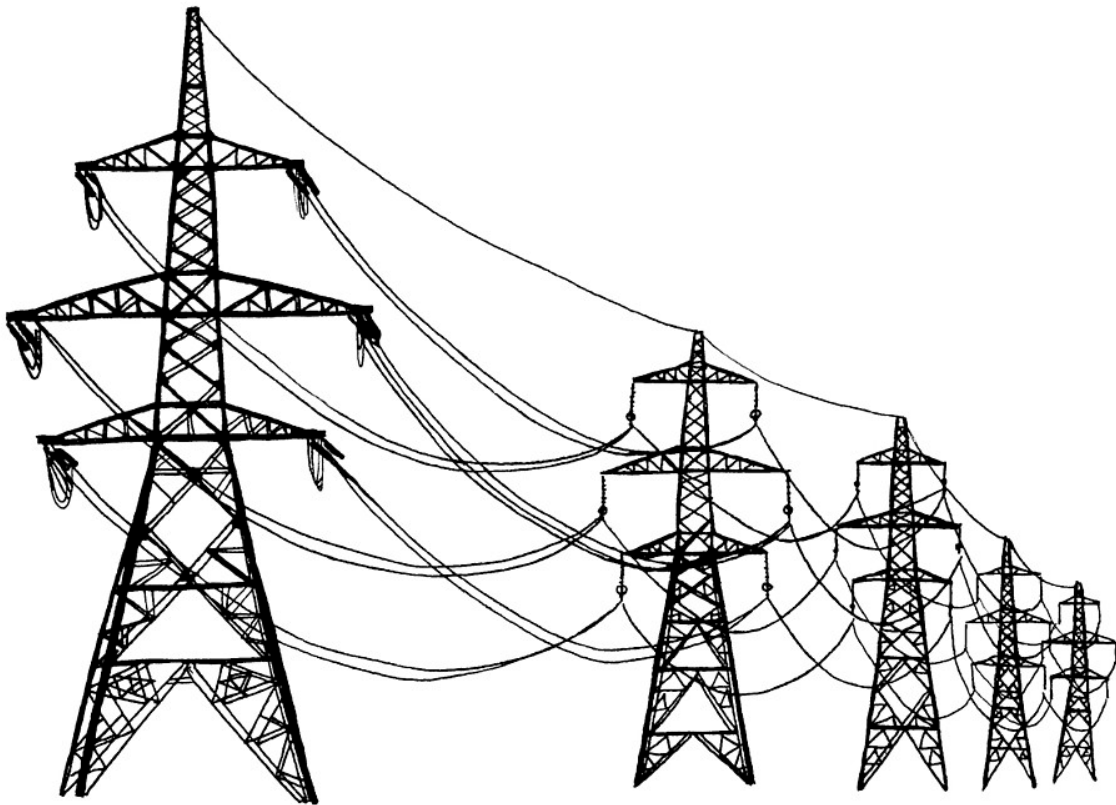


NEWSCLIPPINGS

JULY TO DECEMBER 2020

ELECTRICITY



Urban Resource Centre

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Boy electrocuted after touching pole

A 12-year-old boy was electrocuted on Thursday, said police and hospital officials. They added that Shahzeb Ilyas died when he touched an electricity pole near Jamal Garden at Dawood Chowrangi.

The body was taken to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre to fulfil medico-legal formalities.

Area SHO Rai Akmal said that the relatives of the deceased told the police that they didn't want any legal proceedings.

Fish trader shot dead

A fish trader was shot dead by suspected robbers over putting up resistance in Rehri Goth early on Thursday morning, said police and residents.

They added that Ayub Seth was killed inside his home in Moosani Mohalla.

Kamal Shah, representative of the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, said the victim was a trader of shrimps. Quoting the family members, Mr Shah said that around six suspects entered the home at about 2am and took people in the house hostage at gunpoint.

However, Ayub put up resistance upon which they initially beat him and later on opened fire on him. The fish trader sustained critical bullet wounds while the robbers escaped.

Ayub was taken to the JPMC, where doctors pronounced him dead on arrival.

The PFF official said that a six-member gang was active in the area looting homes and shops.

He recalled that four homes of fish traders and two shops had been looted recently.

Man commits suicide

A 30-year-old man committed suicide in Saeedabad on Thursday, said police.

They added that Rashid Ali ended his life inside his home near Bismillah Chowk by shooting himself to death.

The body was taken to the Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi to fulfil medico-legal formalities.

Area police officer said it was a suicide, but its motive could not be ascertained immediately.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 10/07/2020)

Generator sales shoot up in Karachi due to loadshedding, prolonged power cuts

Prolonged loadshedding by K-Electric in residential areas coupled with rising temperatures in the last several days has boosted the sales of generators in the metropolis.

Dealers said many people were buying generators because their loved ones suffering from Covid-19 were in home isolation and could not afford to stay at home without electricity.

Sikandar Shahzada, the owner of a generator company, said he had been selling 30-40 portable generators on a daily basis these days compared to two to four units around two weeks back.

While recalling bad sales days in the same period last year due to improved power supply and very high prices of generators, he said the current heat spell had compelled many people to buy a one kVA portable generator to at least light up fans and LED bulbs even if they had to borrow money for this.

He said frequent and long spells of loadshedding were highly alarming for those who did not have money to buy generators and were looking after a Covid-19 patient at home.

Traders say people are even borrowing money to buy a unit to take care of relatives suffering from Covid-19

Stable prices despite devaluation

He said that the prices of generators had so far not risen this year despite continuous devaluation of the rupee against the dollar. "Shopkeepers have old stocks of last year and they want to clear it at any cost.

"Loadshedding and heatwave are now proving to be a blessing in disguise for such traders in clearing their last year's unsold stocks," he said.

Mr Shahzada said compared to Karachi power loadshedding was so far under control in Punjab, while Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were also experiencing power cuts.

He said people were moving towards solar panels though their installation cost was higher.

Pakistan Machinery Merchants Group president Khurram Saigal said buying activities in power generating machines had revived with high pace. He said the activity remained sluggish last year and shopkeepers were worried about the pile-up inventory of last year.

"Shopkeepers have been selling an average 10 units a day in the last one week as compared to two to three units prior to power cuts and rising temperature," he said.

He also confirmed that the generators' prices had remained unchanged since last year despite higher import cost on account of rupee depreciation against the dollar.

But, there are many consumers who cannot afford to purchase generators due to rising cost of living and especially when they are looking after coronavirus patients at home who need uninterrupted power supply to avoid any serious situation.

He said people were buying one kVA generator (Rs18,000-Rs24,000) to 2.5kVA (Rs35,000-Rs45,000) units mostly of Chinese brand. Some people were also purchasing 6kVA generators for running their air-conditioners.

According to the figures released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Pakistan's total import of power generating machines in July-May 2019-2020 came down by 7.6 per cent to \$1.097 billion.

(By Aamir Shafaat Khan Dawn, 13, 11/07/2020)

'No more unannounced power cuts in Karachi'

There will be no unscheduled electricity load-shedding in Karachi from tomorrow (Sunday), announced Federal Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar on Saturday, claiming that the government had increased furnace oil and gas supply to K-Electric (KE) – the private power utility that supplies electricity to the provincial capital.

He said this while addressing a news conference alongside Sindh Governor Imran Ismail and KE CEO Moonis Abdullah Alvi, following a meeting between government officials and representatives of the power utility to discuss the city's power woes.

"KE will be supplied 290 million cubic feet of gas. All units of the Bin Qasim Power Plant will be made operational and the majority of the city will get an uninterrupted power supply," he assured citizens. According to him, KE was previously receiving 190 million cubic feet of gas.

The minister further said that the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Neptra) would fix responsibility for the prolonged power outages currently occurring in the metropolis, adding that increasing the supply of oil did not mean the petroleum ministry was responsible for the load-shedding.

According to Umar, the federal government had recently decided to give an additional 550 megawatts of power to the city by summer next year, followed by increases of 800MW each in the next two years. "Karachi will be given a total of 2,150MW of additional energy by the summer of 2023," he added, claiming that power generation would be boosted by nearly 70 per cent.

He stated that they had told Alvi that the Centre wanted to help KE resolve the issues for Karachiites. "However, if this is still not done, we will use the full force of the law to make sure the people are not deprived of electricity. The federal government can take over KE if it does not improve its services," he went on to warn, stating that the government was responsible for resolving people's grievances. "Previous governments privatised KE, but Karachi has not been privatised."

Umar added that Neptra would also make a decision about compensation for those who had been electrocuted to death in last year's monsoon rains.

A day earlier, the KE had held the federal government responsible for prolonged power outages in the metropolis, claiming that the government is not providing it required quantity of oil and gas.

"The required quantity of oil and gas is not provided to the KE, which results in low production of electricity. The federal government also did not allow us to install the projects which were approved in 2016," Alvi had stated on Friday.

Rebuttal

Dismissing Umar's statement, Sindh Energy Minister Imtiaz Ahmed Shaikh said his words would make no difference to the load-shedding occurring in Karachi.

"Federal ministers are making a failed attempt to save KE, but their statements will only surface for a few days," he said, adding that an increase of 100 million cubic feet of gas would do no good to the citizens because the power utility was already receiving 190 million cubic feet of gas.

Shaikh further claimed that power outages had increased because of a shortage of furnace oil at KE – resulting from the ban on the fuel's import by the Centre – and added that the masses had to bear the consequences of conflicts between institutions.

He pointed out that several localities in the city were witnessing up to 16 hours of load-shedding a day, while the supply of gas to CNG stations and industries was suspended in the attempt to increase provision to KE. This, he asserted, could deprive thousands of people of their jobs.

"The federal ministers are heaping more financial trouble on the people instead of admitting their failure and incompetence," he argued, adding that the protest being held by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders outside the KE head office was in fact a protest against the policies of the federal government led by their own party.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 12/07/2020)

Centre to take over KE if performance not improved, warns Asad Umar

The K-Electric came under fire on Saturday when federal authorities rejected its claim that it was carrying out loadshedding in the city because of supply shortfall and warned that the federal government could take control of the power utility if it failed to improve its performance.

The warning came at a meeting jointly chaired by Sindh Governor Imran Ismail and Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar here at Governor House.

They came down hard on senior KE officials who briefed the key leaders of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government about the reasons behind the recent power crisis.

The meeting was also attended by PTI legislators from Karachi and other members of the federal government through video link. "The shortfall allows loadshedding just for an hour in the city but the KE keeps supply suspended for six and seven hours," a statement quoted the Sindh governor as telling the KE, which claimed to have faced a shortfall of 250 megawatts.

Governor Ismail feels the power utility is more interested in its profit margins instead of consumers

"The federal government provided everything and met every demand of the company but it has badly failed to bring any improvement. The federal government still offers an additional supply to the KE from the national grid but its system cannot afford more than 720 megawatt," he said.

He said the company over the years had not made any investment to build capacity and now the people were being punished for its ineffective policies.

'KE is more concerned about profits'

"It seems the KE is more concerned about its profits instead of its consumers," remarked the Sindh governor.

He added that the federal government was supplying 4,500 tonnes furnace oil to the company and it could offer another 500 tonnes. "If there's the issue of gas pressure at the Bin Qasim Power Plant, it can be run on furnace oil," he said.

Growing protests by political parties, heightening anger among consumers and persistent poor performance of the KE attracted the attention of Prime Minister Imran Khan, who on Thursday directed his team to meet the company's management and fix the problems being faced by Karachiites.

The intervention from the top came after Sindh Governor Ismail met the prime minister in Islamabad the other day to brief the premier on the ongoing electricity crisis in Karachi and the situation that emerged across Sindh against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic.

Just a day after his directives, Federal Minister Umar landed in Karachi and held a meeting with the KE management along with the Sindh governor conveying serious warning to the power utility.

"The KE needs to plan for the future on a fast track," he said. "The peak hour demand of Karachi stands at 3,500MW to 3,600MW. The KE has to plan to include 2,100MW in its system in the next three years. If situation doesn't improve, the federal government would take over the KE," came the point-blank warning.

The warning from the federal government came after weeks of protests by political parties, including the PTI which rules the centre. With the Jamaat-i-Islami and Pak Sarzameen Party calling upon the chief justice of Pakistan to take notice of unannounced loadshedding and overbilling by KE, the PTI for the last several days has been staging a sit-in outside the utility's head office, demanding an end to its monopoly on electricity generation, transmission and distribution.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan — an ally of the PTI government at the centre — has also announced that its parliamentarians would hold a protest demonstration against KE in Islamabad on July 14.

At the Governor House meeting, the KE management also came up with its plans for the future and briefed about the reasons behind the recent crisis, which were mostly rejected by the federal government.

"The KE is supplying 2,950MW to the city and facing a shortfall of 250MW," the statement quoted a KE official as telling the briefing. "By the end of next year, the KE would add 800MW in the system. The company also plans to add 800MW each in 2022 and 2023."
(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 15, 12/07/2020)

Load-shedding and Karachi

Karachi and power load-shedding seem inseparable. This link has been intact for the last forty years — yes, load-shedding in the metropolis is an early 80s phenomenon — and does not look like going away anytime soon. The Karachi Electric Supply Corporation became K-Electric over the years, but it turned out to be a mere change of name. There is hardly any change in its performance and efficiency. The power infrastructure remains so vulnerable that it cannot even withstand a very small amount of rain and a little bit more power load. The company that was only restricted to supplying power is now allowed to produce it too, but the shortfall persists. Despite all this the power bills continue to inflate.

The citizens of Karachi, thus, continue to suffer. For domestic consumers, it may only mean personal suffering in the form of restless days and insomniac nights. But for commercial and industrial consumers, it means loss of business — something that also results in fall in government revenues. If not for the sake of poor consumers, the federal government should have taken a proper action for the sake of its own revenues and fixed the issues long back. Prime Minister Imran Khan has, thankfully, swung into action. He has mobilised his best aides — Federal Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar, Sindh Governor Imran Ismail and Special Assistant Shahzad Qasim — to address the issue of loadshedding in Karachi and provide relief to its citizens who are simultaneously suffering from rising temperatures and the coronavirus lockdowns.

On Saturday, the trio met the K-Electric management as well as others including the representatives of Nepra, the business community and the citizens. The all-inclusive huddle ended with a piece of good news for Karachiites — that K-Electric will be supplied with additional amounts of power, gas and furnace oil, and load-shedding will, therefore, come to an end forthwith. While this announcement from Asad Umar is welcome, his government is also required to focus on other serious issues — such as the weak infrastructure and higher transmission and distribution losses — which hinder uninterrupted power supply to a city which is the economic engine of the country.

