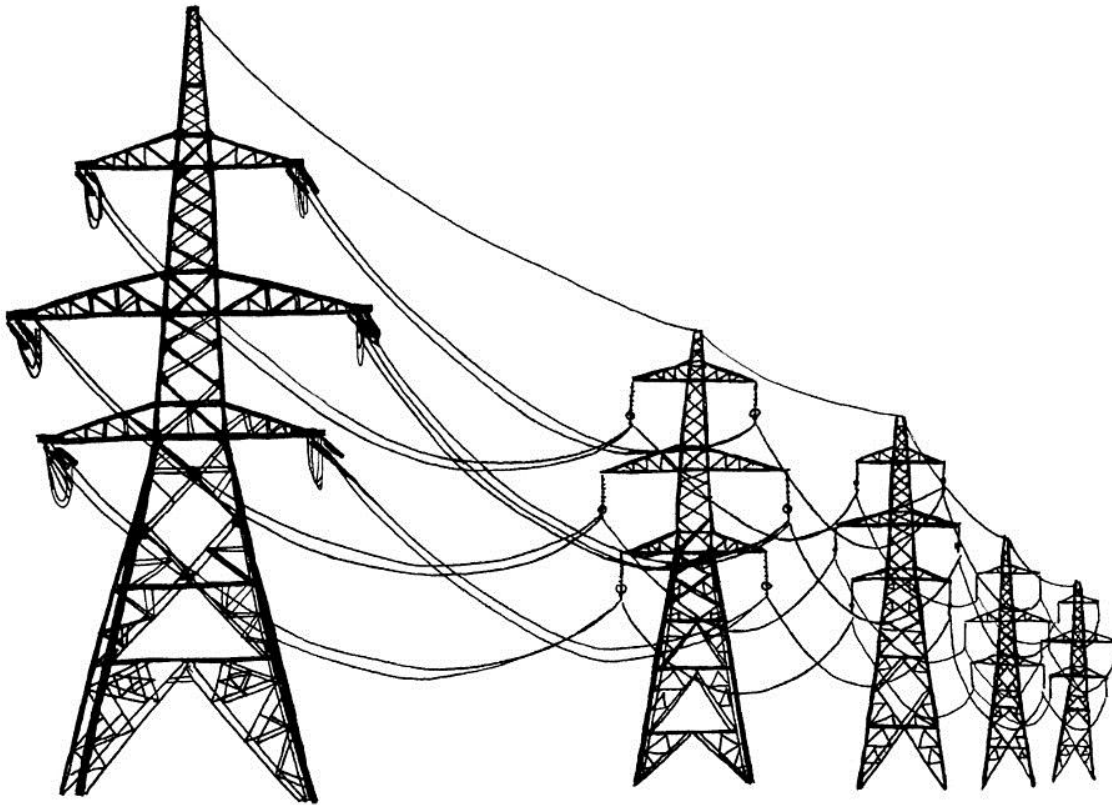

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JULY TO DECEMBER 2019

ELECTRICITY



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KMC, K-Electric embroiled in tit-for-tat war

The power outage at the Old Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) Building, the KMC head office, continued for the fifth day on Tuesday. The rift between K-Electric and KMC continues as the former claims that the KMC owes it Rs4.11 billion in arrears and that the Supreme Court had directed the latter to start paying monthly electricity bills from April 2019 onwards. The KMC, for its part, alleges that the KE has ignored the orders of the apex court. According to Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar, it is the Sindh government that is liable to pay arrears of Rs580m as per SC's directives while KMC is only liable to pay monthly bills from April 2019.

Adding fuel to the fire, on Friday morning at 5am, KE cut off 71 electricity connections, including the one supplying power to KMC's head office. KMC's budget session which was to be held on Friday at the Old KMC Building was then convened at Sabzazar Park instead of the City Council Hall due to the power outage.

KMC comes to a standstill

The conflict remains unresolved despite the passage of five days while all affairs of KMC have come to a halt. The payment of employees' salaries for the month of June has been delayed as has the pension of 22,000 retired employees which is paid on the first of every month. KMC claims bills can't be printed due to the power outage. Besides, retired KMC employees live in different cities of the country and their pension is usually transferred to their bank accounts in those cities but the transactions couldn't be made as the KMC's system remains disrupted.

Tit for tat

The KMC has not remained silent on the matter either and has adopted an aggressive policy. It has reportedly begun razing KE buildings and connections present on land owned by the KMC. The local body's anti-encroachment department has demolished the boundary walls of KE's office in Shaheen Complex and razed various connections and installations at Sharae Quaideen and Nagan Chowrangi.

The metropolitan corporation claims that KE is also a defaulter of KMC and owes it millions of rupees. KMC maintains that the KE has established power stations, installed electricity poles and other connections on KMC lands. The argument, reportedly, is that the KMC has resolved that the power utility should pay rent for using KMC's land or all its structures built in those areas will be demolished. Besides, the local body says it will not permit KE to dig up roads for electricity connections in any area of the city.

A conference, headed by the mayor, was held in this regard where these decisions were reportedly taken. Legal opinion was also sought on the matter. Sources say that Akhtar formed a committee which will prepare a report pertaining to areas where KE has dug up roads to establish its connections. The committee will also gather information about the amount submitted by KE in challans. The power utility allegedly cut up University Road a couple of months ago and the mayor has sought a report on the matter. Sources suggest that KMC will approach the court after preparing these reports.

They started it: KE

The power utility claims that KMC has damaged its property in retaliation to the disrupted power supply. It has accused the local body of damaging KE premises in Qayyumabad and North Karachi.

KE maintains that according to court orders in KE's recent suit, dated July 1, 2019, no action shall be taken against the power utility without two-day's prior notice. However, KMC continued to violate the law by damaging KE property, including damaging motorcycles of KE staff. The power utility alleges that a KE guard was also injured during these incidents.

The power utility remains adamant that the KMC owes Rs4.11 billion to KE and insists that the apex court had directed KMC to begin paying monthly bills from 2019. And when KE disconnected power supply to multiple KMC connections on account of non-payment of the monthly bills since April, KMC demolished its structures without any prior notice.

KE has termed KMC's actions as a 'gross violation' of the law while maintaining that the power utility had served several notices to KMC regarding payment of monthly electricity bills before discontinuing its power supply.

Who will pay the dues?

During the session on Friday, Akhtar criticised KE and held the Sindh government responsible for the unpaid arrears. He claimed that the provincial government was deducting money from the annual funds, making it difficult for KMC to pay its employees' salaries. Referring to the power cut, the mayor remarked that it was tyrannical of the power utility company to cut off the power supply. "An elected local body leadership is organising its session in an open area."

Meanwhile, the KE has declared in no uncertain terms that the power supply would only be restored once outstanding dues are paid. KMC remains obstinate that it is the provincial government who will pay the bills. The employees of both corporations have deepened the conflict further by getting into fist fights on multiple occasions. Some employees were also injured in the conflicts.

It also stands to reason that if KMC demolishes major power stations in the city, the electricity supply all across Karachi would be affected.

The Sindh government, on its part, has yet to intervene in the matter.
(By Naeem Khanzada / Adil Jawad The Express Tribune, 04, 03/07/2019)

SC orders KE to restore power supply of KMC's head office, parks

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed K-Electric to restore electricity supply to the head office of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and its parks.

A three-judge bench headed by Justice Maqbool Baqar restrained the power utility from disconnecting the power supply of the KMC till July 24 and also directed the officials of provincial and local governments to come up with a plan to pay the outstanding dues to the KE on the next date of hearing.

The bench issued these directives in a petition of the KMC, which approached the apex court with a plea to restrain KE from disconnecting the power supply of its offices over non-payment of dues after the Sindh High Court had dismissed an identical plea of the city's municipal administration.

The SHC extends pre-arrest bail of suspects in 'Roshan Sindh' probe

When the matter came up for hearing before the bench at the Supreme Court's Karachi Registry on Wednesday, the lawyer for the power utility submitted that the electric supply had been disconnected due to non-payment of dues as despite an earlier court order, the KMC had yet to pay the bills for the months of April and May.

Justice Sajjad Ali Shah, one of the members of the bench, asked why the KMC had not paid the electricity bills from April.

The lawyer for the KMC, Sameer Ghazanfar, submitted that the KMC was facing a shortage of funds of around Rs700 million and it requested the provincial government to provide a financial grant.

The KE counsel informed the bench that the electricity was also being provided to the houses of KMC employees located on the premises of parks under the same system.

Justice Shah asked why the KMC employees were not paying the electricity bills. The bench also issued directive for installation of sub-meters in the houses of KMC employees located in or around parks.

The lawyer for the KMC claimed that there were also around Rs1.7 billion outstanding dues of KMC, which had not been paid by KE yet.

The finance secretary informed the bench that the chief secretary had issued directives to address the issue of electricity dues in consultations with the KMC and a meeting about a proposed grant of Rs700m to KMC would be held on Friday (tomorrow).

The Metropolitan Commissioner, Dr Syed Saif-ur-Rehman, said that the KE disconnected the electricity of the KMC head office and around a dozen of its parks.

In April, the Supreme Court had asked the Sindh government to pay the outstanding electricity dues of the KMC to KE in five months in as many instalments and also directed the KMC to pay its electricity bills from April.

Earlier, the KMC had petitioned the SHC after the KE had disconnected power supply to one of its parks for non-payment of dues. However, the high court had dismissed the plea of the KMC in January and told it to pay the dues. Thereafter, the KMC approached the SC as it said that the power utility also disconnected power supply to its head office and other offices for non-payment of dues.

SHC summons NAB prosecutor general

The Sindh High Court on Wednesday directed the prosecutor general of National Accountability Bureau to appear on Aug 6 for arguments on a set of petitions challenging the transfer of an inquiry into Roshan Sindh project for installation of solar lights to NAB-Rawalpindi.

Khalil Asad, Agha Shahid Hussain, Azhar Qadir and others had moved the SHC seeking pre-arrest bail after NAB had initiated the inquiry. Later, the inquiry was transferred from Karachi to Rawalpindi and they challenged it.

When the petitions came up for hearing before a two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Iqbal Kalhoro, the court asked about the prosecutor general of NAB as previously he was directed to argue about the transfer of the inquiry.

NAB's special prosecutor Zahid Baladi informed the court that prosecutor general was available in court in the previous hearing, but the petitions had not been taken up due to want of time.

The bench again directed the prosecutor general to appear on Aug 6 and advance his arguments regarding transfer of the inquiry. The court also extended the interim bail of the petitioners till the next hearing.

The counsel for petitioner argued that NAB had transferred the inquiry to the investigators of the fake bank accounts case and questioned the authority of the NAB chairman to transfer the probe.

NAB said that around Rs4bn Roshan Sindh project was initiated for installation of solar streetlights in the province but the complaints of large-scale corruption had been filed in the implementation of the project.

