**MOUNTAINS OF GARBAGE: KARACHI’S LOOMING CRISIS AND WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?**

**INTRODUCTION:**

According to the Sindh Waste Management Board, Karachi produces approximately 12,000-14,000 tons of trash, out of which 2,000 tons accumulate as a daily backlog. As the population increases, the problem of trash accumulation also worsens. This daily backlog has resulted in mountains of garbage on our roads. From hospitals to the front of houses, parks to playgrounds, and shopping malls to streets, very few places are trash-free. It might sound like an exaggeration, but it's the reality in which the Karachiites are living. It's a disaster for our public health, tourism, and national reputation.

**A THREAT TO TOURISM:**

Karachi is one of the representative cities. However, as Karachi's first impression on a foreigner is that of a slum, it will result in declining tourism. This will lead to a decrease in tourism, which has significant drawbacks. It can have a significant impact on the local economy since tourism is often a major source of revenue. Additionally, it can lead to job losses and a decrease in the quality of life for those who rely on the tourism industry. We should take the example of Japan, where one of the major reasons for its attraction is its cleanliness. Just a glimpse of one of its cities through social media can mesmerize anybody with its beauty.

**A PUBLIC HEALTH DISASTER:**

The other problem caused by garbage is health issues. Karachi has plenty of breeding grounds for mosquitoes and bacteria due to heaps of garbage on the roads. The huge amount of trash is not only polluting our land but also our sea and water resources. This has led to the problem of water contamination, rendering it undrinkable. Moreover, there is a risk of disease outbreaks. With the already crippled healthcare system, Karachi cannot afford an outbreak. Additionally, being a source of revenue for the country is another reason to address this issue.

**WATER POLLUTION:**

Garbage is affecting our marine life. The improper disposal of solid and liquid waste throughout Karachi has destroyed marine life at two points: western Gul Bai and southern Gizri Creek, according to Muhammad Moazzam Khan, a technical advisor to the World Wide Fund for Nature. Khan states, "These two points were famous for fishing and oysters, but the water has become so polluted that these areas have turned into azoic zones." This has led to the disappearance of lamp shells, Arabian pupfish, and the plastic from the trash is causing harm to reptiles as well as fish. These same fish end up on our plates, and their consumption results in health problems.

**WASTAGE OF USEFUL LAND:**

Many lands that have potential use are rendered useless because of piles of garbage.

**COUNTER MEASURES:**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF S. KOREA'S WASTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:**

We can start by implementing it on a small scale in Karachi, observe the public's response, and mold the system according to our convenience. Here are some key aspects of South Korea's waste management system that can be applied in Karachi:

1. Waste is sorted into different categories at the source or waste collection facilities.

2. Separate collection of food waste and processing it through anaerobic digestion to produce biogas and fertilizers.

3. South Korea has invested in waste-to-energy plants that incinerate non-recyclable waste into electricity and heat.

4. South Korea implemented strict regulations that penalize non-compliance and reward those who report violators.

5. Implementation of awareness programs in schools and communities.

6. We should try to enforce residents to pay for the waste that they produce based on the volume and weight they generate. This would encourage citizens to recycle and produce less waste.

7. South Korea has an extensive recycling infrastructure, with designated collection centers and separate recycling bins

8. Bonus points: Implementation of this can help generate jobs.

**CHANGING THE MINDSET:**

The government should collaborate with the film industry, celebrities, and political figures to consciously and subconsciously promote the campaign as much as possible and continue to do so. It is ingrained in the minds of the youngsters in Karachi that "if we don't throw trash on the roads, someone else will" or "Karachi is already polluted. What difference can I make?" or "Nothing will ever change." These thoughts have encouraged people to litter the city as they please. However, if we wisely utilize social media and circulate government ads that are on par with social media reels, we can change mindsets. It will take time, but this rewiring of minds can be accelerated as soon as people see that the government is making an effort to make a difference. Areas like Clifton are quite clean, and people rarely throw trash on the roads because it is already a clean area. Why would anyone want to litter there? We can ask celebrities and political figures to make short clips of themselves cleaning the front of their houses and throwing the trash into the bins. Young people like to follow trends, and the youngsters of Karachi want to see the city clean; they are just very disappointed in the system.

**CLERICS HELPING IN THE CAMPAIGN? :**

"Cleanliness is half of faith," we have heard this hadith many times. How many actually follow it? Most people only care about keeping themselves clean. If we can collaborate with clerics to promote the true meaning of cleanliness, which is to keep ourselves clean as well as our surroundings, it will influence minds of all kinds, from young to old and rich to poor. After all, who doesn't go to the mosque? In this way, those minds that were not reachable through social media will get the message.

**PRAISING THE CLEANERS:**

Many people look down on the cleaners. As part of changing the youth's mindset, it is necessary to praise the cleaners. After all, they are picking up the trash for which we are responsible. Usually, in schools, if a teacher asks a child to pick up trash, kids make fun of that child by calling them "sweepers" as if it's a bad thing to keep our places clean. Once again, South Korea sets a leading example. Seoul, the largest city in Korea with a very large population and huge tourism, manages to stay clean. The secret to its cleanliness is its residents. Many older residents sweep the roads, collecting bottles, cans, wood, and cardboard to turn them in for money. The strict rules for disposal and recycling make the citizens compliant in sorting things out properly; otherwise, they will be fined.

**SUMMARY:**

Karachi is in dire need of proper waste management. Increasing population, inadequate and improper disposal of garbage has resulted in its accumulation on roads, parks, playground, and tourist spots, in vicinity of hospitals, schools, houses and restaurants.

It has become a major threat to public health, wastage of useful land, water pollution (of tap water, underground water and sea)

Following steps can be taken to prevent the situation from aggravating:

1. Government should start a campaign in collaboration with clerics, film industry, celebrities and political figures to consciously and sub-consciously feed the mind of youngsters that they need to be responsible first before the government starts the whole project. People should be reassured that they being responsible will bring change, their cooperation will accelerate the success of the project and their money will be put to good use.
2. Initially waste management policies of Korea should be implemented on small scale to observe the response of people and should be molded accordingly. According to this system the residents are expected to sort the waste and then dispose , a certain amount of fee is a part of their utility bills depending on different factors such as size of household and type of residence etc. Those who are non-compliant face penalty and those who report the violators will be rewarded.
3. Plants should be set up for disposal of non-recyclable waste. Plants should be set up for converting food waste into bio gas and fertilizers.
4. Cleaners should be praised. As a part of changing the mindset of people we need to get rid of the notion that cleaners are dirty or that they should be looked down upon. If we are able to change this stigma then people won’t feel shame in cleaning their own streets. We must create a sense that it is praiseworthy that they are being responsible citizens by taking care of the surroundings.

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