(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 14, 13/07/2020)

‘KE to invest \$2b in system in next three years’

Apologising to citizens for extended load-shedding in the metropolis, K-Electric (KE) CEO Moonis Alvi claimed the power utility planned to invest \$2 billion on its infrastructure in the next three years.

Addressing a press conference on Wednesday, Alvi said the company planned to invest in a 900 megawatt RLNG power plant, as well as upgrading its infrastructure.

He pointed out that the Centre had also committed to expedite infrastructure upgrades for the national grid, so that KE could receive an additional 300MW of power in 2021, further 400MW in 2022 and 800MW in 2023. This, he said, would allow KE to put in place large-scale power projects that would give the metropolis a power surplus.

According to Alvi, the city's power demand was around 3,500MW, but KE could only supply 3,200MW at the moment. "The situation would have been different if we had been granted permission to install a 700MW power plant in 2016."

He also claimed that load-shedding was in line with the National Power Policy, 2013, and was carried out entirely on account of power theft. "We did not carry out load-shedding from March 20 to May 28. And even in areas with extremely high levels of power theft, load-shedding does not exceed 8 hours," he said, adding that they informed customers of load-shedding beforehand.

"Sometimes faults or tripping can occur but we fix them on priority basis even with the pandemic creating workforce challenges," Alvi went on to say.

Regarding complaints of overbilling, he asserted that the power tariff was set by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) and KE could not increase or decrease it. "The federal ombudsman had 30 offices in Karachi to handle overbilling complaints, but 99 per cent decisions end up in our favour," he added.

Alvi also refuted reports that KE used cheaper fuel for power generation. He further added that the power company was owed Rs267 billion by the Centre, Sindh and their subsidiaries.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 05, 16/07/2020)

NAB begins probe against KE over outages, deal violation

As the government decided not to increase tariff of K-Electric (KE) immediately but in phases, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) took notice on complaints of frequent unannounced loadshedding and overbilling in Karachi and ordered initiating an inquiry against the company.

The decision to increase the KE tariff in phases was taken at a meeting presided over by Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday. The meeting discussed the issue of KE tariff and gas prices and the prime minister decided to apprise the people of the factual position of increasing the power tariff.

Federal ministers Shibli Faraz, Pervaiz Khattak, Dr Fehmida Mirza, Aminul Haq, Asad Umar, Omar Ayub Khan and Mohammedmian Soomro, PM's advisers Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh and Dr Ishrat Hussain, National Assembly Deputy Speaker Qasim Suri, Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan and PM's special assistants Dr Shahbaz Gill, Nadeem Babar and Shahzad Qasim attended the meeting.

The meeting was informed that power tariff was increased countrywide in January this year on the recommendations of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra), but that of KE was not raised and the federal government was paying a subsidy of Rs3-4 billion per month to the company.

It was told that local gas production was insufficient to meet the country's needs, compelling the government to import gas and there was a clear difference between the prices of local and imported gas. The meeting was apprised that only 27 per cent of the country's population was being supplied piped gas at a low cost, while the rest was using LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) by paying a far higher price.

The prime minister directed the authorities concerned to prepare a comprehensive strategy to provide relief to the masses and emphasised the need for finding a durable solution to the problem through consultation.

NAB chairman retired Justice Javed Iqbal ordered an inquiry against K-Electric on complaints about frequent unannounced loadshedding in Karachi, overbilling and violations of an agreement with the federal government for developing the power utility's infrastructure.

"NAB Karachi will initiate the inquiry while taking notice of public complaints and media reports about prolonged power outages and overbilling worth 'billions of rupees' on part of KE," the anti-graft watchdog announced.

K-Electric is also accused of "not complying fully" with an agreement it had reached with the federal government under which the company was required to carry out necessary investment for developing its supply system on modern lines.

According to a press release, the bureau chairman directed the NAB Karachi to obtain a copy of the agreement reached with KE, details of investment made by the company and other relevant documents. Justice Iqbal said that NAB being a "national institution" believed in performing its duty as per the law and it would "not allow" KE to seize billions of rupees from the citizens through alleged overbilling and violate the agreement.

He directed the NAB Karachi to complete the inquiry against K-Electric within three months so that those looting the public could be brought to book as the bureau believed in accountability without any discrimination.

The people of Karachi have been enduring prolonged loadshedding since the start of the current sizzling heat amid coronavirus smart lockdowns in several parts of the city.

Nepra had on Friday last week formed a committee to visit Karachi and probe complaints about "excessive" loadshedding by KE. The power regulator had taken notice of the complaints had last month and directed KE to submit a detailed report in this regard. Nepra sprang into action after many residents took to the streets in protest against power outages and blocked main roads and highways to bring the issue to the notice of the relevant authorities.

The ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf had also launched a protest campaign and staged a sit-in outside the KE head office earlier this month to protest "atrocities" of the power utility, demanding an end to its monopoly on electricity generation, transmission and distribution and vowing to approach Nepra and the Supreme Court against KE.

On Wednesday, KE Chief Executive Officer Moonis Alvi claimed that the loadshedding being carried out in Karachi was in line with the National Power Policy 2013 and on account of power theft.
(By Syed Irfan Raza Dawn, 01, 17/07/2020)

NAB inquiry against K-Electric ordered

National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman Justice (ret'd) Javed Iqbal, while taking notice of media reports and public complaints against the K-Electric, on Thursday ordered an inquiry against the power utility for flouting of the agreement with the government of Pakistan.

He directed the NAB Karachi to investigate reasons for unscheduled load-shedding, overbilling and violation of agreement. The agreement bound the K Electric to invest in modernising the electricity generation and transmission system but it had failed to honour the agreement.

The chairman directed the NAB Karachi to obtain the copies of agreement, relevant documents and details of the volume of investments promised in the agreement and complete the inquiry within three months so that those responsible could be tried.

The chairman said: "NAB is a national institution which believes in working as per law. NAB will never allow K-Electric to fleece billion of rupees from the consumers through overbilling, resorting to unscheduled load-shedding and blatant violation of the agreement. NAB believes in accountability sans any discrimination."

Govt defers decision to increase power tariff for K-Electric

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday deferred the decision to increase the power tariff for K-Electric by Rs2.79 per unit on the opposition of the federal ministers.

The premier directed the authorities concerned to supply electricity to Karachi from the national grid until the resolution of K-Electric issues.

The prime minister was briefed on the agreement between the government and K-Electric and power crisis in Karachi as he chaired a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Energy.

The meeting also mulled over the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC's) decision to increase the price of energy for K-Electric consumers.

Federal ministers Asad Umar and Aminul Haq opposed the idea of increasing the power tariff after which the premier deferred his decision in this regard.

The premier was informed that the federal government had offered an additional supply of electricity through the national grid, however, the K-Electric system could afford more than 720 megawatts.

He was further told that the K-Electric had been provided 4,500 tonnes of furnace oil and an additional 500 tonnes had been offered.

Deliberating on the matter to fix the gas price, the meeting was told that local gas production was insufficient to meet the needs of people which forced the government to import the commodity.

The meeting was apprised that only 27% of the country's population was being supplied piped gas at low cost, while the rest was using the LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) and paying a far higher price.

The prime minister instructed for a comprehensive strategy to provide relief to a major chunk of the population and emphasised for a durable solution to the issue through consultation.

Federal ministers Shibli Faraz, Pervaiz Khattak, Dr Fehmida Mirza, Aminul Haq, Asad Umar, Omar Ayub Khan and Mohammadmian Soomro, while advisers Abdul Hafeez Sheikh and Dr Ishrat Hussain, National Assembly Deputy Speaker Qasim Suri, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mehmood Khan, and special assistants Dr Shahbaz Gill, Nadeem Babar and Shahzad Qasim attended the meeting.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 01, 17/07/2020)

Citizens demand reversal of KE privatisation, shutdown of illegal hydrants

At a press conference held at the Karachi Press Club on Saturday, the Shehri Awami Mahaz, comprising citizens of Karachi, demanded that K-Electric's privatisation be cancelled and it be placed under democratic control of the citizens and more than 100 illegal hydrants in the city be shut down immediately.

The power and water mafias have taken 20 million citizens of Karachi hostage. Water scarcity and power outages have left the citizens suffering from mental and physical ailments, the activists pointed out.

Nasir Mansoor, secretary general of the National Trade Union Federation, said Karachi has been suffering from the inflicted punishment of two big mafias for long, and these mafias have the blessings of major political parties and powerful circles.

'Power and water mafias have taken 20 million citizens of Karachi hostage'

He said the privatisation of the KESC in 2005 was a "fraudulent" deal. General Pervez Musharraf, Shaukat Aziz and Karachi's "false" representatives were directly involved "in this robbery". The company, whose shares were valued at Rs9 per unit at the time of privatisation, was sold for Rs1.60 per share, causing a loss of more than Rs70 billion to the exchequer. This major power company was sold for only Rs15.8bn.

He said the privatisation of KESC (renamed K-Electric) is tantamount to recognising the IMF's dominance by handing over important public resources to foreign traders. On the occasion of privatisation of state-owned enterprises, it was said that state subsidies placed an undue burden on the exchequer, but despite handing over the KESC to a private party, the government was giving it an annual subsidy of Rs41bn. So far, the state has given more than Rs600bn in subsidies to K-Electric. Despite the huge state subsidies, the people had been waiting for proper supply of electricity for 15 years.

Mr Mansoor added that the group that had taken over KESC in 2005 announced that it would invest \$1bn to improve the power transmission system, but even 15 years later it had not been done. Currently the situation was that the country's largest city was intentionally plunged into darkness, unannounced loadshedding of 10 to 12 hours has become the fate of 22 million citizens in the sizzling heat and lockdown.

He said that despite the lack of electricity, overbilling was a tried and tested weapon of KE that had made citizens mentally ill. Through the same "criminal method", the KE had made a profit of more than Rs17bn this year, which was 40 per cent more than the previous year. Despite the protests of the people, the present government had allowed KE to increase the tariffs of electricity in phases. KE had immediately increased the tariff of electricity by Rs2.8 per unit.

Comrade Gul Rahman, convener of the Workers Rights Movement, said KE had installed meters that were faulty and did not conform to international standards. The government, NAB and Nepra had given the KE a free hand of lawlessness and arbitrariness

because its owner, Arif Naqvi, was considered the closest friend of the current ruling oligarchy. He had provided huge funds to the party in power to run the election campaign.

Khaliq Zadrán, chairperson of the Lyari Awami Mahaz, said that like the KE the water mafia had made the lives of the citizens of Karachi “worse than hell”.

Zehra Khan, general secretary of the Home-Based Women Workers Federation, said that more than 100 illegal hydrants were earning Rs90bn annually by selling people’s share of water to the citizens. Currently the water tanker mafia was making more money than the drug mafia.

Nisha Rao, president of the TransGender Rights Society, deplored that the city, provincial and federal governments were constantly showing a lack of seriousness in resolving Karachi’s problems.

Aqib Hussain, president of the National Youth Committee, said that at a time when all parties had left citizens at the mercy of the mafia, it had become imperative for the people to organise themselves to achieve their basic rights.

On behalf of the citizens of Karachi, the Sheri Awami Mahaz demanded that privatisation of the KE be cancelled and it be given under the democratic control of the citizens, the increase in electricity tariffs be withdrawn and overbilling be stopped.
(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 19/07/2020)

Nepra issues show cause notice to KE over loadshedding

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) issued a show cause notice to K-Electric on Tuesday over excessive loadshedding and began the process for similar proceedings against two other distribution companies of the federal government operating in Sindh.

The Karachi-based power utility was issued the show cause notice after a day-long public hearing a few days ago, followed by a field visit by an investigation team of Nepra to Karachi. The regulator said in a statement the investigation committee constituted to look into the excessive loadshedding in Karachi had submitted its report.

“In the light of findings of the investigation committee, the Authority has decided to proceed further and issue a show cause notice to K-Electric,” the regulator said in its brief statement.

An official said the show cause was necessitated under sections 28 and 29 of the Nepra Act and licencing rules for failing to ensure uninterrupted power supply to consumers and maintain service quality.

Meanwhile, the Nepra held public hearings into complaints against the Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (Hesco) and the Sukkur Electric Power Company (Sepco) over loadshedding and overbilling. A flood of complaints came in from consumers during the public hearing, presided over by Chairman Tauseef H. Farooqi.

Power regulator plans action against two distribution firms in Sindh

The Nepra is in the process of holding public hearings against seven distribution companies (Discos) of the federal government, including Hyderabad, Sukkur, Peshawar, tribal districts, Quetta, Lahore and Multan on a daily basis.

On the first day, the public hearing pertained to Hesco and Sepco.

Chief executive officer of Hesco Abdul Haq Memon conceded five to six hours of average loadshedding while high-loss areas were subjected up to 12 hours of power cuts.

He said loadshedding was worked out on the basis of system losses and unannounced loadshedding had been controlled.

Chairman Farooqi observed that he had received letters from the Sindh government over the relentless loadshedding. Mr Memon said there were some problems during the rainy days and a number of transformers went out of order.

He said there was no loadshedding on feeders supplying power to hospitals and overall loadshedding in his company was lower than last year.

Sindh Energy Minister Imtiaz Shaikh told the Nepra that loadshedding in Hesco and Sepco areas had now gone up to 18 hours and thanked the regulator for holding a public hearing.

He suggested that the regulator launch an investigation into the Hesco and Sepco’s performance on the pattern of K-Electric.

Mr Imtiaz said he did not want to give a political colour to the people’s suffering, but the fact was that loadshedding was a very serious issue in Sindh and the two companies (Hesco and Sepco) had not been able to draw even their allocated electricity quota from the national grid.

He said the regulator had also highlighted in its report that Hesco and Sepco had surrendered 200-300mw of their quota instead of utilising it for the benefit of their consumers.

The companies should disconnect illegal connections instead of punishing all the consumers, the minister added.

He said an impression was growing in the province that the centre was not willing to provide electricity to the people of Sindh.

Hesco officials said FIRs were not being registered on the complaint of the company staff against power theft and action was not being taken even if FIRs were registered.

Consumers' complaints

A number of consumers complained against the two Discos. The complaints mostly pertained to announced loadshedding, overbilling, poor response to complaints and corruption.

For example, a representative of Shaheed Benazirabad Chamber of Commerce said linemen had turned into millionaires, but consumer problems were not coming to an end.

He said not only unannounced power cuts had become routine but also overbilling was rife.

Another businessman said the national grid had enough electricity, but Hesco was unable to supply it to consumers due to distribution constraints.

A woman complained that she was a cancer patient and had been visiting Hesco office for four years for redress of her grievance, but the matter was not resolved.