(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 15, 11/07/2019)

Roshni - a glimmer of hope at the bleakest hour

It is the year 1989. An abandoned house in Bhattaiabad has a new resident – a 14-year-old girl has suddenly appeared under mysterious circumstances. Sinister men can be seen coming in and out of the house at odd hours. People in the neighbourhood observe these activities with a sense of unease, passers-by catch occasional glimpses of the girl but her existence remains mere speculation. One man realises that the girl is being kept against her will. Overwhelmed by the suspected misfortune of the girl, he shares his misgivings about the situation with his friend, Muhammad Ali.

Ali is a fabric trader in Shah Faisal Town, he is a man of modest means with ambitions to develop necessary technical expertise to be employed in a textile company. What is he to do for a girl whom nothing is known about?

He contacts the Subdivisional District Magistrate's office. He gathers as many officials and concerned individuals he can find, and marches forth to the house, unsure of what he'll find, but driven by the fear of what may become of the minor girl.

An informal rescue operation leads to the successful recovery of the girl. Her kidnappers had picked her from a city in rural Sindh, and had destined her for a forced marriage. Ali's interference in the matter saved her from the misfortune – to put mildly – that her 'in-laws' to be had waiting for her.

Ali's inability to ignore a hapless child also led to the arrest of her kidnapper – a dacoit with prize money on his head, wanted by the police dead or alive. Along with that 14-year-old girl, countless other children were saved from his web of human trafficking, kidnapping and other heinous crimes.

It is now 2019. Ali is the founder of Roshni Helpline 1138. He has led rescue operations for thousands of missing children and has managed to recover over 5,100 of them through his helpline.

Over the years, he has worked with numerous non-governmental organisations, including War Against Rape (WAR) – in Lahore and in Karachi, has trained under activists like Asma Jahangir and Hina Jilani, set-up an informal network of search and rescue in Lyari, and established his own NGO, registered as the Roshni Research and Development Welfare Organisation.

Decade of struggle

Recounting his journey, Ali says that it in 1989 it was his inability to ignore the plight of a 14-year-old girl being kept against her will that propelled him in action. However, her case opened his eyes to the atrocities that await young children who wander the streets alone, away from their parents or guardians. Those children are the most susceptible, he says.

Tied by the financial constraints of his family, he continued with his work in the trade of fabrics and textiles while volunteering part time at various social organisations.

In the year 2000, nearly eleven years later, a case emerged that changed Ali's life forever. It was the horrendous act of kidnapping more than a 100 children in Lahore and their barbarous murders by a man named Javed Iqbal. Ali studied that case extensively and concluded that 90% of Javed's victims were homeless and abandoned children who lived on footpaths and railway stations.

Prior to this, Ali had come across child trafficking rings run by slave-dealers who would kidnap and sell off children for camel races in the Gulf States. He also became familiar with Kharkar Camps where children, snatched from their families, were forced into labour. Those children would return to their homes several years later, scarred for life. Many of them had lived through abuse, torture and worse.

In 2001, Ali joined an organisation run by Sahabzada Dawood Abbasi – a member of the royal family of the former princely state of Bahawalpur, who worked for the protection of children from violence and abuse. Ali worked at Abbasi's NGO till 2007.

During that time, another case emerged in Lyari. In 2003, an eight-year-old girl was brutally murdered after being kidnapped and raped. Ali, who played football in Lyari, heard the gruesome details of the incident from his friends in the neighbourhood. He wondered how the girl could not be recovered in time to be saved, especially when, as he observed, most areas in Lyari consisted of close knit communities which knew each other well.

This coupled with his work at various NGOs and his close study of Javed led him to conclude that children's lives were at greater risk when they weren't guarded by their parents or families. He felt that social awareness with regard to children's protection was almost absent. The issue was also largely dismissed by police and relevant authorities, he noticed.

Propelled into action, Ali built an informal network in Lyari for the rescue and recovery of missing children. Through connections established with local mosque administrations, small shopkeepers, blacksmiths, cobblers and transgender persons, Ali accompanied by young vanguards in Lyari, managed to recover children missing from Lyari within hours of their disappearance being reported. So successful was this community-built system that the network soon had the support and cooperation of the police.

The police's involvement, however, put Ali in a tough spot with the gangs that had emerged in Lyari at the time and eventually the network ensuring children's protection was disrupted by members of the Lyari gang-war.

Sensing that it had become increasingly difficult for Ali to combat the issue of missing children in Lyari, his friend advocate Asghar Ali offered him an office space in Rimpa Plaza. It was here that Ali laid the foundations for Roshni Helpline.

Protecting children

Ali warns against the dangers of being inattentive towards one's children. "A small act of neglect can endanger a child's life," he says. While all parents and guardians know how important it is to ensure the safety and protection of one's children, to keep a watchful eye, to warn them against strangers and to be mindful of their activities, Ali reminds that parents and guardians must also confront an uncomfortable truth lest their children suffer.

It is important that a relationship of trust and safety exists among children and their caregivers. "Talk to your child if he or she avoids going to the school, madrassa or meeting any particular relative or acquaintance."

According to him, most children who disappear fall in the bracket of 11 to 18 years of age. These children are susceptible to sexual violence as well as other dangers that prevail and their vulnerability is only heightened when they are unable to vocalise the danger they can sense as sexual violence is not freely spoken about in our society. "Children must be made aware of the difference between 'good touch' and 'bad touch'", he says.

From humble beginnings

Ali's father was a migrant from Jaipur. The family had settled in Karachi and lived in Shah Faisal Colony. The second among four siblings in a middle-income household, soon after Ali graduated from Government Superior Science College, he joined his father in providing for the family. While he'd divide his time between family, employment and volunteer work, it was harder to manage expenses for both his social services and his family. As he felt acutely responsible for both, it is a choice he still struggles with.

"I was worried about meeting the expenses at home. However, if I abandoned my efforts towards the rescue of missing children, who would protect them?" recalls Ali. "Yet, how would I run the house if all my time was devoted to social work?" This conundrum had stayed with Ali for most of his life but it was when him and his wife were expecting their first born that Ali lost all hope. It seemed that he would have to choose between securing the future of his own child and ensuring the safety of other people's children. "It as a perpetual internal battle for me."

The tears in the eyes of the mother whose child had gone missing and her indescribable joy when the child was delivered safely back in her arms, is what kept him going, he says.

Help finally came in the form of ASHOKA International [the organisation recognises and supports entrepreneurs working for social change]. In 2008, Ali was listed as an ASHOKA fellow and in 2010 he received a grant for Roshni Helpline. This led to international recognition and garnered the attention of other organisations such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Voice of America and Voice of Germany, among others.

Ali still lives in a rented house but his helpline has now touched thousands of lives and recovered more than 5,100 children. The network of volunteers has expanded to 9,500 people with 4,500 serving in Karachi alone.

Ali carries on with his mission with the same urgency that drove him to rescue that 14-year-old girl in 1989 though. He updates his modus operandi as he goes along – from informal networks to an established NGO, from people on the streets to wide-spread campaigns and mobile applications, he uses every resource available to carry on with his mission.

(By Kashif Hussain The Express Tribune, 04, 22/07/2019)

Residents suffer as prolonged power cuts continue in Karachi, Hyderabad

The fragile transmission and distribution system of the K-Electric and Hyderabad Electric Supply Company remained affected on Tuesday as electricity played hide-and-seek till late in the night causing hardship and mental agony for millions of people, who already had to spend a sleepless night on Monday due to prolonged power failures following a brief spell of rain.

While the call centres of the KE failed to give any substantial information to people regarding the restoration of power supply, unannounced breakdowns also led to thin attendance at various schools as well as resulting in acute shortage of water in different localities.

A spokesperson for the power utility said: "Monsoon showers and precipitation late on Monday night caused power interruptions in parts of the city including some areas of Defence, Malir, Gulshan and North Karachi."

The KE carries out unannounced loadshedding in the metropolis for 'system stability'

However, a large number of people from almost every part of the city called the offices of *Dawn* to vent their anger against the power utility with most of them wondering what would happen if the city received a little more rain during the monsoon season.

The prolonged power breakdown continued to pile miseries on people in almost every part of the city in the early hours and later in the evening.

Reports suggested that the power supply was disrupted in most parts of the city immediately after brief rainfall around 10pm on Monday and since then hide-and seek of electricity continued till late on Tuesday.

Some areas remained without power supply for the whole night, while the others suffered breakdown of up to 18 hours.

Up to 20 hours power failures in Hyderabad, Badin

Not only in Karachi, but people across the province faced hardship due to prolonged power failures.

In Hyderabad, a massive power breakdown hit the city after a brief spell of rain on Monday night and till Tuesday night electricity could not be fully restored.

A spokesman for the Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (Hesco) apologised for the massive power breakdown and said that power supply to eight feeders of the city remained suspended.

In the entire region, he said, power supply from 52 feeders was suspended due to “safety reasons”.

In Badin district, residents spent a sleepless night and then a full day on Tuesday without power following moderate rain.

Areas in Tando Bago, Golarchi and other towns of the district were among those hit by the power breakdown.

A large number of citizens of Golarchi town staged a demonstration on Badin-Karachi road to register their protest against Hesco. The protesters lit bonfires during the demonstration.

Meanwhile, the KE spokesperson said: “The power situation was affected by the fact that some circuits of NTDC (National Transmission and Despatch Company) were already offline for maintenance at the time, and the load was being managed by K-Electric with system stability being prioritised. Further, due to EHT [extra high tension] tripping the power supply from Sindh Nooriabad Power Company (SNPC) Limited, an independent power producer (IPP) as well KE’s generation plants BQPS-I and II tripped.”

The spokesperson claimed that while most of KE’s generation plants were swiftly restored the power supply from SNPC resumed by midday.

“Further, the supply of NTDC is expected to fully resume after completion on maintenance activity by late evening today (Tuesday) after which the load management would be normalised”, he said, adding that KE teams remained engaged with key stakeholders for swift resolution of this situation throughout and the collaborative efforts of all parties resulted in the improving power supply to the city.

He said that the unprecedented humidity created a cascading effect on the power supply chain.—Mohammad Hussain Khan in Hyderabad & Hanif Samoon in Badin contributed to this report
(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 15, 24/07/2019)

Rain, power failures wreak havoc on Karachi

The first proper monsoon rain spell in the city played havoc with the ill-maintained civic infrastructure and power distribution system, causing nine deaths, flooding in low-lying areas and hours-long traffic jams on Monday.



Power supply was suspended with the first drop of rain in the morning. Many city areas even remained without electricity for over 15 hours.

Due to the intensity of the rain, the Sindh government announced that all public and private educational institutions across the province would remain closed on Tuesday (today).

