**Beijing was once Lahore**

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February 12, 2022

The people of Lahore have their life years slashed by five years. On average, the citizens of Lahore are losing about five years of life expectancy due to hazardous air quality; as reported by The University of Chicago. Once the city of vibrance; Lahore now has a dubious distinction; for being a city with one of the worst air quality levels in the world.

As one of the most populated cities in the world, Lahore has expanded four times its size in the past two decades due to migration. Migration not only brings people but also vehicles, causing air and noise pollution. The air quality index in Lahore at one point this year went up to 440. For reference, the worst possible is 500.

Taking a stroll in the city, one finds a thick layer of dust covering trees that line Lahore’s streets and its famous gardens. All around the city, visibility is low. The smog makes it hard to breathe, even with a mask. Smog is caused by various air pollutants which are introduced to the environment by burning the low-grade fuel and crop residue along with the general waste on roadsides. Brick kilns play a detrimental role in emitting toxic smoke. Also, the burning of stubs of crops and the smoke emitting from vehicles cause the particles to suspend in the air.

[German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier elected to 2nd term](https://nation.com.pk/14-Feb-2022/german-president-frank-walter-steinmeier-elected-to-2nd-term)

Poor fuel quality and furnace oil used to produce power in thermal power plants add to the menace. Unfortunately, Lahore is surrounded by at least eight thermal power plants including, Sahiwal Coal Power Plant, which uses coal. Pakistan adopted the Pak-2 fuel-quality standards in 1998, but uniformity in implementation has never been evaluated. Beijing can be a role model. Twenty years on, Beijing’s air quality has improved substantially, and the lessons learned provide a roadmap for other cities tackling air pollution—Lahore in this case.

Beijing’s air quality management system is supported by monitoring and evaluation, pollution source apportionment and emission inventories, all of which seem missing at home. It also contains comprehensive legal standards and strict environmental law enforcement. Air quality work is supported by economic policies, public participation, and coordination on air pollution prevention and control in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region. Coal-fired pollution control and vehicle emission controls are the keys. Beijing was once as polluted as Lahore is today. To put it in a layman’s language, the people of Lahore can be thought of as living in a big cylinder of toxic gases piercing into their eyes, nose and lungs and cutting short their lives.

[Woman, 2 children die of hunger in Somalia as drought worsens](https://nation.com.pk/13-Feb-2022/woman-2-children-die-of-hunger-in-somalia-as-drought-worsens)

However, if you have visited Beijing lately, one finds it hard to believe that this city had one of the worst air qualities in the world in the past. Lahore can do what Beijing has done already. Air pollution is one of the greatest environmental challenges facing the world today. Beijing has shown what is possible, their efforts benefit health, sustainable development and our shared climate and far outweigh the cost of doing nothing. In Pakistan, hazardous air quality is forcing the government to shut down schools, students and teachers are calling sick unprecedently and restraining outdoor activities especially in big cities. Online classes must be a permanent option to reduce a load of traffic on the roads.

Improving the fuel quality, planting trees and using advanced scrubbers will gradually improve the air quality and will be the first step towards a ‘smog-free’ Lahore. The government envisions the Import of Euro-4 oil, and converting petrol buses to electricity and CNG to guarantee less air pollution. Oil refineries are already given three years to improve their technologies for a better refining process. Loans will be offered to convert kilns on the zigzag technology and lastly to import machinery that would uproot the crops residue and plant more trees in Lahore. But these need to be more than on paper. Individually using carpooling or hybrid cars, stopping burning waste materials and focusing on planting more trees can help. In the short run, to combat irritation, headaches and discomfort, wear recommended masks and only go outside when it is highly necessary for the smog condition. Inaction is criminal now. Remember. Beijing was once Lahore.

[Security forces kill two terrorists in Chaman](https://nation.com.pk/13-Feb-2022/security-forces-kill-two-terrorists-in-chaman)

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