The Nepra chairman asked the woman to send the entire record to the regulator and stop visiting any other office as he would resolve the matter and asked Hesco to send her file to the regulator's headquarters.

The chief executive of Sepco said attempts to eliminate loadshedding were hitting roadblocks due to the "kunda culture" and non-recovery of bills.

He conceded that power cuts had gone up to 12 hours.

The Nepra chairman questioned as to why the Sepco was not drawing its full electricity share. The Sepco CEO replied the power supply to high-loss feeders had to be curtailed to minimise financial losses.

He said it was a continuous battle as the staff keep on removing illegal connections that return shortly and electricity theft cases were not being registered.

Mr Imtiaz Shaikh asked the CEO to give him reports as to which police stations they went for registering FIRs against electricity theft but were not entertained. He sought a list of "electricity thieves" so that the provincial government could intervene and ensure registration of FIRs.

(By Khaleeq Kiani Dawn, 01, 22/07/2020)

K-Electric's licence should be suspended: SHC

The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Friday directed the K-Electric (KE) to end unscheduled load-shedding and remove illegal connections from across the city.

A two-member bench, comprising Justice Khadim Hussain M Shaikh and Justice Arshad Hussain Khan, was hearing a plea seeking the disconnection of illegal connections and an end to power cuts in exempted areas.

Justice Shaikh observed that everyone in Karachi was complaining about the power utility, adding that the lives of Karachi's people had been rendered miserable by illegal connections and unannounced power outages. "In such a situation, KE's licence should be suspended," he remarked.

To this, the KE lawyer responded that many areas had been cleared of illegal connections, whereas new wires had also been installed.

However, Justice Shaikh remarked that the connections still existed, as did the menace of unannounced load-shedding.

The KE counsel informed the court that there were many areas their teams could not access, adding that residents often reinstalled illegal connections after their removal.

"How can an ordinary citizen set up an illegal connection with the new wires? What action has the company taken against electricity theft?" inquired the bench, adding that the KE administration was "useless" if people could reconnect their suspended illegal connections so easily.

Directing the KE to put an end to unannounced load-shedding and remove illegal connections from the city and stop unannounced electricity load-shedding, the court sought a progress report on August 25.

On July 17, National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman Justice (retd) Javed Iqbal ordered, while taking notice of media reports and public complaints against the K-Electric, an inquiry against the power utility for flouting the agreement with the Government of Pakistan.

He directed NAB Karachi to investigate reasons for unscheduled loadshedding, overbilling and violation of agreement. The agreement bound the K-Electric to invest in modernising the electricity generation and transmission system but it had failed to honour the agreement.

The chairman directed NAB Karachi to obtain the copies of agreement, relevant documents and details of the volume of investments promised in the agreement and complete the inquiry within three months so that those responsible could be tried.

Ever since the power outages began this summer, the private power utility has held the federal government responsible, claiming that the government is not providing it required quantity of oil and gas.

However, the Ministry of Energy had repeatedly rebutted KE's claims stating that K-Electric's claims of fuel shortage were wrong, insisting instead that the power utility company has failed to enhance its system.

Garbage in the city

Separately, the same bench directed the petitioner to nominate the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) as a party in a plea pertaining to accumulated garbage and dirt around the city, while seeking a reply from the local government deputy secretary.

Justice Shaikh expressed dismay over pictures of garbage piles, presented by the petitioner in court.

"The city's condition is very disappointing," Justice Shaikh remarked. "Should a city like Karachi be treated this way?" He added that political parties, when not in power, claimed that they would work to improve matters if given an opportunity, but forgot their responsibilities when they came in power.

The Sindh government's counsel maintained that the district municipal corporations (DMC) and Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) were responsible for collecting garbage in the city.

Justice Shaikh observed that the KMC had been complaining that it was not receiving the necessary funds and authority, adding that the filth in the city would lead to an epidemic one day.

Asking the government lawyer why the provincial government was not issuing funds to KMC, he noted that none of the authorities bothered to appear in court for an explanation despite being summoned.

However, the local government deputy secretary appeared in court.

Upon being asked who was responsible for cleaning garbage from the city, he maintained that this was the duty of the DMCs and KMC, adding that the government could take action against them if they failed to do so.

Irrked at his reply, the court inquired about the action taken by the government against the relevant bodies so far.

The additional advocate general argued that the SSWMB was equally responsible for collecting garbage in the metropolis but had not been nominated in the plea.

The court directed the petitioner to nominate SSWMB and adjourned the hearing till July 29, ordering the local government deputy secretary to submit a reply after removing garbage from the city.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 25/07/2020)

Sindh Assembly demands KE's forensic audit, more power companies in Karachi

Condemning the K-Electric for prolonged and unannounced loadshedding in Karachi, the Sindh Assembly on Monday unanimously demanded the provincial government to approach the federal government for actions against the power utility including its forensic audit.

The provincial assembly adopted two separate resolutions pertaining to the electricity crisis in the province, also seeking exemption of taxes and levies on the import of solar power equipment and permission for other power utilities to work in Karachi.

Through a joint resolution, the house called upon the provincial government to approach the federal government to conduct a forensic audit of the KE and ask it to end prolonged loadshedding in Karachi.

The joint resolution, moved by Mohammad Hussain Khan of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) and Tehreek Labbaik Pakistan's parliamentary party leader Mufti Mohammad Qasim Fakhri, also condemned the power utility for suspending power supply in the city.

PTI boycotts sitting after speaker disallows opposition leader from discussing city's situation after rains

Initially, the lawmakers through their joint resolution had asked the federal government to revoke KE's licence. However, the draft was later amended when MQM-P member Khawaja Izharul Hassan pointed out that the cancellation of licence would further pile miseries on Karachiites as there was no other electricity providing company in the city while thousands of employees were also working in the power utility.

The MQM-P member also moved another resolution demanding the provincial government to approach the federal government for allowing other power utilities to work in Karachi.

"It would make competition amongst the companies and eventually would benefit the citizens," he said.

Through yet another resolution, Mr Khan of the MQM-P asked the federal and provincial governments to soften taxes and levies imposed on solar energy equipment.

All resolutions were adopted unanimously in the absence of lawmakers belonging to the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf.

PTI boycotts proceedings

The PTI members earlier boycotted the proceedings when the chair did not allow the request of Leader of the Opposition Firdous Shamim Naqvi for having a debate on the civic condition of the city in the wake of a recent spell of monsoon rains.

The opposition leader was of the view that issues pertaining to the destructions and havoc caused by the recent rains in the city warranted a thorough discussion as people wanted to know when the city would be safe for them.

He also took exception of absence of the local government minister in the house and deplored that the minister was addressing a press conference instead of attending the assembly session.

"We have been waiting for him here for over two and half hours to have a discussion on the city situation," he rose to tell the speaker and left the house along with other PTI members saying they would come back when the LG minister joined the proceedings.

Wearing mask at public places mandatory

The house unanimously passed 'The Sindh Covid-19 Emergency Relief (Amendment) Bill, 2020' making it mandatory for all to wear face masks at public places for a prescribed period to mitigate the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The bill also asked organisations to approve paid leave for employees infected with the deadly virus.

"Any person employed at any establishment who is tested positive for Covid-19 shall be allowed paid-leave for the period he remains in isolation and shall follow the operating procedures prescribed by the health department," a clause of the bill read.

It added that during the isolation period, the government shall provide financial assistance to daily wage earners who tested positive and follow the standard operating procedures.

The assembly also passed 'The Sindh Safe Cities Authority Bill, 2019', 'The Sindh Wildlife Protection, Preservation, Conservation And Management Bill, 2020' and 'The Drugs (Sindh Amendment) Bill, 2020'.

LG law has 'sufficient financial autonomy'

The provincial assembly was informed that the Sindh Local Government Act (SLGA) 2013 had sufficient financial autonomy and the provincial government was working on further reforms and improvements on the financial side of the law.

Replying to lawmakers' written and verbal queries during the Question Hour in the house, parliamentary secretary Salim Baloch on behalf of the LG minister submitted that two laws — the Sindh Local Government Ordinance-2001 and SLGA-2013 — could not be compared with each other because the former had an entirely different premise or foundation as it attempted to bring all government departments in the district under the command of nazim.

"The system failed and all the provinces in the country refused to continue and enacted new laws," he added.

To a question by PTI's Khurram Sher Zaman, he denied that the Sindh Building Control Authority was taking minimum actions against illegally constructed buildings in the province.

He further stated that three to four actions were being taken on a daily basis against illegal and unauthorised buildings.

"As per record of nine months, the SBCA has demolished more than 644 unauthorised construction sites," he said.

To another question by Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal's Syed Abdur Rasheed, the parliamentary secretary said it was not fact that thousands of criminals had been appointed in the LG department.

He also said there was no amenity plot encroached in district South during 2017 and 2018.

46 dangerous buildings in district Central To another question by PTI's Adeeba Hasan, Mr Baloch said that some private agencies were doing bottled water business in Karachi. "There is no policy under the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board to issue them licences," he said, adding that the policy in this regard was being formulated under the orders of the Supreme Court.

Replying to another question, he said that as many as 46 buildings were declared unsafe/dangerous for human habitation in district Central.

Giving a break-up, he said that there were two such buildings in New Karachi, three in North Nazimabad, nine in Gulberg Town and 32 in Liaquatabad Town.

Mr Baloch said that ejection notices had been issued to the occupants of these buildings and such information was also publicised through newspapers.

In reply to a question asked by MQM's Rashid Khilji, he said that a scheme for "improvement and enhancement of sewerage system in ... in Hyderabad with a cost of Rs414.14 million got approved from the competent authority" and the provincial government had released an amount of Rs25.88m.

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 28/07/2020)

Karachi being provided with cheapest electricity in country, claims Omar Ayub

Federal Minister for Power, Petroleum and Natural Resources Omar Ayub on Wednesday claimed that electricity supplied to the port city by the national distributor is the cheapest in the country.

During a National Assembly session chaired by Speaker Asad Qaiser, the minister informed the House that the electricity supplied to K-Electric (K-E) through the national distribution system has the lowest national tariff when compared to other power distribution companies.

Ayub added that "we have to rationalise this tariff while the members of Sindh [assembly] have recommended reducing K-E's fines."

While responding to question, the power minister said K-E has also been asked to build a 500kV grid to ensure smooth distribution of power from the national grid.

"We are supplying 850 MW of electricity from the national grid. K-Electric did not order oil on time but we provided facilities to them," he said.

The minister further quoted the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) saying that K-E did not make any investment in its grid system and no work has been done on the system during the previous years.

"Our focus is to provide transformers in rural and urban areas," he said. "K-Electric's LNG plant will come online next year which will bring improvement."

Minister Ayub also congratulated the National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) for transmitting 23,300 MW of electricity, which is the highest number achieved till date.

Later, Speaker Qaiser directed the power minister to draft a feasibility report for further improving the country's distribution system.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 03, 30/07/2020)

KE performance

THIS is apropos the letters 'Merge KE with national grid' and 'KE incompetence' (July 14). I fully agree with the views expressed by the writers. K-Electric performance and dealing with its consumers are deteriorating day by day.

It has been noted with great concern that, in spite of the pathetic performance by the company, it is now recovering billions of rupees from its customers on account of fuel adjustment charges as well as these charges related to 2018 and 2019.

The people of Karachi have been compelled to pay these charges in the monthly electricity bills for the last several months on the threat that non-payment will mean electricity disconnect.

In view of its poor performance and the way it is cheating consumers, it is time KE was nationalised or else the federal government should take over its management. The earlier a decision is taken by the government in this regard, the better it would be for Pakistan and Karachi.

Abdul Bari Khan

Karachi

(From the Newspaper Dawn, 07, 01/08/2020)

KE highlights 451 hazardous locations

K-Electric has recently written to the city commissioner highlighting monsoon-caused challenges, including waterlogging and fallen trees, that compromised utility service provision.

The power utility emphasised that these issues resulted in extended outages in some areas due to electricity infrastructure being damaged or inaccessible and requested for the administrative support to address these city challenges ahead of expected rains on August 6 predicted by the Meteorological department to be more intense than before, a statement issued by the utility said.

In its letter to the commissioner, the KE mentioned that its teams faced an uphill task of restoring power to 222 locations, including Delhi and Punjab Colonies, Khadda Market, Badar Commercial, SITE industrial area, main University Road, Korangi, Sohrab Goth and more, due to overflowing and blocked storm-water channels which result in rainwater accumulation.

The power utility requested for coordinated support from the PDMA and commissioner office for expedited drainage support.

The power utility also highlighted the issue of snapped power lines and damaged PMTs on account of trees falling on power lines and urged “professional and urgent support” from city administration for pruning of oversized trees to avoid risk to life and property at 229 locations, including West Wharf, Karachi University, Khayaban-i-Shaheen and Ziauddin Chowrangi.

The letter also talked about the “pervasive” issue of internet and TV cables which encroach on electricity poles and “cause electrocution incidents”.

The power utility complained that the network operators had not started work as committed by them, and urged the commissioner for intervention to ensure public safety.

The safety challenges of illegal streetlight switches placed on power poles and generator wires draped on electricity infrastructure were also highlighted.

The KE assured the commissioner of its intention to continue removing these hazards.

At the same time K-Electric requested the commissioner for a permanent solution to these challenges in coordination with deputy commissioners, KMC/DMC and Cantonment areas.

As the city’s sole power supplier, “KE prioritises the safety of its customers and the delivery of its service promise above all else”. The statement said: “With the next spell of rain expected from August 6th onwards, KE looks forward with working together with the city government in mitigating damage to life and property alike.”
(From The Newspaper’s Dawn, 14, 06/08/2020)

Seven die from electrocution as rain continues to lash Karachi

At least nine people were killed, seven of them electrocuted, in the city where downpour on Friday continued to play havoc with Karachi’s ill-maintained civic infrastructure as accumulation of rainwater caused a traffic mess on major arteries coupled with hours-long power breakdowns.

According to the Met department, the fourth spell of monsoon rains is expected to continue on Saturday (today).

Several flights were also cancelled and those which were due to land in the metropolis were diverted to other cities due to bad weather.

By Friday evening, the maximum rainfall recorded was 68.5 millimetres, or 2.69 inches, at PAF Masroor Base, Gulshan-i-Hadeed 60mm, Saddar 50mm, Keamari 49.8mm, 47mm at Faisal Base, 44.6mm in Nazimabad, 37.5mm in Landhi, 35mm in Surjani Town, Old Airport 30mm, University Road and Gulistan-i-Jauhar 35.5mm and 19mm while 23.9mm was recorded in North Karachi.

