

DAWN (April 16, 2007)
(Letters to the Editor)

Express and elevated

THE article on the proposed Karachi Elevated Expressway (KEE) by Mr Ardeshir Cowasjee (April 8) is well researched, like most of his articles. Your editorial that day, 'A flawed project' is on the same subject.

Like the KPT's underpass at Clifton Cross, this project is bound to arouse interest among Karachiites, being another 'first in the market' product. It is interesting to note that while dozens of letters were written on the Clifton Cross Underpass during its construction, not a single letter appeared on the two underpasses constructed just after the Clifton Cross at Gharibabad and Liaquatabad.

All three underpasses are being utilised to the fullest and I, like many, enjoy them every time I pass under them. Surely we will read many good ideas from great people on the Karachi Elevated Expressway and one sincerely hopes that our authorities will exercise their joint wisdom to select the best option.

According to the article, KEE will have to acquire 15 acres of land from Pakistan Railways, KPT, Qasre Naz, State Guest House, FTC, Pearl Continental Hotel, Metropole Hotel, Avari Hotel, Regent Plaza Hotel, Karachi Gymkhana, Aisha Bawany School, Nargis Cinema, in addition to the encroachment of 1,337 square meters on the Christian Cemetery. The Archbishop of Karachi has already filed a petition against it. Continuing, the article states that it will create air and noise pollution, denial of sunlight, loss of urban space and social alienation.

In addition to listing similar issues, the editorial states that it will result in cutting of hundred of existing trees and will take about three years to complete, thereby causing traffic chaos on Sharea Faisal. These are genuine concerns and the consequences listed are grave and real.

I am no expert or specialist on the subject. However, I was wondering what if we construct the Karachi Elevated Expressway on top of the existing Pakistan Railway tracks with same starting and finishing points. To cater for a future mass transit, a provision for a light train on top of the Elevated Expressway can be provided. Land would still have to be acquired but only from the Pakistan Railways. They have this resource in abundance and that too at all the desired exit and entry locations identified in the project.

In parallel, an oil pipeline can be laid in the Malir river bed all the way to the Superhighway from the National and Pakistan Refineries. Both the refineries are close to the Malir river bed. This pipeline can also be laid without hindering any traffic. It will

eliminate oil tanker loading at Shireen Jinnah Colony, ending their to and fro trips from this location.

If our town planners, social planners, architects and officials give this idea a thought and find merit in it, almost all fears listed in the article and the editorial will be addressed amicably. No trees will be cut, no encroachment will be required on the Christian cemetery, traffic chaos will not be created for three years on Sharea Faisal, no sunlight will be denied to our citizens, no air and noise pollution would increase on top of the already polluted roads, and no land procurement would be required from the KPT, Qasre Naz, State Guest House, FTC, Pearl Continental Hotel, Metropole Hotel, Avari Hotel, Regent Plaza Hotel, Karachi Gymkhana, Aisha Bawany School and Nargis Cinema.

The people of Karachi will live peacefully during the three years of feverish construction period and enjoy another first in the city after three years.

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Karachi