

Citizen Anonymous

Reading a book, sipping coffee, sitting under a gazebo enjoying the soothing sunshine of a reluctantly receding winter in one of the many parks in Islamabad is a luxury that is available to many but availed by a few. This week I joined my friend QID, who spends many hours of the day in this serene and delightful zero-carbon footprint routine. It is at this point that a small and insignificant event took place that made me rethink about many of my puffy concepts on environment, development and self-help.

Not too far from where we sat in the F-11 park, were two persons busy with great care and dexterity, digging earth and planting tree saplings. They would plant the sapling, prune the one's already planted, hoe the soil, take out weeds and place protective metal frames around the weak and the vulnerable plants. Clearly the sort of sincerity and dedication that is rare amongst those employed in the service of the state. We wanted to know more on what made these two individuals plant hundreds of trees in this and many other parks of this sector. This is what we discovered.

Khadim Hussain and Sunny Abbas, the two friendly and committed gardeners have been hired by an individual who lives in the same area. Preferring anonymity over fame, he has taken upon himself the task of not just planting thousands of trees but also maintaining the four parks and the adjoining open areas in the F-11/2 sector of Islamabad. De facto he is a one-person Capital Development Authority (CDA), except that he is far more efficient. His two-member self-propelled team knows exactly what is to be done each day. Planting trees, cutting hedges, weeding flowers, applying nutrients, clearing shrubs and general upkeep and maintenance of the entire sector. There are no files, meetings, foreign fundings, mineral water bottles, approvals or any other emblems or extras of bureaucracy.

Surely the anonymous RMK is not just an outstanding citizen of Pakistan. He demonstrates an important model of how one thoughtful and committed individual can quietly and steadily make a huge difference.