Seven die from electrocution

A 24-year-old woman was electrocuted in Baloch Colony.

Area SHO Ihsan Channa said Farzana Hanif died when she suffered an electric shock inside her home in Junejo Town. The body was shifted to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre for medico-legal formalities.

Two boys drown; wet weather to last till Sunday; city faces traffic mess, flight disruption, power outages

Kaiser Nawaz, 18, died of an electric shock at a shop in Landhi No 4, said an Edhi Foundation spokesperson.

In Lyari, a 30-year-old man died of an electric shock on a street near Jangian Hotel in Chakiwara, said a Chippa spokesperson. The body was shifted to the Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi.

Eight-year-old Anas Shakeel died when he suffered an electric shock as he touched an electric pole near City Courts. The body was shifted to CHK.

Jawad Zubair, 20, died of electrocution when he stepped in rainwater accumulated near the Burnes Centre of CHK.

A man, Mohammed Bilal, 27, died of electric shock in Model Colony when he reportedly touched an electric pole. The body was brought to the JPMC.

A young man, Mansoor, died of electric shock in Gulshan-I-Iqbal’s 13-D, according to rescue services.

Two drown

A 12-year-old boy drowned in a pond filled with rainwater in Surjani Town.

The police said some boys were swimming in the pond in Sector 7-D when Talha Tanzeem, 12, drowned.

In another incident, a six-year-old boy was feared drowned in a drain in the Banaras area of Orangi Town, the Edhi Foundation and Pirabad police said.

SSP-West Fida Husain Janwari said that they got information about drowning of the boy in a storm-water drain.

Edhi Foundation spokesperson said late at night that their divers stopped rescue operation due to darkness at Banaras and it was believed that the boy had died.

Prolonged power cuts continue

Amid other challenges, Friday's rain again brought painful experience for Karachiites who suffered hours-long power outages due to failure of the K-Electric in maintaining uninterrupted supply of electricity.

The power breakdowns, which started on Thursday afternoon when the downpour first started, continued on Friday as large city areas remained deprived of power by KE.

People from a number of areas including Malir, Landhi, Korangi, Federal B. Area, Gulistan-i-Jauhar, Saadi Town, Gulshan-i-Iqbal, North Karachi, Nazimabad, North Nazimabad, Manghopir and Orangi Town reported hours-long power outages in their neighbourhoods.

Residents of DHA Phases 4, 5, 6 and 7 told Dawn they had no power since late Thursday night. Residents in Phase 4 have had no power since 19 hours. KE's customer service representatives told them these areas are under "safety shutdowns".

A resident of Gulistan-i-Jauhar said the electricity went off as the rain started on Thursday evening. "Although we received power for a few hours in the middle of the night, it was fully restored after more than 24 hours", he said.

"KE officials told us the main reason for the prolonged outage was a change of feeder to Pehlwan Goth. Bisma Residency's regular feeder has been undergoing an 'overhaul' since July 26, they said," he added.

A resident of Korangi's Allahwala Town told Dawn that power went off at 4pm on Friday in his locality and was yet to be restored when this story was filed late Friday night.

Rain system to end tomorrow

The cloudburst came in the second half of the day in most parts of the city where the rains came with lightning, thunder and strong winds.

The moderate to heavy rain continued in different areas of the city leading to inundation of various roads and low-lying areas. The weatherman says the trend will continue on Saturday with the system starting to weaken in the evening.

"Actually, there're two monsoon systems, which have led to almost non-stop rain after 2pm in different parts of the city and other parts of southern Sindh," said a Met official. "We see the current system continuing on Saturday. From Saturday evening it would start weakening and fizzle out by Sunday afternoon or a little later."

(By Dawn Reporter 13, 08/08/2020)

'Loadshedding to continue if high-loss areas not improved

Should K-Electric (KE) consumers expect a loadshedding-free Karachi in the next two, five or 10 years? The simplest response could very well be 'not any time soon' but the chief executive officer of the power utility had an elaborate reply.

"Inshallah we see the next year to be better than this year and the year after that would be even better," said Syed Moonis Abdullah Alvi, the KE CEO, while responding to a question by [Dawn](#) during a meeting with journalists from the publication.

A more detailed response entails looking deeper into the phenomenon called loadshedding/load management/power interruptions (all very different from one another, as a company rep explained) that has held the citizens of Karachi hostage.

But before we can get our hopes high, Mr Alvi quickly said: "[Loadshedding ho ge](#)" (loadshedding will continue). He went on to add: "If the high-loss areas are not improved, loadshedding will continue. If the demand-supply situation is normal, out of the 1,860 feeders, loadshedding will continue on 400."

Complaints termed 'noise'

Mr Alvi, a chartered accountant who has been with KE for well over a decade, shares peppy anecdotes when it comes to power outages in Karachi.

Moonis Alvi says by 2023 Karachi's 90pc area will be loadshedding free

From the reaction of a flight full of MNAs including Federal Planning Minister Asad Umar who viewed Karachi from the top as the aircraft landed and commented [*yeh to bara acha roshan hay*], to taking daily 11pm calls with his distribution team to discuss problem areas, he dismissed complaints as “noise” and said it’s more to do with “perception”.

“Asad Umar laughed and said I must have turned it on to show the city is [*roshan*],” said Mr Alvi while recalling the flight story.

Sharing yet another anecdote, this time about a “very senior people group” on WhatsApp, he said a member wrote on the group that he didn’t have electricity since four hours. Some members replied that it didn’t go off even for a second, with one saying he is a satisfied customer. “I responded that 90 per cent people in this group are satisfied customers. We don’t expect them to write anything but it means they are satisfied.”

“We are getting complaints from 10 people out of the 250. [*Woh das log jo hay noise ho jati hay*] (those 10 people create noise),” he added.

The Facebook and Twitter accounts of KE are rife with complaints from consumers.

The company said there were 1,860 feeders in Karachi and some 500 feeders were off when it rained for three hours last month. “Some 250 feeders are switched off due to safety reasons to prevent harm in congested areas, kunda connections are there and there is a chance that the live wire will fall and lead to a tragic incident,” Mr Alvi said.

However, the company claimed that it was working on improving the situation. It has identified areas across the city and is providing meters, which cost Rs5,000, for Rs100.

90pc of city to be loadshedding free by 2023

“We tell people to come on net and not go for [*kunda*]. In areas like Orangi, Korangi, Nazimabad we have done this and turned them into low-loss areas. Next year, we plan to improve six more areas in the city. By 2023 we aim to go 90 per cent loadshedding free from the current 73pc,” said Mr Alvi.

“The investment should be two way. If we are giving people electricity and there are high losses due to thefts and we are still profitable, it means tariffs are not right. The tariffs are high,” he quips. To provide relief to high-loss areas, power supply to industry was shut off, even then the load was high. Between June 20 and August 6, loadshedding was not done by closing down a plant to save oil.

“We bear losses in areas where there is power theft but I was telling my people to let the relief continue,” he claimed.

When asked if KE would exempt these high-loss areas from power outages in this sweltering heat and humidity, particularly at night, on humanitarian grounds, the CEO said, “Power will be shut off when there is no power available. For instance, there is a load of 3,000 MW and supply at that hour is 2,700 MW, shedding will take place.

“We are doing what we shouldn’t be doing. This is a commercial entity. The people who pay 100 per cent bills and do not indulge in thefts, we end up suspending supply to them and diverting power to areas where power theft is rife — sometime up to 60pc,” he claimed.

“Plant generation is maximum but the load is high. Who do we shed? Industry is shut down. There is still gap. These areas are already facing seven to eight hours daily loadshedding during the day,” the CEO acknowledged, adding that low-loss areas were shed so that relief can be provided in high-loss areas.

“We are responsible that the situation has aggravated. We are responsible but we aren’t responsible alone,” he said, adding that KE had informed that the demand would hit 3,800MW this year.

“We are facing criticism for the 900MW project but we are going ahead with it anyways,” he said, sharing that he took industry representatives to Bin Qasim and showed them the plant. “I told them they should bear with it (loadshedding) this year,” stressing things will improve in Karachi.

The utility insists that all the issues — predominantly loadshedding — faced by the citizens are down to regulatory issues and delays involving other stakeholders. The key takeaway here is that if you are an average Karachiite, be prepared to grin and bear it. Since rain started around 4pm on Aug 6, many parts of the city plunged into darkness for hours. Many consumers had no power well after 16 hours. Feel free to blame it on the weather or your luck.

(By Sumaira Jajja Dawn, 13, 08/08/2020)

Police ‘misuse’ of power

The police kill people who want to break the law and also when they themselves want to break the law. Off and on, cases of police brutality occur in different parts of the country when the police shoot and kill without warning on mere suspicion. The police shot dead a 38-year-old man, Aslam, and wounded his friend Waqar, aged 26, when, according to the police, they were seen quarrelling on a street near I I Chundrigar in Karachi. The DIG Karachi South also claims that the cops in a mobile van fired on the men on suspicion. A witness, however, says Aslam and Waqar were merely talking and frolicking when the police van stopped close to them. After the policemen pointed their guns at them, they raised their hands but the police opened fire on them, adds the witness. Aslam died. Waqar was injured. According to a high-ranking police official, the two cops and the police

van driver have been arrested. He has held out an assurance that a thorough investigation would be carried out and those found guilty would be punished. We have only to wait and see.

In recent past, several such incidents have occurred in Karachi and other parts of the country, and it is generally seen that the government and police officers pledge a thorough probe into such tragic incidents. However, the investigation process moves at such a slow pace that the general public soon forgets the incident given the fact that public memory is proverbially short. Their consciousness is awakened only after another such brutality takes place. This, however, does not mean that those involved in killing people on mere suspicion always go scot-free. Of course, those misusing their power do get punished. Unfortunately, a senior police officer, who carries the high-sounding sobriquet of an 'encounter specialist', and is accused of killing a young man named Naqeebullah in a fake encounter in Karachi, remains on the run for several years.

(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 14, 09/08/2020)

Four more electrocuted as rain continues in city for third day

At least seven more people were killed, four of them electrocuted, in different parts of the city in rain-related incidents on Saturday, increasing the death toll to 17 in three days of the current spell of rains.



Of the 17 deaths, 11 people died from electrocution in the three days.

The city continued to receive moderate to heavy rain for the third consecutive day on Saturday while the Met department saw the current spell of monsoon downpour fizzling out by Sunday evening.

KE claims no electrocutions due to its infrastructure; Nasir Shah says flood situation not created anywhere

While key roads including University Road and parts of Sharea Faisal were flooded with rainwater despite much-trumpeted cleaning of storm-water drains, the electricity crisis that began on Thursday afternoon when the downpour started continued on Saturday in many city areas with people complaining about lack of electricity for more than 16 hours.

Deaths from electrocution

A six-year-old boy was electrocuted in North Karachi. Area SHO Salman Shah said that the boy touched a pedestal fan with bare foot and suffered an electric shock.

In Ittehad Town, 18-year-old Shada Pervez was electrocuted when he touched a wall of his home. The area SHO said that electric current penetrated the wall because of a live wire.

Amin Hasan, 45, died when he suffered an electric shock inside his home in Gulistan-i-Jauhar, according to a Chhipa spokesperson. Mansab Munir, 30, died when he suffered an electric shock on the road while passing through Jodia Bazaar, said Edhi Foundation spokesperson. The body was shifted to the Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi (CHK).

Meanwhile, in a statement issued here a K-Electric spokesperson claimed on Saturday that Friday's seven electrocution incidents occurred due to "damaged non-KE wires, water motors and illegal use of kundas".

The spokesperson insisted that no electrocutions happened due to KE's infrastructure.

Two die in roof collapse

Two persons died in a roof collapse incident in Pak Colony.

Area SHO Rehmatullah Khan Marwat said that labourers Mohammad Anwar, 40, and Raza Mohammad, 45, were busy in repair of a house in Magsi Mohalla of Jehanabad when the roof collapsed and fell on them.

He said that the continued rain had damaged the house and the owner was trying to reinforce its structure when the tragedy occurred.

The bodies were shifted to the CHK for medico-legal formalities.

Teenager drowns

A 14-year-old boy drowned in the Malir river on Saturday afternoon. Malir SSP Irfan Bahadur said that the boy, identified as Asad, reportedly drowned while swimming in the river at Jam Goth.

Edhi divers continued to search for him till evening. It was feared that the boy might have died.

Meanwhile, rescuers said that the body of a six-year-old boy, who drowned in a storm-water drain in Banaras on Friday, was retrieved near Dhobi Ghat. He was identified as Shahzeb.

The rain on Saturday mainly started in the second half of the day in most parts of the city with thunder and strong winds. The moderate to heavy rain continued in different areas of the city intermittently leading to inundation of various roads and low-lying areas.

By Saturday evening, according to the Met office, the largest count was recorded in Surjani Town where 42 millimetres, or 1.65 inches, rainfall was recorded. In Gulshan-i-Hadeed and Saadi Town 36mm rain, PAF Masroor Base 32mm and Faisal Base 30mm, North Karachi 24.7mm, Nazimabad 6.8mm, University Road 15mm, Jinnah Terminal 15mm, Keamari 8.7mm and at Old Airport 26mm rain was recorded.

The fresh spell of rains, which started on Thursday evening, flooded the roads resulting in traffic jams and turned low-lying areas into swamps.

The intermittent rains have flooded large sections of University Road, Sharea Faisal, including the notorious Natha Khan portion, MA Jinnah Road and Shahrah-i-Pakistan besides several other roads, where hundreds of vehicles were stuck with vexed and irritated commuters inside.

No flood situation in city: info minister

However, Sindh Information Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah claimed the overall situation of the city was much better than the previous rains. Despite the intensity of rains, he said, no flood situation was created anywhere.

“During the continuous heavy rains in the city, we keep visiting different areas of the city and continued to give instructions to the local government officers and staff on various issues,” he said in a statement.

“Despite the heavy rains, the timely strategy and successful coordination policy of the Sindh government proved effective and led to better post-rain situation in the city compared to previous years,” he said.

“The condition of the city is better and different than before. I am in constant touch with the chairmen of all the DMCs and also gave orders to the water board chief to install dewatering machines at specific places. The staff of water board, DMCs, solid waste board have been permanently engaged in public services in all low-lying areas, choking points, sensitive places,” said Mr Shah, who is also the province’s local government minister.

He said that the places where water had accumulated temporarily were cleared before night and all areas including Sharea Faisal, Gulistan-i-Jauhar, Abul Hassan Ispahani Road, Gulshan-i-Iqbal, Rashid Minhas Road were cleared in time.

He also appealed to the people not to go out of their homes unnecessarily and stay away from electric poles and electrical appliances.

