hazards. During a two-day media briefing organized by Centre for Science and Environment here, the experts said in the next few years there was an apprehension of fast changes in the world environment which could cause immense damage. The experts urged the United States and other world powers to fulfill their responsibilities in making the world environment free of pollution.

They completely opposed the Copenhagen meeting by saying that "it was only a political agreement." Speaking at the briefing, India’s Minister for Environment and Forest Jairam Ramesh said that the United States was not following any agreement on environment and had also put aside the Bali Declaration.

The Copenhagen meeting was also a political agreement between powerful lobbies and it was not mandatory for the countries. America did not let any agreement to take a final shape which carried any legal restrictions. He pointed out that the U.S also did not fulfill its promise of giving $ one billion to India on yearly basis to stop environmental degradation but paid only $ one billion in three years. He called upon the South Asian countries to work together to stop environmental pollution.

He said he held wide ranging talks with his Pakistani counterpart Hameedullah Jan Afridi and it was the responsibility of all to join hands to provide a better environment to their people. Director Center of Science and Environment Sunita Narain said that rapid changes in the environment of the region are having effects on the common man and effective steps are not being taken at the government level to stop the deterioration.

She said the Copenhagen meeting was a complete failure and it would be of no benefit to the people. She said US President Obama and Bush have different views on environment as the latter was not ready to listen to anything while the former has shown some seriousness in addressing the issues of environment.

Without complete implementation of the environmental agreements by the world powers, pollution could not be brought down, she noted. India’s Joint Secretary Union Ministry of Environment and Forests R R Rshmi said the targets of controlling environmental pollution could not be achieved without financial and technical assistance. At the briefing, the experts and journalists from various countries raised objections at the figures presented by India and said other countries were facing problems due to degradation of environment.

Referring to the recent floods in India and Pakistan, prominent journalist Tashi Morup said the recent floods in the Indus river destroyed Leh district of Ladakh and 232 people were killed.

Incharge Sindhi Service of Associated Press of Pakistan Shoukat Chandio said that the coastal areas of Sindh were badly affected by environmental changes.

Five million acres of land in the districts of Badin and Thatta have been washed away and many historical sites are also lost to water, he said adding due to stubbornness of India, Shakoore lake, the biggest one in India and Pakistan, has turned into a salt mine. Due to non-release of water in the sea, thousands of acres of jungles of Timber and Mangroves are wiped out and now cyclones hit coast every year, he added.

Chandio rejected the impression that the Pakistan government was neglecting issues of environment and said recently a world record was set by planting the highest number of saplings in a day. The government is taking measures to expand forests with the cooperation of Asian Development Bank.

Director of Indian National Center for Ocean Information Service Hyderabad Sateesh S Shenoi said sea level was rising due to increase in temperatures. From 1950 to 2000, the sea level rose by 1.8 feet while by 2005 to 3.3 feet. Head of Marine Department of Kolkata University Abhijit Mitra informed the media that the rise of sea level has increased the ratio of humidity in the air which has badly affected agricultural production in numerous areas.

Subodh Sharma said at present 18,000 megawatts of electricity was being produced with coal. He said the government can only support or take steps for implementation of different measures on environment. Energy expert Ajay Mathur said wood should not be used as fuel in villages and LPG should be promoted as this will reduce cutting of forests and create positive effect on the environment.

At the conclusion of the media briefing, it was agreed to hold a similar conference in another country and arrange meetings with people affected by the environmental issues and forge a joint strategy to address climate issues.
Installation of smoke control devices: Brick kilns near airport violating environmental tribunal’s order

22 December, 2010

ISLAMABAD: Most brick kilns within a radius of 12 to 20 kilometres (km) of Benazir Bhutto International Airport are still not using smoke control devices. This is in violation of orders issued by Punjab Environmental Tribunal (PET) a few weeks ago.

PET had directed any brick kiln falling within 12 km of the airport to be removed within three months. Moreover, it had asked brick kilns outside the 12 km radius but within 20 km of the airport to install smoke control devices to reduce the smoke being emitted. This was meant to improve visibility around the airport so that airplanes could take-off and land easily.

Brick kiln owners had said that they did not have a cost-effective emission control solution. Furthermore, the devices available in the market were incompatible with the kilns operating in Pakistan.