City receives 69mm rain

The Pakistan Metrological Department warned that the trend was likely to continue on Tuesday. The pre-dawn downpour continued till late in the evening and the Met Office recorded 69.4 millimetres, or 2.73 inches, of rain till 8pm.

The Met observatories recorded 69.4mm of rain in Surjani Town; PAF Faisal Base and its surrounding areas (66mm or 2.59 inches); Airport (50.4mm or 1.98 inches); North Karachi (55.6mm or 2.18 inches); Gulistan-i-Jauhar (50mm or 1.96 inches); PAF Base Masroor (45mm or 1.77 inches) and 32mm, or 1.25 inches, of rain was recorded in Landhi and its neighbouring areas.

Schools, colleges across Sindh closed today; city gets 69mm rain till 8pm

“The much-awaited rain system entered Sindh early in the morning,” said the city’s weatherman Sardar Sarfaraz. “Due to climate factors the system landed a little late in the region but since it’s here we are expecting moderate to heavy rains in the city to continue for the next 24 to 36 hours.”

He said that there were two systems currently circulating in the region — one in the Arabian Sea and the other in the Bay of Bengal.

People endure traffic jams

The rain badly affected the traffic in the city, where hours-long traffic jams were witnessed on key roads. The traffic started slowing mainly in the second half of the day when the downpour turned stronger and took hours to normalise amid non-functioning of several traffic signals, absence of traffic officials and blockade of some major roads due to accumulation of rainwater.

In district South, hundreds of vehicles were stuck in a traffic mess on I.I. Chundrigar Road, M.R. Kayani Road, Sarwar Shaheed Road, Abdullah Haroon Road, Napier Road, Hasrat Mohani Road, Burnes Road, Shahrah-i-Liaquat, Saddar and Sharea Faisal. Officials said the rain badly affected two key links of East district — Korangi Causeway and Korangi Road — which link Korangi with the rest of the city, as people opted for alternative routes which further swelled the number of vehicles on available arteries.

The vehicular traffic on roads along Liaquatabad, some blocks of Nazimabad, a few sectors in North Karachi and parts of Shahrah-i-Pakistan remained slow but kept moving after the alternative system to drain the rainwater was installed by authorities.

In East district, University Road remained the worst-hit area where hundreds of vehicles were seen lined up after sunset due to accumulated rainwater. Similarly, in Central district construction works on key traffic intersections made the situation difficult for vehicular traffic.

Flights cancelled

The rain also affected the air traffic as many flights from Karachi to different destinations were cancelled due to weather conditions. A spokesman for Pakistan International Airlines said that eight flights from Karachi to Sukkur, Karachi-Gwadar, Karachi-Multan and Sukkur-Islamabad had been cancelled.

He said that all measures had been taken in view of the forecast of heavy rains in the city and passengers were being provided with help at the airport in case of delays/cancellation or diversion of their flights.

A CAA official said that in all eight flights were cancelled and four were delayed due to rain in Karachi.

Up to 15 hours of power breakdown

With the first few drops of rain, the power supply system in the city failed to prove its effectiveness.

The K-Electric blamed “unprecedented” and “heavy rain” for prolonged power failures that extended up to 15 hours in many areas in the city till 11pm.

In the evening, the KE claimed to have restored power supply in most parts of the city, but residents from different localities called Dawn offices to share their sufferings due to hours-long power breakdowns even after 11pm.

“Unprecedented and heavy rains disrupted power supply to some areas in Korangi, Landhi, Lyari and Bin Qasim,” said the power utility. “The K-Electric’s rapid response teams are in the field, working swiftly to restore power to all affected areas.”

It said: “Power supply to parts of Jail Chowrangi, Gulshan, Nazimabad, Gizri, PNT Colony, Numaish, Punjab Chowrangi and Garden has already been restored. In [a] few cases, power supply to kunda-infested and low-laying areas has been deliberately turned off as a safety precaution to avoid any serious incident. Inconvenience is regretted.”

Poor response from Sindh, local govts

The local and provincial governments came under criticism over poor response during the rain.

However, Local Government Minister Saeed Ghani said: “Key roads of the city which always got submerged after rains are not in that bad condition this time. We are only facing challenges in a few areas where drainage system is not capable to handle this amount of rain. But we are going for alternative solutions, which would improve the situation in next few hours.”

Meanwhile, the Sindh government announced holiday for educational institutions on Tuesday due to intermittent and continued rains.

“There would be a public holiday for educational institutes, both public and private, across Sindh province on Tuesday because of continued rains,” said Education Secretary Qazi Shahid Pervez.
(By Dawn Report 15, 30/07/2019)

25 electrocuted in three days

Two more people were electrocuted on Wednesday due to the ill-maintained electricity system in the provincial capital. The total death tally reached to 25 persons in the last three days.

22-year old Mohammad Bux, son of Soomar, was electrocuted in Marvi Goth in the limits of Shah Latif Town while another youth, Sirajuddin son of Shahabdin, 25, was electrocuted and died in Mominabad in the jurisdiction of Qaidabad police station on Wednesday morning. Bodies were shifted to Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre for medico-legal formalities.

On Tuesday, two 13-year old boys identified as Syed Amir Abir Ali and Ahmed Hamza were electrocuted in a street of North Nazimabad. In another incident, 11-year-old Muhammad Araf and 9-year old Muhammad Umar were also electrocuted in Malir’s Muslimabad colony.

The grieved families of Abir Ali held the power supplying company and the government responsible for the incident. Deceased’s grandmother, Rakhshi Zaki, blamed that the boy lost his life due to the negligence of the K-Electric (KE). “They don’t respond to our complaints,” she said, adding complaints of broken wires were not addressed immediately.
(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 05, 01/08/2019)

Electrocution incidents: Authorities question KE's performance

The Sindh High Court (SHC) issued notices on Friday to K-Electric (KE), National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), Sindh chief secretary and local government administration while hearing pleas pertaining to deaths caused due to electrocution during the recent spell of rain.

Twenty-five people died during two days of rainfall in the city due to electrocution and the KE has since come under fire for its alleged negligence which led to the deaths of these people.

The petitioners, Advocate Irfan Aziz and Advocate Asim Aziz, told the two-member bench, comprising Justice Muhammad Shafi Siddiqui and Justice Mahmood A Khan, that 20 people died due to KE's negligence and its fragile infrastructure. "KE failed to ensure the safety of Karachiites while also failing to supply power to the city," argued the counsel. "NEPRA also exhibited incompetence as it merely sought a report instead of cancelling KE's licence," he added. The petitioners prayed the court that KE's licence be cancelled and directives be issued for the payment of compensation to the families of the victims.

"Why was KE's infrastructure not improved?" questioned Justice Siddiqui, as the bench issued notices to the parties and directed the KE chairperson to appear before the court and explain the company's position.

FIR registered

Separately, police registered an FIR against the KE on Friday pertaining to the deaths caused due to electrocution during rain.

An aggrieved brother of one of the deceased lodged a complaint at Paposh Nagar Police Station. The complainant's brother, Saud, 30, was electrocuted to death outside his house in Paposh Nagar during the rain. The death toll mentioned in the FIR was 20. Another FIR has been lodged at Taimuria Police Station against KE's chief executive officer and others. The complainants were families of two children who died in the same incident on Tuesday.

Commissioner calls meeting

Meanwhile, Karachi Commissioner Iftikhar Shallwani held a meeting with KE management at his office on Friday on the issue of the tragic deaths of innocent citizens, including children, during rains on Monday and Tuesday. Representatives of relevant civic agencies attended the meeting.

The commissioner expressed displeasure on behalf of Sindh chief minister. "As we face queries by the federal and provincial governments and ascertain the reasons behind this unfortunate happening, KE authorities ought to identify the negligent party and provide details of the cause behind each death within 48 hours," said Shallwani.

A representative of NEPRA told the meeting, "We have asked them to submit reports of each incident. Our team from Islamabad will assess the facts and figures in the reports and submit them before NEPRA within two weeks."

The team would assess the factual position with regard to the failure of power supply and casualties caused during the recent rain. It would be visiting both the KE and Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (HESCO).

Besides, he added, NEPRA has sought KE's safety and precautionary measures manual as is mandatory under NEPRA's 2005 policy.

Sindh Energy Department representative, Ishaq Khuhro, said that it is mandatory for his department's inspectors to visit the KE's installations. "Our officials may be included in the inquiry so that specific responsibility can be established for the negligence," said Khuhro, adding that his department has also sought a report on the incidents.

KE authorities said that they shared the sentiments of the others over the unfortunate incidents and there could be no justification or reasoning behind the deaths. They offered assurance that whoever was responsible would be dealt with accordingly, while adding that the government may support and assist KE further to improve and upgrade its system.

'Human rights violation'

In a statement on Friday, the Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC) condemned the deaths of people due to electrocution. SHRC Chairperson Justice (R) Majida Razvi described the deaths as a serious human rights violation. She called for action to be taken against KE.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 03/08/2019)

Three die of electrocution as rain lashes Karachi



Four people died — three of them of electrocution — in different incidents following a fresh spell of rain that hit the city on Saturday morning and continued intermittently throughout the day.

The Met Office said that "moderate to heavy" rain was expected in Karachi on Sunday (today) and the rain system would lose its intensity by Monday afternoon.

The maximum rain, 33.4 millimetres, or 1.3 inches, was recorded in Airport area followed by Landhi (32mm), Faisal Base (25mm), Surjani Town (25mm), Masroor Base (23.5mm), Nazimabad (20.5mm), Keamari (10.2mm), Gulshan-i-Hadeed (11mm) and North Karachi 9.4mm.

Deaths by electrocution

A teenage boy, identified as Kaif Wahid, and four cows were electrocuted in Soldier Bazaar on Saturday. The boy and the cows suffered an electric shock when they stepped into accumulated rainwater outside Yasin Square.

Nabi Bux SHO Mohammed Rashid said it appeared to be the “fault” of the residents who had installed “naked wires”.

The Met Office forecasts more rain today; federal, provincial ministers and mayor take credit for draining out rainwater

In Manghopir, 25-year-old Saeed Khan died of electrocution when he tried to steal a motor pump in Mianwali Colony during rain. Pirabad SHO Amjad Javed said the deceased was a drug addict.

Shahbaz Hussain, 24, also died of electrocution in Landhi on Saturday evening.

An Edhi Foundation spokesperson said that he suffered an electric shock when he touched an electric pole in Bhains Colony. In Sherpao Colony, Landhi, 17-year-old Mohammad Danish drowned while swimming in a pond filled with rainwater. The body was brought to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre.

KE says death by electrocution not its fault

A spokesperson for the K-Electric said that three incidents of electrocution were reported from Orangi Town, Soldier Bazaar and Manghopir, but “no incident can be attributed to a broken KE wire or KE pole”.

He said that all incidents were of “internal nature caused by motor pumps or wires inside buildings.”