(By Dawn Reporter 13, 09/08/2020)

Four electrocuted in different incidents in city

Four people were electrocuted in separate incidents in the city on Sunday, officials and rescue services workers said. A man was electrocuted in Ibrahim Hyderi on Sunday.

Police said Pappu Chetan, 65, died when he suffered an electric shock at Charan Para in Ibrahim Hyderi.

The body was taken to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) for medico-legal formalities.

In another incident, a six-year-old boy was electrocuted in Sharifabad, Liaquatabad, said a Chhipa spokesperson.

He said that the boy was playing outside his home on Saturday night when he received an electric shock and died.

A teenager was electrocuted in Korangi Industrial Area on Sunday evening, said police and hospital officials.

Ehtesham Ahmed, 19, died when he suffered an electric shock at Malik Riaz Karkhana in Mehran Town near Godam Chowranghi, said area SHO Nawaz Gondal.

The body was taken to the JPMC.

In another incident, a young man, Bilal, was electrocuted in Orangi Town, said rescue services.

Boy missing after falling in drain

A 10-year-old boy is believed to have drowned when he fell in a drain near Kabari Bazaar in Shershah on Saturday, an Edhi Foundation spokesperson said.

Edhi divers continued search for him on Sunday, but his body could not be found.

Meanwhile, the rescue services officials said that the body of a boy, Asad, who had drowned in Malir stream at Jam Goth on Saturday, was found floating in the river on Sunday.

The body was taken to the JPMC for medico-legal formalities.

(By Newspaper’s Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 10/08/2020)

Teenager electrocuted to death at KE sub-station

A young man was electrocuted to death at a K-Electric (KE) sub-station in Defence Housing Authority Phase I on Tuesday.

The body was shifted to Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre for medico-legal formalities, where the deceased was identified as 19-year-old Faizan.

According to Defence SHO Muhammad Ali, Faizan, who was from Mansehra, was visiting his uncle's house in Qayyumabad from Mansehra. He added that the teenager was taking pictures with his mobile phone near the KE sub-station when he received the fatal electric shock.

Ali stated that there were neither any safety arrangements at the sub-station nor any gate to keep people out.

KE officials, on the other hand, claimed the incident occurred when Faizan tried to steal wires from the sub-station.

Meanwhile, Faizan's uncle told the media that his two sons were with Faizan when the incident occurred. "Faizan and my children were roaming around when they neared the sub-station's wall and stepped into water accumulated nearby, which was conducting electricity," he claimed, adding that his nephew died on the spot.

He further said that when he arrived at the sub-station after being informed about the incident, bystanders advised him to stay away as the electric current had spread in station's surroundings. He added that everyone knew the incident was a result of the KE's negligence.

A case was registered against four KE officials, including CEO Moonis Alvi, under sections pertaining to unintentional murder, on behalf of Faizan's uncle Muhammad Fayyaz. The other nominated officials include KE distribution head Amir Zia, senior Defence IBC security official Faheem and Defence assistant manager Awais.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 12/08/2020)

Two die from electrocution in city

Two people were electrocuted in as many incidents in the city on Tuesday, officials and rescuers said.

A man, identified as Gulzada, was electrocuted in Sherpao Colony of Landhi inside his home. The body of the 42-year-old victim was handed over to the family after medico-legal formalities at the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC).

In the second incident, a teenage boy died from electrocution in Defence.

The area police said that 19-year-old Mohammad Faizan suffered an electric shock near Masjid-i-Zubair in DHA Phase VII which proved fatal. His body was also shifted to the JPMC.

KE chief booked for manslaughter

The chief executive officer of the K-Electric along with senior management of the power utility was booked in a manslaughter case.

A relative of one of the victims lodges FIR against KE chief Alvi

Police said an application was received from the paternal uncle of Faizan, the teenager who died from electrocution. The Defence police turned the application into an FIR which blamed KE CEO Moonis Alvi and his senior colleagues — distribution head Amir Zia, senior security officer of the company's DHA office Fahim and assistant manager of the same facility Owais — for his death.

"According to the FIR's content the negligence of the company led to the incident," said a police official. "The teenage boy lost his life in Defence Phase VII due to electrocution near a KE substation. The KE management has been booked under Section 322 (punishment for qatl bis-sabab) of the Pakistan Penal Code."

Two 'bandits' held

Police arrested two suspected dacoits after a shootout in the Seaview area that also left a police constable injured.

Officials said that a police patrol spotted a couple of suspects travelling in a rickshaw.

"As the police tried to stop them, the people inside the rickshaw opened fire. The firing was so intense that the police were forced to stop their chase. However, after a brief break the police chased the rickshaw," said an official.

Near the Omar Shareef Park, he said, the police found the abandoned rickshaw and it was clear that the suspects were fleeing on foot. After a hectic chase, the police spotted the suspects in a street near Marine Drive, he added.

"Our mobile rushed to the site and cordoned off the street," said the official. "The suspects, who later turned out to be bandits, were armed and after finding themselves trapped fired at the police party. Constable Deedar Hussain was injured when he was hit in the arm. Both the suspects identified as M. Shafqat alias Shanto and M. Shakeel were arrested with arms."

Inspector General of Police Mushtaq Ahmed Mahar announced a cash reward of Rs50,000 for the injured constable.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 12/08/2020)

KE comes under fire in Supreme Court over loadshedding, deaths from electrocution

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said that there should be zero loadshedding in the provincial metropolis and sought a time frame and a detailed report from the K-Electric regarding its power generation capacity, consumption and demand till Thursday.

While heading a three-judge bench, Chief Justice of Pakistan Gulzar Ahmed came down hard on the chief executive officer of the KE for prolonged loadshedding and deaths from electrocution in the city and warned that he would also be named in the cases for the incidents of electrocution.

The bench, also comprising Justice Faial Arab and Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan, called record about stay orders granted by the Sindh High Court in the cases of the power utility after the chairman of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) informed it that KE obtained restraining orders from the high court after the authority took action against it.

The bench asked the Nepra chairman to properly monitor KE and ensure that there should be no loadshedding in any part of the city.

CJP observes KE monopoly should be ended; seeks time frame for zero loadshedding by tomorrow

The chief justice expressed resentment over the performance of the power utility and said that prolonged loadshedding was being carried out in the city and earth wires had been removed causing many incidents of electrocution, especially during rains.

He remarked that the infrastructure of the KE had been replaced and on the verge of collapse due to use of cheap material in order to make money which, he said, was being sent overseas for investment.

The CJP added that the firm that owned KE had become a defaulter in other countries and its management was facing jail terms and fines.

At one stage, the CJP warned to put the name of KE CEO Moonis Alvi on the exit control list and order an audit of the power utility.

The monopoly of the KE should be ended by inviting other companies for a healthy competition, he said, asking the Nepra chairman about the action taken against the power utility.

The Nepra chief said that the actions taken against KE included imposition of a fine of Rs50 million, but it obtained a stay order from the high court.

He further stated that they had granted permission to some companies for power generation, but the KE had approached the court to get restraining orders.

The bench also asked the Nepra chairman to inform it whether there was any alternative arrangement if the licence of the KE was suspended.

The chief justice also asked the lawyer for the KE that over 20 people had been electrocuted and they were obtaining stay orders. The counsel claimed that most of the people died inside their homes. The chief justice said that the electric faults caused their death.

Justice Arab said that people were dying on the roads and streets due to electrocution since the earth wires had been removed. The KE CEO submitted that around \$1.5m had been invested during the past 10 years. The chief justice remarked that the losses had exceeded the investment amount.

The CEO further maintained that the line losses in 2010 were 42 per cent; the utility managed to bring the losses down to 26pc. He added that they had not paid a single penny to the shareholders of the KE for the last three to four years.

Mr Alvi further said that they had made investments in Lyari and Korangi in order to reduce the line losses. However, the chief justice said that they had caused a huge loss to the organisation by replacing silver wires.

The CEO denied sending money abroad and claimed that no loadshedding was carried out in 73pc areas of the city.

The chief justice asked the KE chief that there were many complaints of overbilling against them and ruled that there should be zero loadshedding in the city.

During the proceedings, the Sindh advocate general informed the bench that the KE had also cut off power supply to the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board though the federal government assured it of payment, adding that as per an agreement, the provincial government was also paying the dues.

The chief justice remarked that the provincial government was purchasing vehicles worth billions of rupees and why they had not been paying the outstanding dues.

The provincial law officer said that these vehicles were meant for police. The chief justice remarked that buses and ambulances might be purchased to save the lives of the people instead of air-conditioned vehicles.

300 billboards removed

The bench directed the Karachi commissioner to take action in accordance with law against those officials who had allowed installation of billboards.

On Tuesday, the commissioner informed the bench that around 300 billboards and hoardings had been removed across the city following the directives of the bench issued on Monday.

The bench had directed the commissioner to immediately remove all the billboards and hoardings from public spaces and properties and also take them out of private properties if found dangerous for public.

Meanwhile, the bench called record of a case from the trial court after an aging man informed it his son was allegedly abducted by the police for ransom and then killed.

Umar Daraz submitted that he was a resident of Baldia Town and his son, Saeed Umar, was on bail in a case, but the police took him away from their house and demanded ransom against his release. Later, they killed him, he alleged.

(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 12/08/2020)

KE chief granted protective bail

The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Wednesday granted protective bail to K-Electric (KE) CEO Moonis Alvi in two cases related to electrocution deaths.

The court also granted protective bail to the power utility's chief distribution officer.

The bench approved the bails against surety bonds of Rs50,000 each, directing both the accused to cooperate with the relevant authorities in the investigations.

The police had registered cases against four KE officials, including Alvi, over the death of 19-year-old Faizan Ahmed near a KE substation due to electrocution on Tuesday.

Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Gulzar Ahmed had also expressed displeasure over prolonged power cuts and ordered officials to put Alvi's name on the Exit Control List on Tuesday, further ordering the registration of murder cases against KE officials for electrocution deaths in the city.

It is pertinent to mention here that over 30 people were electrocuted to death in the port city during the recent spells of monsoon rain.

While KE officials have also been booked in similar cases several times previously, no effective action has been taken against them.

At least 15 people were killed in separate incidents of electrocution during last year's monsoon season, with Alvi and others booked in 12 cases. However, none of the officials were arrested.

Alvi and other KE officials were also booked for the deaths of at least five children in July, 2019.

New constituencies

Meanwhile, the SHC issued notices to the Sindh chief secretary, provincial election commission, local government secretary and others over a plea challenging the election commission's notification about forming a committee to define the constituencies.

A two-member bench, comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Yousuf Ali Sayeed, was hearing the plea filed by Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) leaders.

The petitioners maintained in the plea that MQM-P would suffer due to the demarcation of new constituencies.

They claimed that the election commission had included deputy commissioners and assistant commissioners in the committee, but forming a committee for the purpose was illegal because the method for it had been devised in 2013. They added that the report regarding constituencies defined earlier had also not been made public.

The plea moved the court to nullify the notification issued by the election commission.

The court issued notices to the parties and sought replies by August 26.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 13/08/2020)

SC again blasts KE over loadshedding in metropolis

The Supreme Court on Thursday again came down heavily on K-Electric over prolonged loadshedding and sought details from the federal government about its future plan to supply electricity to the provincial metropolis and end power cuts.

While heading a three-judge bench, Chief Justice of Pakistan Gulzar Ahmed said that there were also grievances against the KE regarding overbilling and faulty electricity meters, which have to be stopped immediately.

The bench, also comprising Justice Faial Arab and Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan, further directed the federal authorities to take action immediately and fix these issues.

It observed that electricity was a federal matter under the Constitution and it was incumbent upon the federal government to ensure that citizens were not deprived of electricity facility as it was a matter of right to life.

It also directed the chairman of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) to take action against the power utility in accordance with law over prolonged loadshedding and deaths from electrocution.

Chief justice says there should be zero loadshedding in Karachi and overbilling and problem of faulty meters must end immediately
The KE CEO, Moonis Alvi, submitted a compliance report regarding loadshedding in which he contended that currently, 75 per cent areas of the city were loadshedding-free while 63pc areas were exempted from loadshedding in 2017, 64pc in 2018 and by 2023 they were aiming to go 93pc loadshedding-free.

The chief justice expressed displeasure with the CEO and said that they issued directive on Tuesday, but prolonged loadshedding was carried out on Wednesday, adding that there should be zero loadshedding in the city.

The lawyer for the KE argued that there was a shortage of around 400 megawatts.

The chairman of Nepra submitted details about the cases in which the KE obtained stay orders from the Sindh High Court.

He said that around 60 investigations had been conducted against the KE and when the reports were at the implementation stage, the power utility got restraining orders from the high court.

The chief justice again expressed serious resentment towards KE for taking shelter behind stay orders after deaths of people from electrocution, adding that it was a matter of fundamental rights and people could not be left at the mercy of KE and they get these stay orders vacated.

'KE faulty plans'

The Nepra chief was of the view that every plan of the power utility was faulty including power generation and fuel and said that they had imposed fines and also issued show-cause notices to the KE.

Justice Ahsan observed that the court could not interfere in the matters of a regulator.

The lawyer for the KE said that Nepra appellant tribunals were not functional. The bench asked the attorney general to look into this issue and address it in two months.

The chief justice asked the Nepra chief to impose heavy fines on the power utility as per law and remarked that the KE was here to make money and even jail terms were not an issue for them.

Cleaning of drains

The bench did not entertain a request of Advocate General of Sindh Salman Talibuddin seeking modification of its Wednesday's order regarding cleaning of all drains through the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).

He contended that the provincial authorities undertook the work of cleaning drains of the city and around 50pc cleaning of Gujjar Nullah was done before the NDMA took over on Aug 3.

He argued that the NDMA was desilting three main drains and the provincial authorities be allowed to clean the remaining drains which would be completed by Aug 30 since he claimed that they had already done a lot of work on such drains.

The provincial law officer further maintained that the project was funded by the World Bank and the court had given its ownership to the NDMA.

He further argued that the machinery and manpower of the provincial government were being used and the NDMA was supervising the work.

Justice Ahsan reminded the provincial law officer that he didn't say a single word against it when the bench passed the order on Wednesday.

The chief justice asked him why these drains were choked and overflowed during recent rains and said that they will not amend the order.

He further remarked that in fact the motive for the provincial authorities was something else as they were concerned about the funds provided by the World Bank since the provincial government had to brief the Bank about utilisation of funds.

Encroachments

The bench issued notices to the commissioner of Karachi, director general of Karachi Development Authority, commissioner of KMC and others on a set of applications about encroachments on amenity plots and public spaces in Banaras, Urdu Bazaar, Bath Island, Gulshan-i-Iqbal and other parts of the city.

