**Public projects**

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The chief justice has expressed concern over the delay in completing the Orange Line Metro Train project. He observed that the people had suffered enough “due to the construction work and the court could not see them in agony anymore”.

By stating that “this project should now be completed in hours, instead of days”, the CJP communicated his urgency about completing it and asked the authorities to get moving on the project. Unfortunately, this project had faced many impediments created by its critics, including the usual armchair environmentalists.

Environmentalists had also opposed the decision to add a lane each to Lahore’s Canal Bank Road, but the previous provincial government went ahead with widening the road on both sides. Now, if you notice the intensity of traffic on these roads, you may wonder: what if the additional lanes had not been added? When 20,000 vehicles are added to the city every month, the roads seem to fall short of capacity. The traffic jams on the roads are frequent, for which traffic wardens are solely responsible. They stand on the road crossings as spectators.

However, commuters should now invite the CJP’s attention to the 10.7 kilometre-long Hudiara Drain Project, starting from Niaz Baig Thokar to Hudiara Drain, on the busy Multan Road that has been left unattended for many months. The few kilometres of short distance serves as entry and exit points to and from the provincial metropolis.

Most treacherous to negotiate is the distance of 1.5 kilometres – the NLC U-turn to the Saidpur U-turn, where 40 feet long passenger buses and trailers traverse back and forth. The result: traffic remains blocked, causing inordinate delays to passengers packed in buses. The traffic situation on this crossing is so chaotic that the motorway traffic sergeant usually stands on the side, looking helpless.

It is distressing to watch poor passengers, including women and children, who cannot afford to travel in air-conditioned buses, peeping out of the windows helplessly. One feels guilty travelling in an air-conditioned car when so many people brave the sweltering heat. Don’t hundreds of thousands of such passengers travelling to and from the provincial capital deserve to feel the change of New Pakistan? These people travel less for pleasure and more as a compulsion to seek employment.

Believably, the NHA now intends to reduce the number of lanes from the original design of four lanes each way to three lanes each way. Such gimmicks to cut corners might help reduce the traffic pressure for the time being. But they won’t be as effective a few years down the line when the population continues to grow exponentially and vehicles of all varieties are added to the roads. Four lanes each way would greatly facilitate heavy traffic that enters and leaves the provincial capital.

It is commonly observed that if one political party in power initiates a mega project, the next party that assumes power isn’t interested in it, finds faults with it, or shelves it altogether. As a result, the sufferers are the hordes of people whose daily preoccupation is to earn their livelihood to stay alive. Were the 10.7 kilometre-long road, along which several industries are situated, used for the VVIP movement, this road would have been converted to eight lanes long ago.

The CJP is requested to order the NHA to complete the project according to the original expansion plan of Multan Road without any further delay. In fact, hundreds of thousands of rupees have already been paid to the contractor as mobilisation advance.

The CJP clearly ordered that “all projects whose advance payments had been made to contractors must not be held up”. Leaving projects, especially road expansion projects that are meant for public travel, halfway create more problems for the people. Presently, the 10.7 km stretch of Multan Road presents an unsavoury sight, with half-built rainwater drains, and heaps of crushed stones and debris lying along the roadside.

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