He said that the power supply situation remained largely stable as the city was hit by a fresh wave of monsoon rains. KE's on-ground teams were prepared and responded swiftly in case of any localised faults, which were swiftly rectified, it was claimed. He said rainwater had accumulated around electricity installations in parts of Lines Area, Burnes Road, Malir and other adjoining low-lying areas and power supply was temporarily switched off in the interest of public safety.

He said that the KE management reached out to the city commissioner to drain out the rainwater to expedite restoration of power supply and to avoid any untoward incident.

“Power supply to strategic installations such as KWSB, airport and key hospitals remained uninterrupted and rapid response teams along with online staff remained fully engaged and ready to respond to consumer complaints and queries,” the spokesman added.

More rain today

As the monsoon currents from the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal are penetrating upper, central and southern parts of the country, widespread rains/wind/thunderstorm would continue in parts of Sindh and Balochistan, according to the Met department's forecast for Sunday.

The areas where moderate to heavy rainfall is expected in Sindh and Balochistan include Karachi, Mirpurkhas, Thatta, Hyderabad, Shaheed Benazirabad divisions and parts of Larkana and Sukkur, Makran, Quetta, Zhob, Kalat, Sibbi and Nasirabad. The system would lose its intensity by Monday afternoon.

The maximum and minimum temperature recorded in Karachi was 32 degree Celsius and 27.5 degree Celsius, respectively.

**Ministers and mayor take credit**

Maritime Affairs Minister Ali Zaidi said on Saturday that the cleaning campaign started in the city with the coordination of the federal government proved quite successful as the rainwater was being drained out in a better way due to timely cleaning of storm-water drains.

The minister was talking to reporters during a visit to the city along with Mayor Wasim Akhtar and Deputy Mayor Arshad Hasan to review the city's situation and inspect the cleaning of drains.

The minister and the city's municipal custodians went to several areas of the city including Hijrat Colony, PIDC, Qayyumabad, Manzoor Colony, Mehmoodabad, Admin Society, Baloch Colony, Korangi, Landhi, New Karachi, Sakhi Hasan, North Nazimabad and Orangi Town.

Mayor Akhtar said that better arrangements were made this time by taking into consideration the experience of the past. “The provincial government is not ready to provide resources to the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation; therefore, we asked the federal government to cooperate,” he added.

He asked the Provincial Disaster Management Authority to help the municipal administration by providing required machinery for cleaning of drains.

Also on Saturday, Sindh Minister for Information Saeed Ghani visited various parts of East and Korangi districts.

He said that on the directives of the Sindh chief minister all the members of the cabinet visited various parts of Karachi to ensure proper and instant drainage of rainwater.

"Owing to untiring and vigorous efforts and constant supervision of the cabinet ministers, the rainwater has been drained out instantly after rain," he said. "The Sindh ministers are constantly reviewing the situation as it is developing after rain. It would be ensured that the people of Karachi do not suffer as every Sindh government minister is present on the road to ensure instant drainage of rainwater and cleanliness of the city."

(By Dawn Report 15, 11/08/2019)

18 people died from electrocution in Sindh during rain, say police

At least 27 persons were killed in rain-related incidents in Sindh during the latest spell of monsoon rains, which hit Karachi and some other parts of the province on Aug 10 and continued till Aug 12. Inspector General of Police Dr Syed Kaleem Imam said the police were investigating the incidents and that action might be taken against those found responsible in light of the investigation, it emerged on Wednesday.

According to a police summary detailing casualties/damage during the recent rains, 27 people were killed in rain-related incidents across Sindh, 24 in Karachi alone, while 46 people were injured.

Of the total deaths reported to the police, 18 people were electrocuted in the province. The police data was silent on the age and gender of the victims.

The data obtained by *Dawn* on Wednesday revealed that four persons died from electric shocks in South zone, five in East zone and six in West zone of the Karachi police, totalling 15 from Aug 10 to 12.

Two more persons were electrocuted in the Hyderabad range while another person died in the Larkana range.

A total of 27 deaths in rain-related incidents reported

Thus a total of 18 people died from electric shocks as per the police summary of rain casualties.

The police data stated that only one person drowned during flooding in the West zone of the city. One person was killed by lightning in the Mirpurkhas range.

Roof/wall collapses claimed nine lives — eight in Karachi and one in Hyderabad. Of the eight persons, six died in East zone and one each in South and West zones.

The police data showed that three persons were killed while 26 others injured when the roof of a mosque caved in during Eidul Azha prayers in the Sohrab Goth area.

At least 46 persons were injured during the three days of rain with 43 people having suffered injuries mainly owing to roof/wall collapses.

It has been pointed out that 33 people were injured in Karachi. Of them, 31 were hurt in collapse of structures with 27 persons in East zone of Karachi. The four others were injured in West zone.

Two persons were injured from electric shocks in East zone.

Twelve persons were injured in the Mirpurkhas range with 11 sustaining injuries because of roof/wall collapses while one was hurt in lightning.

At least five sacrificial animals also died after receiving electric shocks in different parts of the city.

Regarding the registration of FIRs over casualties during the recent rain spell, the police report said that only one FIR was registered about the death of three young friends in Defence on Sunday evening.

Police probe

Talking to the media after laying a wreath at the mausoleum of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah to mark Independence Day, Sindh IGP Dr Syed Kaleem Imam said that after a long period, heavy rains had hit Karachi, causing human and property losses.

"The officers are probing the incidents which were reported to the police," said Mr Imam. He hinted that people held responsible/negligent during the probe would be taken to task.

Answering a question, the IGP said that an inquiry into the death of a passerby in Pirabad on Monday during crossfire between the police and an alleged criminal had been initiated and added that "transparency and impartiality" were being given importance in all matters.

Responding to another question, the provincial police chief claimed that "some progress" had been made in the Quaidabad bomb blast and deadly attack on Mufti Taqi Usmani and police were working on it.

(By Imtiaz Ali Dawn, 13, 15/08/2019)

Fourth case registered against K-Electric over electrocution deaths

Another case has been registered against the K-Electric, after which the number of FIRs registered in the recent days has jumped to four. Surprisingly, not a single arrest has been made in any of these cases.

The latest case was registered on the death of 55-year-old Abdul Rehman, who died due to electrocution on the first day of Eidul Azha in Baldia Town. His funeral prayers were offered on Tuesday at Maryam Masjid located near his residence after Asr prayers and he was buried in KMC graveyard on Hub River Road. The deceased was a father of three children.

On Wednesday, a case was registered by his brother, Javed, in Saeedabad police station. The CEO of K-Electric, Moonis Alvi and other regional officers of Baldia Town have been nominated in the case.

The case was registered under Section 322 – intentional murder – of the Pakistan Penal Code. According to the content of the FIR, on August 12, electricity cables broke apart during the rain at 12pm near Abdul Rehman's home and a complaint had been made to the K-Electric by the deceased. The complaint number is also present. When Abdul Rehman entered his house at 3pm, he was electrocuted, due to which he died.

The three other cases against the power utility have been registered in Paposh Nagar, Taimoria and Darakshan police stations. This is the fourth case in which the CEO of K-Electric and other officers have been nominated.
(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 05, 15/08/2019)

Electrocution deaths: Fifth case registered against K-Electric officials

Yet another case has been registered against the K-Electric CEO and other officials of the power utility over the electrocution death of a citizen. This time, the case was registered in Sharae Noor Jahan Police Station and has raised the total number of FIRs registered against the power utility's officials and CEO to five.

A young man, Talha Ahmed son of Nadeem Ahmed, had died after being electrocuted by a K-Electric pole near Shadman Town during the first spell of monsoon rain on July 29. Talha's father approached the Sharae Noor Jahan Police Station on Wednesday night and submitted a written request for the registration of the case.

Based on his complaint, Sharae Noor Jahan police registered the case, 19/202, against the K-Electric CEO Moonis Alvi and other officials on behalf of the victim's father under Section 322 – intentional murder – and other sections of the Pakistan Penal Code.

According to the text of the FIR, the victim's father told the police that he called his son, Talha, on Monday, July 29, at around 7:45 pm, because he was late in coming home from work.

The call was received by someone else and the man talking over the phone said that he was a staff member at the Geo Hospital in Shadman Town. The man asked the victim's father to reach the hospital as his son was unwell.

When he reached the hospital, the administration told him that his son had been shifted to the Remedial Hospital and when he reached there, he was told that his son had died after suffering electric shocks.

The father said that he fainted on hearing the news and his relatives took the body to the KKF morgue near UP Mor. The body was handed back to them after two hours and they were told to bring the police report. The relatives took the body to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital but the medico-legal formalities could not be performed there. They had to keep the body in Edhi Morgue in Sohrab Goth.

The victim's father requested that a case be registered against the senior officials of K-Electric and other relevant authorities because he had been informed that electric current was flowing from an electricity pole on the main road in Shadman Town and it became the cause of Talha's death. The police officials registered the case against the K-Electric CEO and others.

The deceased, Talha, was the eldest among four brothers and had recently started working at a private textile mill after passing his intermediate exams.

KE offers condolence

In a statement issued on Thursday, the K-Electric said it was 'deeply saddened' by the unfortunate incidents which occurred during the recent torrential rain and sympathised with the affected families. It added that it was extending full cooperation in the investigation process with various stakeholders including NEPRA. "The power utility reiterates that it remains committed to Karachi and will undertake required remedial measures in light of the investigation results," the statement reads. "At the same time, KE will also be undertaking a network-wide study to identify opportunities for infrastructure improvement so as to strengthen both reliability and safety of power supply," it adds.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 05, 16/08/2019)

Police fail to act even after 9 FIRs registered against K-Electric

At least two more cases were registered against K-Electric officials, taking the total number of cases against the power utility to nine. The latest two cases were registered in separate police stations – the first at the SITE Super Highway Police Station on

Thursday night and the second at Baghdadi Police Station on Friday evening. Police have, however, failed to make a single arrest or present reports in any of the cases in court.

According to SITE Police, a case was registered against the KE's administration for alleged negligence that resulted in the death of a nine-year-old, Zakir. The child was electrocuted as a result of faulty wiring at Wazir Goth on July 29, during the first spell of Monsoon rains in the city. The case, number 19/487, was registered on the complaint of the victim's father, Ghulam Abbas.

The second case was registered at Baghdadi Police Station over the death of Umair, son of Ilyas, in Kharadar on August 11. The case, number 243/19, was registered on the complaint of the victim's brother, Muhammad Ameen, who has nominated the KE's CEO and other senior officials in the case. According to the complainant, the victim was electrocuted from live cables that were strewn on the footpath, due to which he died on the spot.

Earlier, Malir City Police had registered two separate FIRs over the deaths of two young boys who had died due to electrocution during the first spell of rains.

Police apathy

Two days after case of the electrocution deaths of three persons was registered at the Darakshan Police Station, police officials failed to submit the case report to the court.