The bench also put the Defence Housing Authority, Karachi commissioner and other authorities concerned on notice on an application against movement of heavy traffic on city roads, encroachments on Korangi Road as well as high-rise buildings.
(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 14/08/2020)

Agreement with IPPs

The government's agreement with Independent Power Producers (IPP) is most welcome news in these difficult times. The deal will help reduce costs to both the government and consumers, while apparently reducing the amount of scrutiny that power producers face at the hands of various oversight bodies. The change in equity return currency from dollar to rupee will also help provide some much-needed stability. It is also heartening that the government is trying to shift away from imported fuels to renewables, which are cleaner and much more cost-effective.

Unfortunately, the government appears to be overselling the overall impact of the deal. Many large power producers were not covered by the agreement, meaning that the true gains will be limited until there is broader acceptance of the new conditions. The government could also not offer a timeline of when citizens will actually see any of the benefits.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Power Shahzad Qasim may have acknowledged one of the other issues during a recent press conference where he noted the reduction of the rate of late payment surcharge to be paid by the government. The fact that reducing it counts as an achievement is a reminder that the circular debt issue is not going anywhere soon. Even if reduced rates are accepted by all producers, there is no visible solution, even on the horizon, for paying down the existing mountain of debt. Then there is the issue of line losses and defaulting consumers, which no government has ever been willing to actively address.

In the past, and some would say the present, some would argue that this is because the major defaulters are in positions of power. After all, we rarely hear of the mansions of billionaire defaulters getting their lines cut, even though urban slum dwellers regularly see such fates over a few missed payments of minuscule amounts. Then there are line losses, the continuing existence of which remains paradoxical. The government could easily address them with proper policing and monetary and punitive penalties, especially when successful businesses are the culprits instead of blaming their 'powerful lobbies'. All it needs is the will to do so.

(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 04, 19/08/2020)

IPP 'agreement'

THE first thing to note about the recent 'agreement' signed on Aug 13 between a group of power-producing companies and a government committee is that there is, in fact, no 'agreement'. What we have at the moment is an agreement to have an agreement at a later point in time, hence why they are calling it a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for now.



So the natural question to ask is what all needs to happen before we can get to an 'agreement'. There are two hurdles that need to be cleared before an agreement can be reached, and both of these hurdles present their unique challenges. And the government has six months in which to clear both these hurdles failing which the understandings will expire.

First is that the 13-point MoU needs to be cleared by respective authorities from both sides of the negotiating table. It needs to be cleared by the management of the IPPs as well as their boards, which is unlikely to present major issues.

A challenge is possible on the government's side. The committee that negotiated these understandings now needs to present them for approval to the federal cabinet as well the power sector regulator, Nepra. At the cabinet level, the terms outlined in the understanding might activate some politics, and those who are unhappy with the outcome try and oppose the MoU.

The natural question to ask is what all needs to happen before we can get to an 'agreement'.

Some of this may have already begun. Senator Nauman Wazir of the ruling PTI has already referred to the IPPs as "criminals", said an FIR ought to have been registered against 'them' — presumably their sponsors and management, for the "excess profits" that the inquiry report alleged they have made over the past couple of decades. In a TV appearance he said the MoU signed between the government and the IPPs "will legalise their criminality" and totally rejected the understandings contained within it. The next day he followed these words up with more objections during the Senate panel hearing. Let's see if others join him in rejecting the MoU. After the approvals a second challenge looms. Before an agreement can even be reached, Clause 10 of the understanding says all outstanding dues owed to them should be settled "within an agreed time period".

The amount the government will have to pay for this settlement is estimated by the IPP managements to be above Rs200 billion. The total outstanding owed to power producers is Rs600bn, but not all of those producers are part of these talks. The IPP team tells me they expect a full settlement of all outstanding receivables owed to them before they will consider activating any of the other clauses in the MoU. But the language of Clause 10, where this understanding is written, does not specifically make activation of the terms of the agreement conditional on prior payment of outstanding receivables. The MoU simply says there will be “agreement on payment of receivables within an agreed time period”.

The language of the clause is carefully crafted to leave just enough ambiguity to let the IPPs decide either way, to either press for full payment or activate the terms against an agreed timeline only. They will probably check the temperature at decision time before choosing their course of action on this clause.

The other clauses in the MoU are minor details, even the IPP managements agree. The revised formulae for sharing of efficiency gains or the revision in the Delayed Payment Rate are nothing special. The reduction in the DPR is only for the first 60 days, for example, after which it reverts to an exorbitant Kibor plus 4.5 per cent.

The switch to “take and pay” — a reference to eliminating capacity payments — has been thrown indefinitely into the future since both sides agreed it can only happen after a competitive trading arrangement comes into being, an idea that has languished for more than 20 years already. There is little reason to believe it will happen in the next five years, and even that is being optimistic. The committee has also agreed to abide by the principle of first in first out when making all future payments, which will prove to be costly for the government. Common practice that helped save the government money was to pay off those bills first that came with the highest interest rates, and FIFO ends that discretion.

The biggest allegation that launched this entire exercise in the first place was the one of “excess profits” that the IPPs were said to have made by misrepresenting their costs or their fuel consumption or their efficiency levels. The government marched into these talks alleging trillions of rupees worth of wrongdoing in “excess profits”. Yet under the MoU, the whole matter has been lobbed into Nepra’s court, which will decide only whether the profits were made in accordance with the 2002 policy, the tariff determinations and the power purchase agreements of the IPPs, based on numbers that were reconciled between government and the IPPs during these talks.

The rupee indexation of returns for local investors sounds good on the surface, until you see that the rupee has been indexed at 148 to a dollar. Given these plants made their equity investments in the year 2002, when the dollar was around a third of this value, the indexation compensates the IPPs very generously in return for losing their dollar-based certainty.

The government has done the right thing to seek these talks, and it has also done the right thing to ensure sovereign guarantees are not violated in the process. But these terms do little for the vaunted goal of tariff reduction. The terms in the MoU are meek and the IPPs have largely escaped the kind of accountability that the government was screaming about when this whole affair was launched. In the meantime, the circular debt, power sector governance and the rising power bills of consumers will remain large challenges for the government.

(By Khurram Husain Dawn, 06, 20/08/2020)

Support for teachers

TEACHERS, irrespective of the level they are teaching at, have had to make major changes in the way they teach over the last few months. And they have had to adapt quite quickly as well. Schools and universities were closed in mid-March. But within a few weeks, many universities and schools started to take their instruction online. By June, almost all universities had gone online. Most medium- to high-fee private schools went online as well, while teachers in even low-fee and NGO-supported schools worked out hybrid systems to restart at least some teaching activity again.



This change, still continuing, has been hard. Teachers were used to teaching face to face. Suddenly they were told they had to teach through the internet. They had to learn how to use new programmes. They had to quickly adapt their teaching material, as much as possible, to the new medium. The assessments had to change as well.

The pandemic has not gone away. It is being said that if the pandemic remains under control, schools and universities across the country might be allowed to open up in mid-September. This will be under strict standard operating procedures. The risk of outbreaks will increase if schools and universities do open. So, we might have partial shutdowns even during the academic year, and it might happen more than once.

Given all of the above, there will continue to be heavy demands on teachers. They might have to do teaching in hybrid mode: face to face at times and online at others. Or even both at the same time. They will need to have contingency plans in case schools/universities are closed suddenly and for weeks on end.

The need to adapt to the pandemic will continue to place heavy demands on educators.

Teachers will continue to learn about new programmes and new ways of delivering classes. In the last six months alone, we have moved away from simple synchronous classes on Zoom/Teams to many other platforms and with a mix of asynchronous and synchronous. In synchronous classes, even breakout rooms have become more common. New ways of engaging students and making content interactive and interesting are being devised all the time. Teachers will need to have access to new resources as

they become available and they will need to continue to experiment with modes to find things that work better for them and their students.

On the pedagogical side, too, experimentation and innovation will continue. Given unstable internet connections — which is the case for residents in larger cities too — there is a tendency to explore asynchronous modes of teaching. But student interest is better captured through synchronous teaching. How do teachers balance the two imperatives? How can asynchronous teaching be made more interesting, and how can synchronous teaching be made less heavy on bandwidth?

This has implications for assessments as well. Face-to-face teaching in Pakistan, across the system, relied heavily on summative assessments. But summative assessments are very difficult to conduct online, and they are less effective as well. Timed examinations, when internet is unstable, are difficult to manage. Issues of cheating also become quite hard to manage. For fairer assessments, teachers have to think more in terms of formative assessments. Assessments that they can do continuously as students engage with the course material, especially in asynchronous environments, need to be thought through and these assessments need to be aligned with teaching goals and objectives. This in and of itself requires a fair bit of effort.

Teachers have to adapt and adapt material to online teaching too. The easiest thing to do is to use the same readings and just record the lecture that one would do face to face and send that video to students. They would have access to the readings and lectures. But that is not what optimal online teaching is about. The reading material needs to be adapted to online teaching. It might mean supplementing readings with presentations, short audio/video lectures on key concepts, written and/or audio/video responses from students, and interactive synchronous sessions in which to hold discussions.

Students are no longer sitting in front of teachers. It is hard enough getting and keeping their attention when they are captive in a classroom environment. To have to do that when children are home, and when home environments vary a lot and there might be many things competing for their attention, the material has to be a lot more engaging and interactive.

The coming academic year is not going to be a normal one. When students come back, many might not have had access to any educational material for months, other might have had regular classes. Teachers will need to assess the level of learning for their students and then they will have to meet the students where the students are. The curriculum for the year will have to take into account potential learning losses and meet this challenge head on.

The next academic year might also be a truncated one. We will be starting a bit late, and there might be disruptions during the year as well. We should be prepared for such eventualities. More importantly, we should have contingency plans where we know which are the important concepts and learning objectives we have to prioritise and which ones we can leave out if need be. Teachers need to either figure this out or the school system has to do it for them with their feedback.

All of the above is a tall order. But it has to be done if we are going to have effective teaching and learning for most children. The role of the teacher is central here. But they will definitely need a lot of support as well. Are systems in place, in the private sector as well as public, to provide support in terms of trainings, equipment, motivation and acknowledgement?

(By Faisal Bari Dawn, 06, 21/08/2020)

Street protests against KE over 40-hour-long power failure

Already exhausted by devastating rains, enraged people took to streets late on Friday night in protest against K-Electric for its failure to restore electricity even after 40 hours in several parts of the city, blocking major arteries and streets in almost every locality.

Thousands of people became stuck in traffic jam on Sharea Faisal for hours as the protesters gathered near the FTC building chanting slogans against the power utility.

Residents of almost every locality across the city called Dawn offices to report that the power supply had been suspended in their localities for past 24 to 40 hours.

They said that the power utility suspended the electricity immediately after first drop of rainfall and did not entertain their complaints at their complaint centres which were 'closed down'.

The protesters also gathered around K-Electric offices and centres and pelted them with stones.

Residents from several localities also claimed that team members of KE did not fix localised faults until their 'palms were greased'.

CM visits KE office

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah visited the KE head office. He was briefed about the power crisis in the city by the chief of the power utility.

The chief minister asked the chief executive officer of the KE as to why power was not restored in parts of the city even after 35 hours.

He apprehended that continued power disruption could lead to law and order situation in the city as it was adding to their miseries, pointing out that people were holding demonstrations against the power utility across the city.

The CM asked the KE chief to immediately restore power supply in Gulistan-i-Jauhar, Surjani Town, Kharadar, Mithadar and Lyari.

KE claim

A spokesperson for the power utility, however, claimed that restoration work was initiated immediately when the rain stopped and regular power supply had been resumed to over 80 per cent of the city by mid-afternoon, including Gulshan-i-Iqbal, Saddar, Garden, Numaish, Punjab Colony, Korangi, Nazimabad, Federal B Area with the support provided by the city administration for drainage and dewatering.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 30/08/2020)

K-Electric tariff goes up by 26%

The federal government has approved increase in electricity tariff for the K-Electric consumers by nearly 26% with immediate effect and decided to shut down the Roosevelt Hotel, New York, by paying its debt and severance cost totalling \$142 million (Rs23.6 billion).

The decisions were taken by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet, chaired by Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh.

"The ECC approved the summary moved by the Power Division for the rationalisation of eleven quarterly adjustments of K-Electric Limited from July 2016 to March 2019", according to a handout issued by the Ministry of Finance.

The quarterly adjustments of K-Electric for period from July 2016 to March 2019 would be notified with effect from September 1, 2020 to bring the K-Electric tariff on a par with 10 other power distribution companies, according to the ministry.

The base tariff for the K-Electric was Rs11.22 per unit, which would be increased by up to 25.75% or Rs2.89 per unit after the ECC's decision. Nepra has determined an increase in power tariff for K-E consumers by Rs4.87 per unit or 44% on account of previous years' adjustments. The total revenue impact of the tariff hike of Rs4.87 per unit was nearly Rs106 billion.

Now, the K-E consumers would pay additional Rs80 billion on account of increased prices, while the government would pick a total Rs30 billion cost, including Rs4.7 billion on account of delayed increase for the month of July and August of this year.

The power minister sought Rs4.7 billion cash injection to compensate the two-month delay in increasing the electricity prices by the K-E. The finance division would release the amount subject to verification of the claims.

In addition to these 11 quarterly adjustments in the tariffs, the KE consumers will also have to bear the brunt of increase in electricity prices for four more quarters (July-June of 2019-20), the ECC was informed.

In March, the ECC had allowed increase in electricity prices for K-E consumers with effect from June 26, 2020 but the federal cabinet did not ratify the decision. Subsequently, in July, the Cabinet Committee on Energy, chaired by the prime minister, decided to defer the tariff increase till August 31.

Since its privatisation, the K-Electric has been struggling to provide uninterrupted power supply to its consumers. The company has not been able to make full equity investment as per the privatisation deal and it undertook some expansion projects by taking loans, which would eventually be recovered from the consumers.

In March this year, the power division had recommended to increase the K-E prices by Rs4.87 per unit as differential between the scheduled tariff recommended by Nepra for April-June 2019 and scheduled tariff earlier recommended by the Nepra and reflected in the K-E notified tariff.

It had proposed to increase electricity prices in the range of Rs1.09 to Rs2.89 per unit for various categories of consumers. The federal government would pick the subsidy of Rs26 billion that will bring the tariff down by Rs1.98 per unit. Effective increase in electricity prices will be Rs2.89 per unit for K-E consumers.

The residential consumers electricity bill will go up by 20.6%. The commercial consumers cost of electricity has been increased by 19.8% and the industrial consumers prices would shoot by 19.2%, according to the power division summary for the ECC.

