

## **Urban Forum**

### **Yadgar Signal Free Corridor-Citizen Perspective**

**Speaker: Madiha Asif**

**Date: 01-03-2013**

Punjab Urban Resource Centre (PURC) organized a forum on 1 March, 2014 at 2:00 pm by Research Associate of the organization, Madiha Asif with the support of Research Assistant, Bilal Raza. The purpose of conducting the forum is to share the information and realities about the project initiated by Government "Construction of Azadi Chowk Interchange and New Circular Road". The audience related to Sociology, Environment, Geographical information System (GIS), Civil Engineer, Public Policy Expert, etc. participated in the forum.

The researcher used daily news clipping, observation and interviews as tools to get the required information. First of all, the speaker told the reason of the initiation of the project claimed by the Government which is the increment of metro bus route as well as the preserving and promotion of historical monuments. Total cost of the project is 5 Billion and 35 Crore in which 4 Billion will be spent on the construction of Azadi Chowk Interchange having length 670 meter from Taxali Gate to Timber Market (Annexure A) whereas, 1 Billion will be spent on construction of New Circular Road having length 1.6 Km with 1 circle and 2 U-turn. The duration of the completion of the project is 3 month according to Chief Minister (CM).

Lady Wallington Hospital (LWH)- the biggest Gaynea Hospital in Lahore, plaza/commercial markets and residential areas, lake and sports complex are affected due to this initiative. LWH was constructed in 1933 having area 104 Kanals or 193489 sq-ft, 235 beds for patients, 3 units, mosque, medical store, doctor hostel consisting on 42 rooms, 6 residential flats, 16 ACs private rooms and Cornl. Ret. S.N.Haynees was the first supridentant. As an average, 70 deliveries and 30 suzerain cases were operated on daily basis. 2.5 Kanal and 12 Marlas land of hospital having doctors hostel, maternity ward A & B, chemical store, general store, kitchen, doctors flat is affected and Govt. also cancelled shifting plan of the affected parts in Shad Bagh and claim to provide alternatives in the hospital.

This demolishing plan was challenged by Doctors Young Association (DYA) (PTI Member, Dr. Yasmeen Rashid) with the help of a famous lawyer Azhar Siddique in High Court, Lahore. Shumail Paracha also claimed that location of roads, hospital and parks cannot be changed legally. Lahore Conservation Society and Lahore Bachao Tehreek are also against the Govt. decision because of cutting trees and destruction of city heritage. They said that Govt. is using health budget on construction of Metro Bus and 98% people are in trouble just for the relief of 2% people.

In the high court hearings, Justice Abdul Sattar Asghar declared the evidence provided by Govt. lawyer incomplete and demanded black & white map of alternatives location of

affected areas. However, Govt. claimed that 22 Lacs vehicles will pass on signal free daily with saving of fuel of 1 Million annually and SP Traffic Circular Rana Shahzad and DSP Shahdra Munir Butt strictly instructed traffic wardens to guide people on alternative routes during the construction process.

The speaker also shared the views of affected traders conducted by PURC. They are trading here from last more than 20 years and unhappy with Govt. process because DC rate for 20 foot front is 10 Lacs 75 thousand Per Marla whereas market value is 25-30 Lacs according to affectees (M.Awais, M.Shakeel, Shahnawaz). They submitted forms for payment in the first week of February but there is no progress. They stated that Govt.'s commission is involved more than that people's benefit and there is no need of demolishment if flyover will construct at height. The affectees annoyed and said that the entire project is being executed in a haphazard manner therefore; they threatened Govt. for protest in case of receiving no payment.

Whereas, 35% payments have paid to affectees according to LDA's Partwari and MNA (Bilal Yaseen) of the area also met twice with affectees but useless. The govt. also took safety measure to reduce high risk of accident by appointing safety supervisors and helpers who are alert and performing their duties with responsibility. This initiative is also creating many problems, such as difficulty in walking and mobility of vehicles, shifting of business of traders, receiving of payments and more important is extra budget on infrastructure development of Lahore.

This initiative also raises a lot of questions in mind of all human beings. First of all, for whom this plan is being designed, is there any need and why development of infrastructure in Lahore is more important as Govt. also proposes plan for construction of flyover and underpass at GT Road and Shalimar Link Road having cost 20 Crore and 70 Lacs and another underpass at Chubacha Railway Crossing having cost 3 Billion 10 Crore. The most important autopsy is if infrastructure development of Lahore is Govt.'s priority then why this infrastructure is not being developed in peripheries of the city where it is highly needed. The speaker also shared the important arguments of Journalist, Shahzada Irfan in his article "What Price for Azadi". He said that why the government has failed to complete even a single health project over the past seven years as a couple of years back, the Punjab government had refused to accept USAID's offer to renovate the hospital at the cost of \$16 million but today it's adamant to move it from its location and why no concerned officials is willing to talk with Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI).

In the end, the participants identified the gaps and suggested the researcher to enhance the study by taking in-depth interviews of trade unions, affected residents and executive members and finally correlate the study with multiple sections of the budget of the city. Lastly, the coordinator and speaker offered thanks to all participants for their time and interest.

# Annexure A

## PROPOSED FLYOVER FROM TAXALI GATE TO TIMBER MARKET