The three young victims, identified as Faizan, Hamza and Talha Tanveer, had lost their lives after they were electrocuted from K-Electric wires on August 11.

On August 13, a case was registered on the complaint of Hamza's father, Tariq Mehmood, in which the KE's owner, Arif Naqvi, CEO Moonis Alvi and other officials have been named.

According to the law, the police are supposed to submit the case report of the incident in the court within 24 hours of its registration. However, police have neither arrested any of the nominated suspects nor submitted a report in any of the seven cases.

PTI MPA's presser

Meanwhile, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MPA and famous orthopaedic surgeon, Dr Imran Shah, has said that three children have been badly injured as a result of naked wires in his constituency. "I will consult the federal government in this regard," he said, adding that he would seek measures through which fatal incidents occurring as a result of faulty installations and wiring of the K-Electric during events of rainfall may be avoided.

The PTI leader was addressing a press conference at the AO Clinic in North Nazimabad, where he was accompanied by the family members of 12-year old Adeel, who had sustained burns injuries due to electrocution.

According to Shah, the child had fallen prey to an electric shock as a result of a disjointed wire at the Five-Star Chowrangi in North Nazimabad. The wires stuck to the child's limbs and his body and face was badly affected as result. The news of the fallen wires had been reported at 2pm in the day but the K-Electric staff surprisingly did not reach the site.

"Adeel was brought with serious burns to the AO Clinic and we only thank God that doctors could save his life," said Shah, adding that the child had suffered third-degree burns. The victim is the son of a fruit seller.

KE offers condolences

Meanwhile, the KE in a statement issued on Friday, said it was "deeply saddened by the unfortunate incidents which occurred during the recent torrential rain and sympathised with the affected families".

According to the statement, the KE is extending full cooperation in the investigation process with various stakeholders including NEPRA. "The power utility reiterates that it remains committed to Karachi and will undertake required remedial measures in light of the investigation results. At the same time, KE will also be undertaking a network wide study to identify opportunities for infrastructure improvement so as to strengthen both reliability and safety of power supply," the statement reads.

The power utility added that as per initial reports, the majority of the incidents either occurred inside homes through broken wires and internal equipment or due to non-KE infrastructure such as kundas and hanging lights. "In such cases where KE's infrastructure and equipment is not involved, K-Electric is not responsible" the statement adds.

(By Our Correspondents The Express Tribune, 05, 17/08/2019)

Civic agencies, 'mafias' responsible for majority of electrocution deaths: KE chairman

With at least 33 people having been killed due to electrocution during the recent spell of rains, the K-Electric (KE) has said that civic agencies and various 'mafias' are responsible for the majority of the deaths. The power utility's chairperson, Ikram Sehgal, admitted, however, that two deaths were caused due to the KE's negligence.

Over the last couple of weeks, the power utility has received much flak for its inability to develop its distribution network and the large number of incidents of electrocution. On Monday, *The Express Tribune* sat down with Sehgal, who is chairman of KE's board of directors, to understand the causes and any preventive measures in the pipeline.

In a recent board meeting, said Sehgal, the KE administration had informed him and other board members that “there are only two incidents of electrocution caused due to the power utility’s negligence.”

He added that the recent incident in Defence Housing Authority, in which three young friends were electrocuted from a KE electricity pole, was caused by a cable wire, which had been illegally connected with the KE’s network.

“When we investigated the incident, we discovered that the electricity pole was still live after we had disconnected the power supply,” he explained. “We found that in fact, it was the cable wire that fell and stuck to the electricity pole and caused the incident,” he added.

For Sehgal, the internet and TV cable ‘mafia’ is one of the biggest culprits in the recent incidents.

“According to our investigation, there were at least eight incidents that were caused by illegal cable connections in the recent spell of rain.” In the past, said Sehgal, whenever the KE has attempted to remove the cable wires from the KE’s network, the cable service providers have retaliated by harming the power utility’s infrastructure.

The ‘real’ issue

That, according to Sehgal, is the crux of the matter. He blamed the local bodies and other civic agencies for the deplorable condition of storm water drains, which caused water to accumulate in many areas of the city. “The armed forces managed to save the city from terrorism, but they must now relieve its citizens of these mafias.” The mafias, he claims, have infiltrated local bodies and are involved in installing illegal electricity poles and kundas, besides running TV and internet cable services.

In response to a question regarding the cases registered against him, Sehgal smiled and retorted: “I don’t know why Waseem Akhtar has a problem with me. I have never asked for him to be held accountable for May 12 incidents.”

What is needed, said Sehgal, is better coordination among the various civic agencies and utility service providers. “We should all sit together and come up with solutions for the betterment of citizens,” he added.

Independent survey

The KE, however, does realise that more must be done to prevent such incidents in the future. The board has now decided to enlist the services of an independent surveyor, who will be tasked with investigating each incident of electrocution and come up with a detailed proposal on what preventative measures can be taken in the future. “We will get this done by a reputable independent surveyor so that its findings are beyond reproach.” The findings, said Sehgal, will be available within a month.

Besides the KE’s investigations, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) and the police are conducting their investigations separately into the incidents.

Future plans

With the Shanghai Electric Power Company’s offer for the acquisition of a majority stake in K-Electric from Dubai-based Abraaj Group expiring for the fourth time at the end of this month, Sehgal appeared optimistic that the deal would still go through. “We are still in talks with the Shanghai Electric,” he told *The Express Tribune*. “The real hurdle,” he said, “was that the NEPRA hadn’t announced the multi-year power tariff, which is why the KE couldn’t publish its accounts for the last three fiscal years. Now that this has been resolved, we have already published our accounts for up to 2017, while those of 2018 will be published in September and then 2019 in December.”

Notwithstanding the transaction, the KE is investing heavily in its infrastructure, claimed Sehgal. “Not a single penny we have earned has been taken out of Pakistan,” he insisted. “We have invested heavily in power generation and there are still two 1,600 megawatt power plants in the pipeline,” he added.

(By Adil Jawad *The Express Tribune*, 04, 20/08/2019)

KE seeks to slap additional charges worth Rs16.9b on Karachiites

The K-Electric (KE) has sought the power regulatory authority’s approval to send additional bills worth around Rs16.9 billion to consumers in Karachi and other parts of Sindh and Balochistan on account of surge in price of fuels for electricity generation over the past three years.

The power firm submitted to the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepa) that the surge in the prices of fuel has cost it an additional Rs20.29 billion from July 2016 to June 2019. It would, however, send additional bills totaling Rs16.9b to its 2.5 million end-consumers. The remaining additional fuel cost would be adjusted in line losses during transmission and distribution of the energy.

NEPRA hearing

The KE presented its case before Nepa at a hearing held in the city on Wednesday. Officials of the power regulatory authority, while sitting in Islamabad, heard various stakeholders in the city through video link.

The KE submitted that it could not pass on the surge in fuel prices to end-consumers due to a delayed finalisation of the multi-year tariff (MYT) for the period from 2016 to 2023. The previous seven-year MYT for end consumers expired on June 30, 2016.

One of the stakeholders, an industrial consumer, submitted to the authority that it should not approve the additional billing to end-consumers since the KE has time and again failed to submit the heat rate of its generators [how much electricity is generated in one unit of furnace oil or gas].

"This is one of the essential elements to calculate what is the actual fuel cost of power generation," he said, adding that the power utility has submitted its claims worth over Rs20 billion on end consumers on account of fuel cost adjustment for the past three years while it is yet to submit the required actual heat rate for the prior seven-year MYT that expired on June 30.

"KE has submitted the new claims based on provisional heat rate," he said.

An official at Nepra, speaking on condition of anonymity, told The Express Tribune that it was not necessary that the regulatory authority would approve exactly what the KE had asked for. "The regulator would make its own calculations to find out whether the KE's demand is justified or not."

He did not, however, give a timeline as to when the Nepra would announce its verdict in the case. He said that it could take some time as they would do such calculations for a notably long period of 36 months.

KE version

The KE, in a press statement, said that the variation in fuel cost adjustment occurred, following an increase in the price of furnace oil (FO) and use of imported gas; re-gasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG). The cost of furnace oil was Rs27,700 per ton in June 2016, and jumped to Rs69,600 in FY 2019.

The other major reason for the increase in fuel cost is a reduction in the supply of natural gas from Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC), which has resulted in the addition of RLNG in the fuel mix. The cost of natural gas in June 2016 was Rs613 per MMBTU and with the addition of RLNG in the mix, the cost has jumped to Rs936 per MMBTU in FY19, it said.

Besides the monthly fuel cost adjustment for the past 36 months, the power firm has also submitted its case for quarterly tariff variations as well. The adjustment may also additionally cost the end consumers. It, however, remains to be seen how much the KE has made the claim under this head.

The quarterly adjustments are requested to be made by taking into account adjustments in variation in power purchase price, impact of transmission and distribution losses on fuel charges variation as per the mechanism provided in the MYT and annual adjustment of operation and maintenance, bad debt, base rate adjustment component, other income, depreciation and return components, according to the KE's petition to Nepra.

(By Salman Siddiqui The Express Tribune, 04, 22/08/2019)

Nepra holds KE responsible for 19 deaths

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) on Friday formally held K-Electric responsible for 19 of the 35 deaths from electrocution in Karachi after the two spells of showers in July and August, and started legal proceedings against the power utility.

K-Electric, however, said many of the unfortunate incidents occurred inside homes due to faulty wiring, illegal connections and the unwarranted placement of cable TV and internet cables on electricity poles, encroachment and water logging around power installations.

"According to the investigation committee report, KE has been held responsible for 19 out of 35 electrocution cases and breakdown of power supply for longer duration," said a Nepra statement, adding that a show-cause "notice has been issued to KE" on these charges.

The investigation committee, which had been constituted by Nepra last month under Section 27-A of Nepra Act 1997, submitted its report after detailed field visits and examination of power installations where fatalities had been reported.

The regulator said its team investigated loss of human lives due to electric shocks and suspension of power supply for prolonged duration during heavy rains in Karachi on July 29-31 and August 10-12. "The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority has decided to initiate legal proceedings against K-Electric under relevant provisions of Nepra Act, 1997," the regulator said.

K-Electric blames urban flooding due to rain and encroachment around power installations

Nepra spokesperson Sajjad Akram said the probe team found the KE violating Section 4(g) of Performance Standards and Distribution Rules 2005 that deals with leakage of current and Section 7(3)b under which the utility failed to submit an immediate report to the regulator. Besides, he said, the company was also found in violation of distribution code. He explained that the leakage of current from LT poles indicated that they were not properly earthed.

The probe committee noted that 18 incidents involving 19 fatalities were reported following the July 29-31 rains and the K-Electric was held responsible for 12 of those deaths. The incidents included that of the two young boys widely circulated on social media.