Roosevelt Hotel

In order to meet the financial challenges faced by the Roosevelt Hotel, New York, the ECC approved the amount up to \$142 million for PIA-IL on the recommendation of a committee constituted in an earlier meeting of the ECC, headed by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission and including secretaries of finance division, aviation division and law and justice division", according to the finance ministry.

By virtue of its decision to give \$142.1 million to the Roosevelt Hotel, the ECC decided to close the facility, which is located at a prime location in New York and has remained in the news for all the wrong reasons. The ECC approved to prematurely repay \$105 million loan and also cleared \$37 million in severance cost.

The aviation ministry had sought \$125 million injection for Roosevelt Hotel. But on August 25th, the Pakistan International Airlines-Investment Limited (PIA-IL) sought \$142 million. The PIA chairman had said that the financial health of the PIACL did not permit to repay \$50 million loan.

The PIA-IL management had apprised the ECC-constituted committee that its advisers had deliberated on the financial and legal implications of the loan repayments. The advisers had recommended to pay off \$105 million loan and also close the hotel by bearing all the cost.

The ECC approved to pay \$37.1 million cost associated with shutting down the hotel. This includes \$13.7 million severance cost of the employees, \$18 million pension liabilities, \$34 million cost to creditors and \$2 million closing cost, according to the aviation division summary.

After the ECC's approval, the PIA-IL will give notice before 9th September as payment date to the lender for prepayment of \$105 million in one month.

A July 2019 feasibility study, conducted by Deloitte Transactions and Business Analytics, recommended that the "highest and best use of Roosevelt Hotel property is to redevelop the site into a mixed use of primarily office tower over retail and condominium".

(By Shahbaz Raza The Express Tribune, 01, 03/09/2020)

Neptra hearing sees chaos as end sought to KE exclusivity

A public hearing of the National Electric and Power Regulatory Authority (Neptra) seeking amendment to K-Electric's licence was marred on Monday as public representatives and political leaders demanded that the federal government allow more power supply companies to operate in Karachi, while the city's lone power utility termed the move to end its exclusivity "violation" of the agreement.

Participants, who apparently also included a sizeable number of power utility supporters, kept on chanting slogans intermittently, with Neptra chairman Tauseef Farooqui asking them to show some restraint and not to disturb the proceedings.

However, the Neptra chairman had to suspend the proceedings after trying hard to control the situation that turned ugly after the remarks of former Sindh Governor Kamal Azfar that the Muttahida Qaumi Movement 'earned huge amount' from privatisation of then Karachi Electric Supply Corporation in 2005. "Why did they remain silent spectator when it was being privatised?" he asked, alleging that the MQM had acted as a facilitator at that time.

MQM-Pakistan's Khawaja Izharul Hassan, Javed Hanif and Hafiz Osama Qadri reacted severely to the allegations and started shouting. Despite the Neptra chairman's efforts to ease the situation, the two sides kept on hurling remarks against each other leading to adjournment of the hearing.

Earlier, too, the chairman had to put off the hearing for 30 minutes as representatives of the public, traders, and industrialists and consumers kept chanting slogans against the power utility hardly half an hour of the proceedings.

The MQM-P member of the Sindh Assembly Khawaja Izharul Hassan said the provincial assembly had passed a resolution demanding more power utility companies in Karachi, but the same was not being implemented. The KE violated rights of consumers but there were no consumer courts functioning in the city, he said.

"The power utility kept on carrying out loadshedding even during the lockdown when the working hours for the business activities were remarkable reduced," he said, adding that the power utility did not have infrastructure to detect faults and its staffers took several hours to rectify a common fault.

Taking a jibe on KE, the MQM-P legislator said the power utility did not have fuel in summers and gas pressure in winters.

Jamaat-i-Islami Karachi Ameer Hafiz Naeemur Rehman also came down heavily on the KE, complaining that the power utility had made lives of Karachiites miserable. He said that even areas exempted from loadshedding witnessed prolonged power disruption whenever the mercury touched 35 degrees Celsius. "The city faces power suspension soon after the first drop of rain, while maintenance shutdowns continue throughout the year," he added.

He demanded that the federal government revoke the KE's licence and order forensic audit and accountability of the power utility as well as the political parties that supported its privatisation.

Industrialist and representative of Site Association Abdus Sattar Jamani said there should be separate power generating and distributing companies. He demanded that the representative of Site Association demanded that they should be provided electricity directly from grid station, as they were ready to distribute the power themselves.

Habib Hassan, a former union council chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party from Lyari, also spoke on the occasion.

The Neptra chairman told the participants that he was conducting hearing on directives of the Supreme Court and assured all participants that justice would be done.

He asked the KE representative as to why the power utility had failed to take the much-needed action during the past 15 years. If that had happened, the situation might have been different, he said. "What you could not do in 15 years, how can you do it in the next three year? Do you have a magic wand?" he asked.

KE Chief Finance Officer Amir Ghaziani, however, opposed the amendment to its licence, saying that it had generation and distribution powers till July 2023. The KE's CFO then assured the stakeholders that all areas would be exempted from loadshedding by 2023.

Mr Ghaziani explained that over Rs335 billion had been invested in Karachi's power infrastructure since its privatisation in 2005. He said the investments resulted in increasing KE's generation capacity by 1,057 megawatts, almost doubling transmission and distribution capacity and exempting over 75 per cent of the city from scheduled loadshedding, which had been only 6.5pc in 2005.

He added the KE was in the process of converting its pole-mounted transformers (PMTs) to aerial-bundled cabling, with over 9,000 PMTs converted to date, a process which would further improve the city's power situation by reducing the risk of power theft. At the hearing, various stakeholders acknowledged that Karachi's power situation had improved considerably since the power utility's privatisation.

The CFO also mentioned KE's future investments which would be affected due to a changed distribution regime. These investments include, but are not limited to, the power utility's US\$650 billion RLNG-fired power plant, BQPS-III. All these investments would make 93pc of Karachi areas free from loadshedding by 2023, he claimed.

'KE not against competition'

He said the hearing was in public interest, which was also very important to K-Electric, citing examples of communities like Ghazdarabad and Altaf Town that had been uplifted through sustained investments and social engagements. The existing model of regulation enabled these investments through a cross-subsidy. "KE is not against competition but urges that a proper framework and implementation roadmap be shared, which ensures that public interest is prioritised and a level-playing field which balances both rights and obligations is provided for all players."

The power utility official also highlighted that under Section 14A of the Nepra Act, any developments in the power markets should be prescribed under a national policy rather than for individual utilities and would be moved by the federal government with the approval of the Council of Common Interest (CCI).

Nepra will hold the next public hearing in Islamabad.
(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 01, 22/09/2020)

Anger against KE

THE rowdy behaviour of participants at a hearing organised by power-sector regulator Nepra to seek public opinion on its proposal to end K-Electric's monopoly over the distribution of electricity among the residents of Karachi took the focus off the real issue: how to resolve the city's power woes in a sustainable manner. Instead, the verbal clash that ensued between two groups of political and civil society activists led the Nepra chief to first suspend the proceedings and then adjourn the hearing for a later date in Islamabad. Unfortunately, the choice of venue will not make it possible for Karachi residents who want to discuss the pros and cons of KE's monopoly to contribute to the discussion. There is no doubt that emotions against the country's only privatised distribution company are running high because of the days-long blackout in many parts of the city during the recent torrential rains. Public anger against the utility is totally understandable. Yet the issue needs a dispassionate and informed discussion so that a solution can be found.

Until recently, KE was praised by many for improving service delivery and ending blackouts in many areas. The company has invested significant sums to increase its own generation and improve its distribution network and reduce outages since privatisation. But it is also true that the dilapidated electricity distribution network still requires large investments to remedy the problems. KE claims its planned infrastructure investment will end blackouts in 95pc of the city by 2023, when its monopoly status expires. There is a caveat though in the shape of timely approvals of projects by the government and other agencies. Indeed, there's no alternative to market competition when it comes to improving service delivery. But we are still far from developing a framework to have a competitive retail electricity market. Until that stage arrives, the regulator would do well to ensure that KE executes its infrastructure development investments on a fast-track basis, and that it is held accountable if it fails to make good on its commitments.
(By Editorial Dawn, 06, 23/09/2020)

K-E monopoly

The recent extended power outages in Karachi have again raised questions about K-Electric's stranglehold on the city's power supply. One of the proposals gaining steam is increased competition. Typically, there are many costs and benefits related to competition in power supply. All of these must be weighed against each other before policymakers decide on what path to take. In the case of K-electric, however, the decision is much easier. The company has done little, if anything, to improve the situation for consumers in over a decade of operating. Meanwhile, despite charging some of the country's highest tariffs, the company keeps milking the state for more support and subsidies. The promises of privatisation when the erstwhile KESC was sold off have never truly come. The company is still mostly dependent on the national grid and seems to have little interest in becoming a self-sufficient supply company. Meanwhile, after a temporary reprieve in the early days of new ownership, power outages have come back with a bang, arguably worse than ever.

Meanwhile, politicians have consistently pointed to poor corporate governance, such as the knee-jerk firing of employees and high executive compensation, despite the company's customers giving it a failing grade. Under these circumstances, competition can do no harm. But regulators continue to drag their feet, perhaps due to the close relationship between staffers at different companies within the power sector. Even an earful from the Supreme Court has not been enough to truly set the gears of reform in motion. The court had also pushed for Nepra to move ahead with actions to break K-Electric's monopoly. But instead of

making a concerted effort, Nepra appears to be dragging its feet. Even the recent public meeting made no sense. Parts of Karachi were without power for days. That should be proof enough that the company had failed to do its job. Ideally, competition would reduce outages and prices by forcing efficiency. But at this point, citizens would be more than happy with either of those outcomes.

(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 14, 23/09/2020)

Karachiites endure power cuts in stifling heat as KE, SSGC play blame game

Controversy between K-Electric and Sui Southern Gas Company Ltd over gas supply and pressure deepened further on Thursday adding despair and misery on Karachiites as loadshedding in nearly every locality of the metropolis continued, with cuts of up to 12 hours in some areas.

While the two utilities made claims and counter-claims over the gas issue, residents experienced prolonged spells of power disruption during sizzling weather, with many consumers believing that the power utility had resorted to prolonged loadshedding deliberately in reaction to the public hearing held by Nepra earlier this week against the exclusivity of Karachi's lone power supplier.

The power utility said it was currently receiving low gas pressure from the SSGC, which created up to 400MW shortfall. "KE's furnace oil power plants are fully functional, supply gap will only be filled after gas pressure is restored to KE's power plants," it said in a tweet.

A KE spokesperson told [Dawn](#) that the power utility was facing an ongoing issue with gas pressure from the SSGC. "While the quantity of the required gas remains available, decreased pressure leads to reduced production of electricity. This gas pressure shortfall has created a supply gap of 400MW, at a time when demand is high", he added.

The spokesperson added that pressure of the gas supplied to KE's power-generation plants was low due to which various gas-fired plants at Korangi and SITE were not able to operate at their optimum capacity despite remaining fully available.

KE says it is resorting to power cuts due to 'low gas pressure'

"Generation will be increased as soon as gas supply at the desired pressure is available. KE's furnace-oil fired power plants are fully functional at this time", he added.

The KE spokesperson said that SSGC was providing the required volume of gas, but the power plants needed certain gas pressure to generate electricity.

He said that the power utility had also requested to purchase re-liquefied natural gas (RLNG) if made available at required gas pressure to meet short-term requirements and is awaiting confirmation on the same, adding that the curtailment of gas pressure would lead to increase in loadshedding hours across all consumer segments, including industrial zones. "The power utility requests that SSGC put in all the required efforts to resolve the situation as swiftly as possible," he added.

SSGC denies gas 'loadshedding'

Meanwhile, the SSGC said that there was no gas loadshedding in its franchise areas.

A spokesperson for the gas utility said that a low-pressure situation was created due to diminishing gas supplies from different gas fields.

He said that line pack system of the gas utility was affected due to a shortfall of gas, therefore, it was giving first preference in the gas supply to the domestic sector following the government's gas load-management plan.

The spokesman said that KE was provided required volume and pressure of gas to its major plant at Bin Qasim. He said that two small power plants were facing low gas pressure as they were located in tail end.

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 25/09/2020)

Karachi blackouts

Never-ending electricity blackouts in Karachi have been tormenting its citizens and leaving them foaming at the mouth. This latest spell of prolonged power outages in this hive of industry is blamed on low gas supply by the power utility — a reason most citizens see as a lame excuse. The disruption has badly crippled industrial output.

K-Electric, the sole power production, transmission and distribution company responsible for supplying power across the city of ports and other parts of Sindh and Balochistan, failed to meet the energy needs as it cited low gas pressure as reason for the outages. It has held the SSGC responsible for the power crisis, saying the firm is not providing the agreed quantity of gas. The SSGC, on its part, says they have already informed K-Electric regarding low supplies in advance and advised it to adopt alternative solutions like running power plants on coal, furnace oil and/or diesel.

In the blame-game between the two utility firms, industrial, commercial and residential consumers are paying a high cost and losing businesses to the regional and global competitors. "Gas shortage in Karachi is directly due to government of Sindh not giving Right of Way for a new SSGC line. [We] have been after Sindh government since the last 1.5 years but they have not

budgeted. We are already giving 100 mmcf RLNG to K-Electric and need the new line for additional supply,” Federal Minister for Power, Petroleum & Natural Resources Omar Ayub Khan said on his Twitter handle.

On the other hand, a K-Electric spokesperson, in a video message, said, “The low supplies of gas have impacted power production and supplies to our consumers” and “we are constantly in contact with the SSGC management to overcome the issue.” The SSGC spokesperson said despite facing low supplies from fields, the SSGC is supplying 170-180 mmcf to K-Electric against its demand for 220-230 mmcf.

This tiff between the two companies has been a source of great agony to the citizens of Karachi.
(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 14, 28/09/2020)

Committee decides to generate electricity from city's waste

The Provincial Coordination and Implementation Committee (PCIC) in its second meeting on Friday decided to launch a waste-to-energy electricity project for which necessary measures would be taken at the earliest.

The meeting was attended by Karachi Corps Commander Lt Gen Humayun Aziz, provincial Ministers Syed Nasir Shah and Awais Qadir Shah, Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah, GOC-Karachi Maj Gen Aqeel, Administrator Iftikhar Shallwani, Commissioner Sohail Rajput, provincial secretaries Shariq Ahmed, Najam Shah and others.

