



Press Release

The Fifth International Karachi Conference

27th, 28th and 29th October 2017 at the Arts Council Auditorium

The Fifth International Karachi Conference is being held from 27th to 29th October at the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi. The three-day conference aims to showcase current research and critical discourse on Karachi. The Karachi Conference not only examines questions that define the city's inner life today, but also global questions concerning social ecology, environmental degradation, and urban change.

Karachi is one of the largest cities in the world. Although the city is relatively young – it began as a small fortified trading post in 1729 – the region has a rich heritage with archaeological remains stretching back to the Neolithic period. And the city contains Sufi shrines dating to the 8th century, not to mention Hindu temples and Jewish and Christian graveyards.

The recent decades of Pakistan's history have seen a time of undocumented social upheaval, unacknowledged by the dominant discourse, which is almost exclusively focused on geopolitics. Moreover, there has been a marked turn around in the city's fortunes in the last few years due to better security and a competitive and upbeat market. The new Karachi, undoubtedly a microcosm of the country, needs a voice.

The Karachi Conference aims to be a part of that voice by celebrating one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse cities in the world. It seeks to highlight the importance of Karachi and all facets of its existence by bringing together research undertaken on the city by local and international academic institutions, scholars, development workers and social activists onto a single platform.

As in previous years, the Fifth Karachi Conference will kick-start with a Film Festival on Friday 27th October at 3:00 PM, showcasing the best of student films on diverse aspects of Karachi. The student-film-makers are from different parts of the city, and from various colleges and universities.

This year, important topics of discussion include solid waste management, proposed mass transit schemes, and the city's changing skyline. The conference will also look anew at the historic role of Karachi in the genesis of the country itself, both in regards to it being the first capital, and home to the founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Various new rehabilitation projects in Karachi's historic area of Saddar will be examined, including possibilities for Empress Market and the renovation of a 100-year-old home in Amil colony; an international scholar will also present a paper on the Amils of Sindh, one of the oldest communities of Karachi. Papers will be presented and discussed on 28th and 29th October. The conference will run on both days from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm.

For the first time the conference includes panels that showcase cutting edge student research to foster better understanding and concern for the city and its problems among the professionals of the future. Acclaimed activist and head of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, I. A. Rehman, will be the keynote speaker on 28th October. A detailed programme is available on our website and facebook page, and may also be requested via email. www.facebook.com/thekarachiconference