During the second spell from Aug 10 to 12, a total of 13 incidents were reported involving 16 deaths and KE was held responsible for seven fatalities. Nine other persons lost their lives inside their homes or for reasons other than KE. As such, a total of 31 incidents were reported involving 35 deaths, 19 of them due to KE's negligence, according to the investigation committee.

The company will submit its para-wise response to the show cause notice. If the response is found to be unsatisfactory, Nepra is required under the rules to impose a fine ranging between Rs10 million and Rs200m, which would increase at the rate of Rs100,000 per day in case of non-payment. Given the enormity of the loss of lives, there is a likelihood of a maximum penalty besides the compensation to the families of the affected persons.

K-Electric said it was a responsible, law-abiding organisation and will submit its response to the authority in stipulated time. The KE was deeply saddened by the tragic incidents, which occurred during the recent torrential rains and sympathised with the affected families. It is, however, important to mention that many of these unfortunate incidents occurred inside homes due to faulty wiring, unsafe use of electrical appliances or because of kundas and the unwarranted placement of cable TV and Internet cables on electricity poles, a fact which is substantiated by Nepra's initial findings.

However, it said, the KE would undertake required remedial measures in light of Nepra's investigation results though the power utility regularly conducts exercise to identify opportunities for infrastructure improvement and to strengthen both reliability and safety of power supply.

But the power utility continues to highlight that external challenges such as standing water, encroachments around electricity infrastructure, and theft of grounding wires, not only damage KE's infrastructure but also jeopardise the integrity of the electricity system and bypass laid down electrical safety mechanisms, thus, creating public safety hazards. All these external factors, which come under the purview of different civic bodies in Karachi, have a significant effect on the power utility's ability to ensure provision of safe and reliable electricity to its customers.

The power utility is committed to safety and as per Nepra's last State of Industry Report issued for 2018, KE has the third lowest number of incidents. During the recent rains, however, several parts of the city were submerged creating an urban flooding situation and power supply to some of these areas was suspended on the request of district administration in the interest of public safety as water logging around power installations in low-lying areas not only damages utility infrastructure but it also hampers restoration efforts and causes fatal accidents.

The KE has repeatedly requested all stakeholders and civic administration to recognise their due role in providing an enabling environment for the power utility to operate by enforcing basic urban development protocols in a planned manner across the city. (By Khaleeq Kiani Dawn, 01, 07/09/2019)

Three electrocuted to death in Bhitaiabad

At least three persons died and three others were critically injured on Saturday when during a Muharram procession in Bhitaiabad an 'alam' hit an overhead electric wire

The deceased were identified as Mohammad Ali, 35, Haji Khaskheli, 13, and Sono Shahzeb, 18.

Sameer Mir Hasan, 14, Afzal Agha, 22 and Mohsin Shah, 19, were injured in the accident. The victims were residents of Bhitaiabad and Dhani Bux Goth. The bodies and the injured were immediately shifted to a private hospital located in Gulistan-e-Johar. Police said that injured were in critical condition.

The organisers of the procession said that the alam made of the iron hit the electric wire as it was moving from Asgharia Imambargah situated in Bhitaiabad.

The organisers and the area residents alleged that the incident occurred due to the negligence of the K-Electric (KE), saying naked electric wires have not been replaced with covered cables. They also claimed that rescue efforts were carried out by the participants of the procession themselves.

Meanwhile, a spokesperson of the power company said that the alam was struck with an electric wire, saying all electric wires were fixed according to the law. The spokesperson said that the team of the KE was present in the area and was in coordination with the organisers. He also appealed to the citizens to take precautionary measures during Muharram processions. (By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 05, 08/09/2019)

Five die of electrocution as rain pounds Karachi

As heavy rain disrupted life in the city for the fifth consecutive day on Friday, six people died in different parts of the metropolis, five of them of electrocution.



Karachi received 57.5 millimetres, or 2.2 inches, of rain on Friday and the Met Office said more rain is expected on Saturday (today).

The rain played havoc with the ill-maintained transmission and distribution system of the K-Electric as power supply was disrupted in many parts of the city and took hours to be restored.

Hours-long traffic jams on key arteries were also witnessed in the aftermath of the rain. Civic authorities also failed to drain out rainwater accumulated in various city areas including main roads till late in the night.

Electrocution deaths

Two motorcyclists suffered electric shock and died when a live wire snapped from a pole-mounted transformer (PMT) and fell on them near a seminary in SITE.

The wire apparently fell due to the heavy rains, said SITE-A SHO Saleem Awan. He identified the victim as Abdul Rauf, 35, and Abdul Mannan, 45. The bodies were taken to the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital for medico-legal formalities.

The officer said they would wait for victims' relatives for registration of an FIR to pursue the case legally.

Power failures, traffic jams hit the metropolis; the Met Office describes city's weather conditions as a 'bit unusual'

In Moosa Colony, two brothers were electrocuted in the evening. An Edhi Foundation spokesperson said that accumulated rainwater entered a house and a live electric wire fell in the water, killing 11-year-old Javed and 14-year-old Saleem.

Eight-year-old Arman died of electric shock inside his house in Hijrat Colony. The body was brought to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, but the child's relatives took it away without completing medico-legal formalities.



Motorists try to navigate through stagnant rainwater near Governor House in this PPI photo while (right) a similar situation persists in the Korangi Industrial Area on Friday, in this photograph by Shakil Adil.

Boy feared drowned

A boy was feared drowned in the Lyari River that swelled after the rain on Friday evening. Liaquatabad SHO Liaquat Hayat said that some boys were playing at the bank of the Lyari River when two of them drowned near Teen Hatti area. One of them was rescued immediately but the other one drowned.

He said efforts were under way to recover him. He was identified as seven-year-old Sufiyan Karamat.

Meanwhile, a woman suffered an electric shock while walking on a footpath in Boat Basin. She was saved by area people who shifted her to a hospital for treatment.

SSP South Sheeraz Nazeer said that Samia Irfan became unconscious and fell there due to the electric shock. She was shifted to the JPMC from where she got discharged after initial medical treatment.

Meanwhile, a KE spokesperson said that the power utility regretted the loss of human lives in SITE due to electrocution.

Soon after the incident, the KE immediately disconnected the power supply in the area. "The incident was being probed," he added.

Nazimabad receives maximum rainfall

The Met Office said that maximum rain, 57.5mm or 2.2 inches, was recorded in Nazimabad followed by Saddar and Surjani Town, 45mm each; 33mm at Masroor Base; 20mm in Landhi; 27mm in North Karachi, 11mm at Faisal Base, 3mm in Gulistan-i-Jauhar/University Road and 2mm of rain was recorded in Airport area.

The maximum and minimum temperature was 34.3°C and 25°C. The humidity was 84 per cent in the evening.

It said that rain/wind/thunderstorm was expected at isolated places in lower Sindh on Saturday as the region was still under the influence of a low-pressure area built up across the border.

The weather is likely to remain hot and humid. The districts where rain is expected include Karachi, Mirpurkhas, Umerkot, Thatta and Badin.

"The sea breeze and cloudy weather is likely to return by Sunday evening in Karachi. We expect that these conditions could persist till Oct 6 (in the city)," said Sardar Sarfaraz of the Met department.

The month of September was part of the monsoon period in Pakistan, though weather conditions over the week experienced specifically in Karachi could be described as a "bit unusual", he added.
(By Imtiaz Ali Dawn, 15, 28/09/2019)

Power tariff hike

THIS government has now presided over three separate hikes in power tariffs, aside from the regular fuel adjustment surcharges that are revised and updated as per routine. The latest such hike came on Wednesday, when in one go the government notified a 33 paise per unit increase, on top of the 53 paise per unit hike that the regulator had already approved. The additional increase, according to the finance ministry, was to help bear the cost of the subsidy that the so-called 'lifeline consumers' (those who consume less than 300 units per month) receive. In what appears to be a sleight-of-hand move, the government has passed on the cost of that subsidy to consumers, thereby freeing up some fiscal space for itself, and at the same time, turning the country's power sector and its billing and recovery system into even more of a surrogate revenue-collection machine.

These kinds of gimmicks need to be avoided at all cost; whenever the government resorts to them, it needs to be called out on it. Under pressure to keep expenditures down while lifting revenues, the government is behaving like its predecessors as it begins to lean on power tariffs and fuel prices to make some easy billions for itself. When past governments resorted to such practices, they were criticised, not least by Imran Khan himself. But now, the present government itself has retained the benefit of falling oil prices in the global market, rather than passing it on to the consumers who are already weighed down by inflation. Not content with that, it is now passing on the cost of some of the subsidies — and of its own inability to improve system efficiency — directly to the consumers.

Meanwhile, the public is still waiting to learn what the government's big ideas for power sector reform are. We know privatisation will play a role, but there is nothing yet on how the government intends to improve sector governance, or whether pricing reform is even a part of its vision. There is even less knowledge of what is being done to improve transparency in the power sector. These are mutually reinforcing priorities that are needed to put the power sector on the path of self-sustaining growth. Without pricing reform, investment will always be pegged to guaranteed returns. Without improvement in sector governance, there will always be circular debt, higher or lower in some periods than in others but always present. Without transparency, there will be no meaningful improvement in governance. The absence of any vision for power-sector reform makes tariff hikes even more difficult to bear. At this rate, we will be endlessly raising tariffs to pay for system inefficiency, as well as bearing the associated costs, such as subsidising lifeline consumers; thus there will be no real gain. This is not the way to run things, especially in the power sector.

(By Editorial Dawn, 08, 04/10/2019)

Child drowns in park's uncovered water tank; another dies from electrocution

The poor civic infrastructure and negligence of authorities, including K-Electric, continued to claim the lives of people in Karachi as a boy drowned in an open underground water tank in a public park in North Nazimabad and another youngster died from electrocution in the same area on Friday.

Police said five-year-old Rehan came to a park in Block J of North Nazimabad after sunset and was playing with his cousins when he went missing after one hour. The boy's family initially tried to find the youngster on their own.

"However, after failing to find the boy they finally contacted the police," said Inspector Khalid Nadim Baig, the SHO of the Shahrah-i-Noor Jehan police station. "Our team rushed to the park and started a search while we also deputed another team in the neighbouring residential block. During the search, one of our constables found the underground water tank of the park uncovered and called for other colleagues and the boy's family."

Both tragedies occur in the North Nazimabad area

He said the body was finally found in the water tank. There was so much darkness at the site that the family and even the police could not spot it immediately, he said.

"The boy with his parents came to visit his grandparents on vacation from Saudi Arabia a few weeks ago and [was] scheduled to return next week. The family is staying in Shadman Town. The police have assured every possible support to the family. The officials concerned and staff of the park would be nominated in the FIR, which would be lodged on the complaint of the family. They are in a state of shock and grief right now," said the SHO.