In response, Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) Islamabad developed a smoke-control device that has a much lower installation and operating cost, according to Sajid Mahmood, Chemist Air at Pak-EPA Islamabad.

The device, designed by Mahmood himself, was made specifically for brick kilns. But he said the brick kiln owners were not interested in implementing PET’s orders. He said there was a dire need to educate them to obey the tribunal orders.

“There are 72 brick kilns working within the vicinity of Islamabad Capital Territory,” he said. Twelve of these are located near Benazir Bhutto International Airport Islamabad.

He said that the device had been approved by PET and is cost-effective and environment-friendly. Moreover, it has been specifically designed for brick kilns in Pakistan without disturbing their natural mechanism. The device installs on the mouth of the stack. The water in the device absorbs particles and gases in the smoke and reduces the amount of smoke emitted by 50 to 60 per cent, said Mahmood.

He added that his device was superior to other alternatives such as skid-mounted wet scrubber. The scrubber showers water onto the smoke and a single shower consumes approximately 11 gallons per minute. The total water circulation in the brick kiln is 680 gallons per minute. In comparison Pak-EPA’s proposed device consumes just 16 gallons of water in 24 hours. He added that the water needs to be changed every two to three days, which is significantly less than the alternatives.

Karachi Zoo echoes to the cries of newborns

By Qadeer Tanoli
22 December, 2010

KARACHI: From little baby turtles taking a ride on their mother’s shell to a fallow deer grooming its young, the cries of newborns fill the air at the Karachi Zoological Garden. This year, the zoo saw a significant increase in the number of animals born.

According to the District Officer (DO) Zoo and Aquarium, Muhammad Mansoor Qazi, on an average, between 25 and 30 animals are born every year. This year, however, the Karachi Zoological Garden witnessed mothers belonging to various species give birth to twice the average amount. The place was abuzz with the cries of 60 newborn animals.

The DO informed The News that out of the mammals, the Moufflon Antelope, which is a Bengali species, gave birth to two fawns, while the Continued...
Cont: Karachi Zoo echoes to the cries of newborns

spotted deer was blessed with a single new addition. Similarly, the fallow deer, a European species, brought nine newborn fawns into this world, while the red deer gave birth to one little fawn.

Furthermore, nine little fawns were added to the endangered Black Buck, locally known as the Kala Hiran. Interestingly, in 1974, Pakistan donated a number of Black Buck to the United States. However, large scale hunting almost eliminated the species in Pakistan. Luckily, the species was reintroduced the country after some Black Bucks were imported. Meanwhile, the Fallow Deer also gave birth to two newborns. But it wasn’t only the various species of deer that were busy reproducing this year. A single baby was born to a Rhesus Monkey, which is considered a highly vulnerable species, while the porcupines had two new additions to their family.

Qazi told this scribe that the Blue Peacock, which is a local species, gave birth to six chicks in 2010. As far as the reptiles of the zoo were concerned, the highly endangered Spur-thigh tortoise, which is of African origin, increased its numbers by 16. Qazi said the fact that 60 baby animals survived is a great achievement for the zoo. He told The News that the Karachi zoo is the only place where the Afghan Tortoise is being bred in captivity.

Qazi said that over the last 10 years, 400 animals belonging to different species were shifted to the Safari Park after they were bred at the Karachi Zoo. He added that during the same period, 125 animals were shifted to the Landhi Korangi Zoo.

Apart from the latest additions to the Zoo, two young female elephants continued to be a major attraction for visitors. These elephants were imported a while ago from Tanzania. The trainer of these two young females named them after the famous Pakistani singers, Madhubala and Noor Jehan. Madhubala is six and a half-years-old, while Noor Jehan is four years and eight months.

These young females were initially kept at the Safari Park and were later shifted to the Karachi Zoo, where there is getting them...
BRC aims at emerging as a base of generating high-quality, research-based data on existing bio-resources of Pakistan, and its adjacent tracts: knowing their present status, exploitation patterns and future possible trends, along with monitoring changes in their status over the period of time. Centre aims to target all possible sectors of bio-resources, including, water, air, agriculture, forests, fisheries and wildlife resources, exploiting modern gadgets, like, remote sensing, Geographic Information System and molecular technique. Centre wants to properly study environmental problems in order to increase understanding the system controlling natural resources to develop a wiser management of such resources for the long term benefit of human race.