Electrocution

In North Nazimabad's Block H, eight-year-old Rizwan died of electrocution.

The boy, police said, was playing with his friends when he unknowingly touched snapped wires of the K-Electric.

Residents said that the power utility was asked to fix the wires after they were broken during some civic construction work.

"The area people said that the K-Electric people did not turn up and most of them were not aware of the threat the wires were posing. The boy, [who] belonged to a very poor labourer's family was playing with friends near Masjid Al Falah when he touched the wire and died instantly," said an official at the Hyderi police station.

In a statement, K-Electric said it was "grieved at the unfortunate incident".

(By Our Staff Reporter Dawn, 15, 12/10/2019)

Electric mobility

The federal cabinet has decided to move forward on a national electric vehicle policy whereby around 30% of the vehicles in the country will be converted to work off electric power. The underlying idea of the government is that this will help cut down our fuel import bill by around \$2 billion while reducing vehicular emissions, thus improving the air quality. The government further believes that it will also help spur the local car manufacturing industry which has been in the doldrums recently.

The idea of introducing electric cars is a longstanding dream for environmentalists everywhere. However, as seen in other countries, electric vehicles and battery technology have only just gotten to the point where travel is feasible and economical. In Pakistan, we face a different conundrum. The first part relates to the manufacture of electric vehicles. For years now, we keep hearing about how students in some of our top engineering universities have built electric-powered cars which can solve many

related problems, but they never arrive in the market. If the claims of the climate change adviser are correct and that car manufacturers are indeed waiting for the new electric vehicle policy, the cabinet's decisions should bode well.

The other part of the puzzle relates to how the government thinks that electric vehicles can cut fuel bill and pollution. We will need to nearly double our current energy production capacity to meet the demands of millions of power-hungry vehicles. Our current power mix is heavily reliant on the combustion of oil and gas. This will only increase if we wish for the rapid electrification of our transportation infrastructure, offsetting any savings we hope to make. This also applies to emissions. A better way to solve the problem will be to improve the mass transit system in the country. The government's thoughts are noble thought, but perhaps they need to come up with a better plan to implement it.

(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 16, 10/11/2019)

KE dubs electrocution deaths a 'natural disaster'

The Sindh High Court sought reply on Monday from Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi Ameer Hafiz Naeemur Rehman's lawyer Usman Farooq while hearing the petition filed against K-Electric (KE). The power utility has submitted its reply before the court. A two-member bench comprising Justice Muhammad Iqbal Kalhoro and Justice Abdul Mobeen Lakho heard the case.

In its reply, KE termed the deaths of citizens due to electrocution during rains as a 'natural disaster'. The power utility stated that natural disasters are sent by the Almighty. According to the power utility, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has taken action over the fatalities due to electrocution and has issued a show-cause notice. KE maintained in its reply that KE's poles and electricity wires are up to the mark but illegal connections, street lights and cable TV wires have been attached to KE's infrastructure. The power utility argued in its reply that the petitioner was not the affected respondent and the petition filed by the JI leader was not maintainable while his allegations were based on lies.

The bench directed the petitioner's lawyer to submit his response to KE's reply by December 5.

The JI leader had filed a petition before the court seeking action against KE over the deaths of citizens due to electrocution during rain in Karachi.

Cryptocurrency

The same bench issued notices to the governor of the State Bank, Federal Board of Revenue chairperson and the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) chairperson while hearing a petition pertaining to the use of cryptocurrency.

The petitioner's lawyer maintained that the ban was enforced by the State Bank on April 6, 2018, and the ban was tantamount to injustice and violation of the Constitution. He argued that developed nations are obtaining massive investments through the digital currency and it is being used in other countries where the courts have directed the government to make laws in this regard. The lawyer maintained that digital currency would increase investment in Pakistan and prayed the court to overturn the ban and direct the government to make laws in this regard.

The petition stated that the use of cryptocurrency posed no threats to national interests.

The court issued notices to the ministry of law and justice, science and technology, and finance, and sought replies from them.

Bail pleas

Meanwhile, a two-member bench, headed by Justice Omar Sial and comprising Justice Zulfiqar Ali Sangi, directed the lawyers of Sindh Assembly Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani and other accused to continue their arguments pertaining to bail pleas of the accused in the assets beyond means case.

Justice Sial inquired why the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had suddenly changed its prosecutor.

NAB prosecutor Sattar Awan said that he was assigned the case and hence he appeared before the court.

The previous prosecutor was giving good arguments and the sudden change is surprising, remarked Justice Sial.

The NAB prosecutor maintained that Agha Masihuddin obtained Rs500 million of the benami assets and benami properties were bought and sold in the names of employees.

NAB submitted transactions of Masihuddin while the investigation officer (IO) informed the court that 40 acres of land was purchased in Munawar Ali's name.

Masihuddin's lawyer said that NAB's questions about the properties had been answered already.

The bench asked why properties were bought in the names of the driver and other employees.

The defence lawyer maintained that people in Garhi Yaseen would come to the Durrani family for the resolution of their issues and would keep forth their properties and money. He added that questions would be answered during the trial.

"Do you call this a black law? No one termed it as black law during lawmaking," remarked the bench.

The defence lawyer said that he did not think it was a black law but NAB officials did not act according to law. The court adjourned the hearing till November 18 and directed the lawyers to continue their arguments at the next hearing. (By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 12/11/2019)

SP issued show-cause notice over IO's failure to file charge sheet against KE

A local court issued on Monday a show-cause notice to a superintendent of police (SP) over the failure of an investigating officer (IO) to file a charge sheet in an alleged electrocution case registered against the K-Electric management.

Mohammad Umair allegedly died after accidentally touching an electric wire on Aug 11 within the remit of the Baghdadi police station.

On the last date of hearing, the court had issued a show-cause notice to the IO for failing to submit a charge sheet in the case despite the lapse of around three months of the incident.

On Monday, the matter came up before the judicial magistrate (South), Abbas Ali Dall, for the submission of the investigation report. However, the IO once again failed to file a charge sheet and requested for more time to do so.

NBW issued for ex-DIG's arrest in an extrajudicial killing case

The judge took notice of his failure to submit a charge sheet after repeated directives and issuance of a show-cause notice to him to furnish a written explanation about the delays.

Therefore, the judge issued a show-cause notice to the SP (investigation) concerned with the direction to ensure that a charge sheet was filed by the IO on the next date of hearing, and set the matter for Nov 19.

According to the contents of the FIR, Umair took his sacrificial animal out in the street on the night of Aug 11 during a monsoon spell in the metropolis.

The victim reportedly touched an electric wire lying on the footpath of the road in Sarrafa Bazaar on Nawab Mohabbat Khanji Road, when he allegedly received an electric shock from it and died on the spot.

The victim's brother Mohammad Ameen had lodged a case against the K-Electric management under relevant sections of the law.

Hearing put off

Meanwhile, an identical case pertaining to the death of three youths allegedly from electrocution in the Defence Housing Authority could not be taken up as the judge was on leave.

Three friends — Talha Tanvir, 28; Faizan Saleem, 25; and Hamza Tariq Butt, 20 — had died allegedly from electrocution on the eve of Eidul Azha on Aug 12.

On Monday, the matter could not be taken up since the judicial magistrate (South), Abdul Raqeeb Tunio, was on leave. The hearing was fixed for Nov 24.

Arrest warrant for ex-DIG

A model court has issued non-bailable warrants for the arrest of former DIG Sultan Ali Khawaja for failing to turn up to testify in a case pertaining to an alleged staged encounter.

Six accused — Faraz Baloch, Hasan Baloch, Zameer Brohi, Sher Mohammad, M. Ayub and Imran — have been charged with alleged extrajudicial killing of Tariq Hussain in September 2015.

Additional sessions judge Haleem Ahmed of the model criminal trial court (East) was set to record the testimony of a prosecution witness, Sultan Ali Khawaja, in the present case.

However, Mr Khawaja, serving as director of the Federal Investigation Agency in Sindh, did not turn up to record his statement.

Taking notice of his absence despite repeated notices, the judge issued a non-bailable warrant for the arrest of the witness. Sindh IG Kaleem Imam was directed to ensure compliance with the warrants on Tuesday (today).

The judge further directed that in case the warrant could not be served on Mr Khawaja, the additional IG of Karachi should appear before the court in person with an explanation for non-compliance with the order.

Mr Khawaja is reportedly the last witness of prosecution to testify in the present case. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 16, 12/11/2019)

Kamal asks Nepra to stop KE from transferring burden of bad debt on to bill-paying consumers

Pak Sarzameen Party chairman Syef Mustafa Kamal has sought immediate intervention of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) into the affairs of the K-Electric, asking it to disallow the power utility from passing on the burden of billions of rupees in the head of defaults or bad debt to bill-paying consumers in Karachi.

The former Karachi mayor also asked the power regulator as to why it was allowing the KE to build what he called 'expensive' new power plants at the expense of its consumers and the national economy.

In a letter sent to the Nepra chairman, Mr Kamal also attached a document written by former KE chairman Ikram Sehgal to the board of directors of the power utility on Oct 21 — about a fortnight before his resignation as KE chairman — in which he asked as to why the KE was “rushing into” setting up two power plants when it can wait till the Shanghai Electric took over.

Rs9.5bn burden on consumers

Mr Kamal said that his party strongly disagreed with a Nepra order that allowed the KE “to claim defaults/write offs” debt from “honest regularly paying consumers”.

Asks Nepra to get vacated a stay order the KE got five years ago against sharing excess profits with consumers

He stated that the collective amount claimed by the KE in this head for financial years 2017 and 2018 was Rs9.5 billion and the power utility was set to pass on this huge burden on its consumers in Karachi and parts of Balochistan. “We request you to disallow this provision with immediate effect,” he stated in the letter.

KE on stay order for five years

Another issue highlighted by the PSP chairman in his letter was related to a stay order the KE got from the Sindh High Court around five years ago apparently to avoid returning parts of its huge profits to its consumers.

“As per KE's Annual Account 2018, Nepra determined that approximately Rs43.6 billion should be returned to the consumers under [claw back of excess profit] head,” he wrote, adding that the KE managed to get a stay order around five years ago; although it was still provisioning about Rs25.2bn in its financial accounts.

“Nepra needs to urgently get the stay order vacated so it can set off this amount against future electricity bills to give corresponding tariff relief to KE consumers,” he demanded.

New plants at expense of consumers, economy

Mr Kamal stated that the KE recently announced two power plants — 900 MW on imported Re-Gasified Liquefied Natural Gas (RLNG) and another 700 MW imported coal-based plant — neglecting the fact that excess and “relatively cheaper” electricity was available in the national pool.

He asked Nepra as to why it was allowing the KE “to build these expensive new plants for the net benefit of their foreign shareholders at the expense of the consumers and national economy”.

For strengthening his argument regarding excess electricity and expensive plants, he attached a letter dated Oct 21 written by Mr Sehgal who stated: “With surplus electricity available in South of Pakistan the projects are not justified.”

Mr Sehgal, who later resigned from the KE's board citing personal reasons, continued: “Why are we rushing into this [the 900 and 700 MW plants] when we can wait till Shanghai Electric takes over and makes the necessary investment? The additional debt will be a huge burden for KE — and ultimately will be paid by the consumers.”

KE's vague reply to Kamal

When Mr Kamal tweeted his letter along with supporting documents, the official Twitter handle of the KE, without confirming or denying anything, replied: “KE is a law-abiding and responsible organization. We are bound to follow tariff approved by NEPRA, and making changes in the electricity tariff is out of KE's purview.”

In an apparent reference to the stay order it got from the SHC, the KE said: “Matters under litigation are also adequately disclosed in financial accounts.”

About the new power plants, the KE told Mr Kamal on Twitter that the Bin Qasim Power Station-III project was part of KE's business plan “formulated after a detailed study to review all possible solutions for increase in the generation capacity including long-term offtake of additional power from the national grid with the objective of bridging the supply-demand gap and decommissioning of its old furnace oil-based Bin Qasim Power Station-I”.

(By Azfar-ul-Ashfaq Dawn, 13, 02/12/2019)

Cops lodge another FIR against KE over electrocution death

Acting on court orders, Nabi Bakhsh Police registered a case pertaining to the death of a young man due to electrocution in Saddar. The case was registered on Monday against K-Electric (KE), the Yaseen Square Committee and its members. The number of FIRs lodged against KE due to electrocution deaths during rain has now reached 12.

Muhammad Kaif, 15, son of Abdul Waheed, was electrocuted to death during rain two days before Eidul Azha. The case was registered on behalf of the deceased's father and nominated KE CEO Moonis Alvi and staff of the power utility company as the accused, among others.

In the FIR, the deceased's father stated that on August 10, 2019, around the time of morning prayers, Kaif, left the house to play cricket and see sacrificial animals in Yaseen Square. At around 9.30 am the father received information that his son had been electrocuted. He said he rushed Kaif to Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital where he was pronounced dead. The aggrieved father added that area residents made several calls to the power utility company but no help came for 45 minutes and stated that a cow was also electrocuted to death in the same incident. He implicated KE CEO and staff, the president of the committee Hussain Naqvi and its management.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 10/12/2019)

KE and safety issues

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority has found K-Electric wanting in ensuring safety of people on several counts and has imposed a fine of Rs50 million on the utility supplying power to Karachi. An inquiry by the regulator has established that 19 deaths had occurred due to lack of earthing of low/high tension poles and leakage of current from the distribution system of KE. A number of people had died from electrocution during the monsoon rains in Karachi in July and August this year. Nepra had started a probe against KE in August and September and has come to the conclusion that the power suppliers were responsible for 19 of the 35 deaths. The regulator said the power utility had failed to fulfil "its statutory obligation to maintain safety standards" and the terms and conditions of its licence.

Nepra has ordered KE to complete earthing and grounding of its distribution network by April 2020 and carry out third-party verification of the work. It has ordered the power utility to complete an internal inquiry and fix the responsibility of its employees/management and submit its final report to it. It has ordered KE to share details of the compensation paid to the families of those who died of electrocution. The inquiry has found that the design of the distribution network of KE does not meet the requirements as laid down in the relevant Code and Manual. The inquiry report says KE allowed telephone/TV /internet cable operators to use its distribution network in a hazardous manner. It says "KEL failed to report fatalities immediately after occurrence to the Authority in a prescribed manner and also failed to restore supply of electricity within the prescribed time limits." It is not clear what compensation amount KE will pay to the families of those who died from electrocution. Will those who suffered temporary or permanent disability as a result of electric shock be also paid any compensation? Nepra and KE should come out clear on this vital issue.

(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 16, 11/12/2019)

KE found guilty of 19 electrocution deaths, slapped with Rs50m fine

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) imposed a fine of Rs50 million on the K-Electric (KE) after its investigations revealed that 19 people were electrocuted to death "due to lack of earthing of LT/HT poles and leakage of current from the distribution facilities of KE".

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the regulatory body also directed the KE to complete the earthing and grounding of its distribution system by April 2020, besides directing the utility company to carry out a third-party audit of its distribution system. The KE has also been directed to complete its internal investigation and fix responsibility on its employees and management and submit its final report to the authority.

The electrocution deaths

Karachi had received heavy rainfall between July 29 and 31, and then again between August 10 and 12, earlier this year. According to the statement issued by NEPRA, the regulator had come to know through print and electronic media that scores of people lost their lives due to electrocution and power supply remained suspended for long durations during these days. Subsequently, the authority had initiated a formal investigation to ascertain the facts and causes of fatalities and determine whether any violation of NEPRA laws had been committed by the KE.

On Tuesday, NEPRA announced its investigation committee's findings, which held the KE responsible for 19 out of 35 electrocution cases and breakdown of power supply for long durations in Karachi.

In its statement, the Nepra said that among other violations of terms and conditions of KE's license and NEPRA laws, 19 fatalities occurred due to lack of earthing of low tension and high tension electricity poles and leakage of current from the distribution facilities. Therefore, the authority had decided to initiate legal proceedings against the KE. The power utility was also given the opportunity of a hearing. Based on the evidence available on the record, submissions of KE and relevant provisions of the laws, the regulator issued its order on Tuesday.

The order

In its order, the power regulator has observed that the KEL has failed to discharge its statutory obligation to maintain safety standards and ensure that distribution facilities do not cause leakage of current. "Design of distribution network of KE does not meet the design requirements as laid down in the relevant code and manual," the order states. "Moreover, KE allowed telephone/TV/internet cable operators to use its distribution network in a hazardous manner for their purposes. Further, KE failed to report fatalities immediately after occurrence to the authority in a prescribed manner and also failed to restore the supply of electricity within the prescribed time limits," it adds.

The authority has also considered the submissions of KE to give reasonable compensation to bereaved families in good faith. "The authority has required KE to fulfill its commitments to provide compensation to bereaved families at the earliest and in this regard provide documentary evidence to the authority," reads the order.

In response to the order passed by the power regulator, KE spokesperson Khayyam Siddiqi said that the power utility would submit a review with the NEPRA regarding the recent decision on the unfortunate incidents in Karachi.

"K-Electric is a law-abiding and responsible organisation which ensures compliance with all respective regulations and guidelines and is committed to providing safe and reliable power supply to its customers," said Siddiqi.

"There are a number of primary and underlying external factors that compromise the integrity of the power infrastructure," he continued. "These include illegal kundas, unauthorised use of power infrastructure by cable TV and internet service providers and standing water around electricity infrastructure. These factors bypass electrical safety mechanisms thus creating public safety hazards. KE feels that these factors warrant serious attention," Siddiqi explained.

He added that the KE continues to regularly conduct kunda-removal drives across the city and this year alone removed more than 200,000 kilograms of kundas. The power utility has written to Karachi Commissioner and the PEMRA Chairman, requesting that necessary measures be taken before the next monsoons to prevent water-logging and enable the power utility to provide the best service possible, said Siddiqi.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 11/12/2019)

Nepra slaps Rs50m fine on KE for 19 deaths

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) on Tuesday imposed a fine of Rs50 million on K-Electric (KE) Ltd after holding it responsible for 19 of the 35 deaths from electrocution in July-August in Karachi amid heavy rains.

The regulator also ordered the power utility to ensure complete earthing and grounding of its distribution system by April 2020 and submit a compliance report with third party verification.

Nepra said it also considered the submissions of the KE to give reasonable compensation to the bereaved families in good faith and that details of such compensation paid to the families of the victims should be shared with it in due course of time. The regulator said the KE was required to "fulfill its commitments to provide compensation to the bereaved families at the earliest and provide documentary evidence".

As Karachi experienced heavy rainfall from July 29 to July 31 and then again between Aug 10 and Aug 12, Nepra took notice of the media reports that scores of people had lost their lives from electrocution amid showers.

The regulator then started formal investigations into the deaths of 35 people and prolonged suspensions of power supply.

Power utility likely to seek review of regulator's decision

Among other violations of the terms and conditions of KE's licence and Nepra laws, the investigation revealed that 19 fatalities occurred due to lack of earthing of low-tension and high-tension (LT/HT) poles and leakage of current from the distribution facilities of the KE.

Therefore, the regulator decided to initiate legal proceedings against the power utility and a show-cause notice was issued to the KE under Sections 27-B and 28 of the Nepra Act, 1997. The KE was also given an opportunity of hearing. Based on the evidence available on record, submissions of the KE, and relevant provisions of the laws, the regulator finally passed an order for imposition of fine.

In its order, Nepra observed that the KE had failed to discharge its statutory obligation to maintain safety standards and ensure that distribution facilities do not cause leakage of electric current. Design of distribution network of the KE also did not meet the requirements as laid down in the relevant code and manual, the regulator said.

Moreover, the KE allowed telephone, TV and internet cable operators to use its distribution network in a hazardous manner for their purposes. Further, the KE failed to report fatalities immediately after occurrence to the regulator in a prescribed manner and also failed to restore supply of electricity within the prescribed time limits.

Therefore, the regulator imposed Rs50m fine on the KE, directing the power utility to complete earthing and grounding of its distribution system by April 2020 and to carry out third party verification of its distribution system. The KE was also directed to complete its internal investigation, fix responsibilities on its employees and management, and submit a final report to Nepra in this regard.

KE spokesperson Khayyam Siddiqi said the utility would seek a review of Nepra's latest decision. He said the company would review the Nepra order in detail and submit an appropriate reply, as it was a law-abiding and responsible organisation, complying with all respective regulations and guidelines and providing safe and reliable power supply to its customers.

The spokesperson claimed that there were a number of primary and underlying external factors compromising the integrity of the power infrastructure. These include illegal kundas, unauthorised use of power infrastructure by cable TV and internet service

providers and standing water around electricity infrastructure. These factors bypass electrical safety mechanisms, thus creating public safety hazards.

The threat to public safety and increased accidents due to these factors are well-acknowledged in this region, resulting in multiple drives to remove them from the power infrastructure. One example is to shift these cables underground.

Following the urban flooding caused by unprecedented rains, the KE filed a constitutional petition in Sindh High Court in October against cable TV and internet companies, the city administration, municipal bodies and relevant regulators, the spokesperson added.

The KE said the power infrastructure was continuously being encroached upon by cable TV and internet service providers.

The power utility had requested the city administration and relevant civic bodies to ensure action against encroachments in Karachi. At the same time, it said, there was also a need to address issues, including swift drainage of rainwater around power infrastructure and support in combating illegal connections and unwarranted use of the infrastructure.
(By Khaleeq Kiani Dawn, 03, 11/12/2019)