The matter of lifting of garbage came under discussion in the meeting and it was pointed out that out of 15 garbage transfer stations (GTS) only six were operational, therefore, revival or reconstruction of six other GTS was agreed.

The body recommends procurement of electric buses for Green Line project

The meeting was told that the landfill sites would be filled very soon, therefore, a power plant might be installed for waste being collected from the city. The power generation from the waste would not only burn the waste and save the land.

The meeting decided to work out a plan to generate power from the waste being collected from the city at the earliest. It was also decided that the firms interested in the project would be invited for submission of their proposals.

Survey of five drains completed

The meeting was told that the survey of five storm-water drains had been completed.

It was informed that Gujjar nullah had a length of 13 kilometres with 210-foot width as per the master plan, and 5,961 households, 41,581 individuals and 2,412 commercial units were established along its embankments.

It was stated that the Orangi nullah had 12.5km length, 100 to 150-foot width and 4,480 households, 27,000 individual settlements and 380 factories were established along its embankments.

Similarly, the Mehmoodabad nullah had 4.1km length, and 100 to 200-foot width, while 1,049 households, 5,900 individual settlements and 156 commercial settlements along its embankments.

The Malir River had length of 30km with 1,700-2,000-metre width and had 1,996 households, 12,336 individual settlements/encroachments. The Lyari River is the longest river with 50km length and 300-500-foot width as per the master plan.

The meeting was told that the NED University was conducting a survey with the terms of reference to analyse the width and capacity of existing 44 major storm-water drains, survey of nullahs with a number of physical structures and drone-assisted mapping and outline of encroached land.

It was disclosed that the survey of five nullahs had been completed and the remaining work would be completed by Nov 15 this year.

Technical study

The meeting was informed that in phase-II a hydrologic and hydraulic modelling survey of the drainage would be conducted for demarking existing drainage network, modelling tools to quantify the expected flows in the region, existing cross-section details of the nullahs to be used to assess the capacity of existing sections to cater to the flows to be conducted.

The chief minister said that an ideal cross-section would be proposed for each drain based on terrain and flow models for current and future improvements and the best management plans for drainage network to mitigate the risk of urban flooding.

The meeting discussed purchasing buses for Green Line for which it was proposed to procure electric buses which might be operated by private operators.

The meeting set a timeline for different tasks for completion of the projects, including repair of 106 existing roads by the KMC.
(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 10/10/2020)

Centre notifies up to Rs2.89 per unit increase for power consumers in Karachi

The government on Monday notified an increase in electricity rates by Rs1.09 to Rs2.89 per unit for various consumers of Karachi to bring it on a par with the rest of the country, with retrospective effect from September 1.

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) had determined the tariff increase in December 2019 but the government has been holding back its implementation due to political compulsions despite repeated clearances given by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet.

Nepra had determined an increase in the power tariff for KE consumers by Rs4.87 per unit, or 44pc, on account of previous years' adjustments with a total revenue impact of Rs106 billion.

"In pursuance of sub-section (7) of section 31 of the Regulation of Generation, Transmission and Distribution of Electric Power Act, 1997, the Federal Government is pleased to notify as under the adjustment in the approved tariff on account of quarterly adjustments w.e.f September 1, 2020 as determined and recommended by Nepra vide decision dated December 31, 2019 in respect of K-Electric Limited," the power division said in a notification.

The rise in the KE tariff is applicable from Sept 1

"Recommended quarterly adjustment to the tune of Rs4.87 being the differential between the schedule of tariff recommended by Nepra for April-June 2019 and the schedule of tariff earlier recommended by Nepra and reflected in KE notified tariff be notified for each category of consumer to the extent of bringing K-Electric consumer-end tariff at par with what is currently in field for consumer of XDISCOs increase in rate of Rs1.09 to Rs2.89/kWh for various categories of consumers," it added.

The difference after increase will be covered through a Rs26bn subsidy.

The notification also asked the KE to file its revised claim for such quarterly adjustments.

The ECC had earlier approved rationalisation of 11 quarterly adjustments of KE from July 2016 to March 2019. Based on Nepra determination, the ECC had approved in March this year an average Rs2.39 per unit increase in KE tariff to bring it on a par with uniform national power tariff.

This tariff has been pending for almost three years (11 quarters from July 2016 to March 2019). In summers, this works out at about Rs3bn per month, which drops to about Rs2bn or averages out at about Rs2.5bn.

Its application was stopped due to the Covid-19 situation at the time. The ECC again gave a go-ahead for its implementation with effect from July 1, 2020, but it was again withheld by the federal cabinet and Prime Minister Imran Khan on the desire of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf members of the cabinet from Karachi amid floods and loadshedding.

However, as the problems continued, the KE was assured during a recent meeting at the Sindh Governor House of an immediate increase in its consumer-end tariff.

The non-payment of subsidy by the government and the freeze on tariff are creating cash flow problems not only for the KE but also for other power companies because of non-payment of dues against power purchased from the national grid, resulting in a second-tier tariff increase to finance the borrowing costs.

The KE tariff at present is Rs2.89 per unit (kWh) lower than the rest of the country for almost all commercial categories, temporary residential, all bulk supply tariff, public lighting, residential colonies attached to industrial premises and all industrial tariff categories. The KE tariff for all residential consumers is Rs1.65 per unit lower than the rest of the country.

The KE tariff for commercial consumers on less than 5kwatt load is Rs1.09 per unit lower than the rest of the country.
(By Khaleeq Kiani Dawn, 14, 13/10/2020)

CJP blasts KE bosses, govt over Karachi woes

Annoyed over excessive loadshedding in Karachi, Chief Justice of Pakistan Gulzar Ahmed regretted that neither the federal nor the provincial governments were fulfilling their responsibilities.

"The people have become hostage to the whims of the organisations that are exploiting the weaknesses of the government institutions but no one is there to check them," regretted the chief justice while heading a three-judge bench.

Everybody was taking advantage and "exploiting the government left, right and centre", he added.

The bench that had taken up a suo motu case relating to the excessive and unannounced loadshedding in Sindh termed unsatisfactory the reports furnished by the federal government and the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra).

The court, however, postponed further hearing when Attorney General for Pakistan Khalid Jawed Khan suggested an in-chamber presentation on the supply of electricity within two weeks in which Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar and Minister for Power Omar Ayub Khan, on behalf of the federal government, could brief the court about the future plan to ease the situation in Karachi.

The city of Karachi had expanded greatly but electricity production had not been enhanced, observed Justice Faisal Arab, a member of the bench. He said that agreements should be made to benefit the government and the people of the country by ensuring a competitive environment.

The chief justice was of the view that the employees working in institutions like Nepra and the power division should be fired because “they were useless”, warning that the court could impose a heavy fine because electricity was one of the basic rights of the people.

The K-Electric — the power utility — is not giving any relief to the residents of Karachi, the chief justice observed, adding that organisations like the National Transmission and Dispatch Company and the power division were providing zero service to the people of Pakistan but they take billions from the government kitty.

Chief Justice Ahmed was also not happy with the increase in tariff for K-Electric and while pointing towards the managing director of K-Electric, Monis Alvi, he wondered who owned the utility and how many shareholders the company had.

“If we go behind (the scenes) we will know who actually controls the utility,” he observed, adding that K-Electric might be controlled by Mumbai, India.

“We have learnt from newspapers that people like Sharma, Verma were the shareholders of the company,” the chief justice said, adding that “we have reservations over the investment in K-Electric”.

The chief justice was also sceptical about nine shareholders who want to become party in the case and asked about the credentials of Chairman Shan Ashari and whether he was a Pakistani national.

At this the chairman of K-Electric came forward to tell the court that his complete name was Shan Abbas Ashari and that he was a Pakistani and his patriotism should not be doubted.

“The people of Karachi as well as the power utility would not be in such a mess had you been loyal to this country,” the chief justice said.

Meanwhile, senior counsel representing K-Electric Ali Zafar told the court that the company had nine directors and it was a joint venture between Saudi Arabia and Kuwaiti business groups, with over \$400 million invested.

But the chief justice expressed the fear that there must be someone behind this investment and alleged that the decision about who will get how much electricity in Karachi may be controlled by Mumbai and the situation in Balochistan might be the same.

“I receive calls about loadshedding in Karachi city twice or thrice a day or that half of the city is dark in the night,” the chief justice bemoaned saying corporate affairs were quite problematic when someone different was at the front while at the back there was another.

The court, however, was told that the power supply situation during last June or July was worse because of the erratic oil supply.

While pointing towards the attorney general, the court wondered why the people working in these departments were getting salaries when they were not working, adding that there used to be one power division but now it had been divided into ten.

If the situation persists, the entire country will be engulfed in loadshedding, the chief justice feared.

Advocate Faisal Siddiqui informed the court that the federal government had appointed former CEO of K-Electric Tabish Gohar as a special assistant at a time when K-Electric’s case was pending in court.
(By Nasir Iqbal Dawn, 01, 14/10/2020)

Short circuit blaze kills two minor sisters

Two young sisters died as a fire broke out inside a house in Buffer Zone on Thursday, one of several sites of such fire incidents in the past two days.

The deceased sisters, aged six and seven years respectively, had been left locked at home by their parents, who had gone for work and errands.

Rescue workers, police and fire officials reached the house located on the third floor of a three-storey building and found the door locked. They could hear the sisters calling for help while a neighbour’s wall was broken down for the rescue teams to enter. According to Gabol Town SHO Roshan, the police and neighbours attempted to get the girls out but smoke had filled the house and the children died while they were being shifted to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital.

The flames had erupted due to a short circuit in the wiring of the UPS installed at the house, according to the preliminary investigation.

The deceased were identified as Umaima, 7, and Hamna, 6, daughters of Harris.

Separately, fires broke out in three other areas of the city, gutting valuables. Flames erupted in a hostel room at the University of Karachi campus, a secondhand clothes warehouse and a house in Shah Latif.

A fire tender was dispatched after an electrical short circuit led to a fire in the Institute of Business Administration's boys hostel located on KU premises, according to fire officials.

Everything in the room was gutted by the flames, but the blaze was contained by fire officials and no loss of life was reported. Meanwhile, a warehouse in Haroonabad Pankha Hotel in Sher Shah caught ablaze and two fire tenders dispatched from Lyari fire station managed to put out the fire in 40 minutes.

According to fire officials, preliminary investigation suggests this incident was sparked by a short circuit as well.

Similarly, another short circuit led to flames at a house near Shah Latif Town police station. After a two-hour long struggle, fire tenders dispatched from Landhi and Korangi fire stations each managed to extinguish the fire which burned through various household items. No casualties were reported.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 16/10/2020)

Power sector circular debt rises to Rs2.26tr

The power division's circular debt has surged to Rs2.26 trillion, an increase of about Rs851 billion since December 2018.

Power Division Secretary Ali Raza Bhutta, while briefing the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), explained the reasons due to which the government could not control the circular debt. The circular debt, commonly known as power sector payables, reportedly grew at an average rate of about Rs1.5bn a day (Rs45bn per month) in 2019-20.

Payables to independent power producers (IPPs), which were Rs718bn in December 2018, jumped to Rs1,042bn, according to the statistics presented to the PAC. Likewise, the power holding companies' outstanding, which was Rs607bn two years ago, rose to Rs1,003bn. Also, the amount payable by Gencos (generation companies) to fuel suppliers increased from Rs89bn to Rs105bn. Since December 2018, the total circular debt has increased from Rs1,415bn to Rs2,266bn.

60pc increase in less than two years, PAC told

Mr Bhutta said reasons for the rising circular debt were "technical and complex". According to him, in addition to the "inefficient" power distribution companies (Discos) and technical losses, the subsidies given to the industrial sector, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and areas of the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) and the agriculture sector of Balochistan were also a factor.

He told the PAC that it had been proposed that agriculture subsidy would be divided between the federal and Balochistan governments in 40/60 ratio to cover up the subsidised tariff.

He said some subsidies were budgeted for which the government contributed its share, while "others were not budgeted" and caused increase in the circular debt.

Moreover, the government did not pass on variation in dollar rates to the end-consumers and subsequently this also added to the debt, he said, adding that the Centre also gave 650MW electricity to K-Electric and the delay in payment of the said electricity resulted in amplifying the circular debt.

Mr Bhutta said that since he had assumed the charge of power division secretary only a few days ago, he was not very well versed with detailed facts. However, he said, the government was taking up this issue at the top level and a policy to confine the circular debt had almost been finalised.

The PAC chairman expressed dissatisfaction over the handling of the power sector circular debt. He claimed that the circular debt was only Rs450bn when the previous government completed its term.

Raising the issue of transparency in the power sector's accounts, MNA Riaz Fatyana said about 50pc posts in power distribution companies were lying vacant. "You are saving these salaries, but you did not expand the infrastructure in accordance with the requirements," he said, adding that this was the reason that the power sector had failed to achieve the desired results.

The meeting also took up a matter relating to litigation on the PAC proceedings.

Another lawmaker, Ibrahim Khan, pointed out that a private firm, M/s Usman Traders, had filed a defamation suit on the basis of a discussion held in the PAC, which was the apex accountability forum of parliament.

Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed asked the PAC chairman to take up this matter with the judicial authorities.

MNA Syed Naveed Qamar pointed out that under Article 69 of the Constitution, courts could not inquire into proceedings of parliament.

Sub-Article 1 of Article 69 states: "The validity of any proceedings in Parliament shall not be called in question on the ground of any irregularity of procedure."

Mr Qamar suggested to the panel to ask the National Assembly Secretariat to take up this matter with the relevant judicial authorities.

(By Malik Asad Dawn, 03, 03/11/2020)

Govt to save Rs300bn in electricity costs in three years: minister

Blaming the PML-N government for leaving behind “landmines”, Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar on Monday claimed that the decisions taken by the PTI government would have a cumulative impact of more than Rs300 billion on electricity costs over the next three years (2021-23).

Speaking at a news conference, Mr Umar, who also heads the Cabinet Committee on Energy (CCoE), said the addition of power generation capacity by the PML-N government would add about Rs1 trillion to circular debt over the next three years.

He said the capacity payment obligation which stood at Rs488bn in 2018 was projected to increase to Rs1.473tr by 2023 as system utilisation would stand at 55 per cent, compared to 84pc in 2018. He said the tariff increase to be required in 2023 due to Rs450bn base circular debt in 2018 was estimated at Rs4.09 per unit while another Rs8.09 per unit increase was estimated due to increasing capacity payment of Rs890bn, leaving a total gap of Rs12.18 per unit by 2023.

The minister said the PTI government had decided to get rid of the “centre of power” from the power division by introducing competitive tariff regime to ensure cheaper energy. He said the PML-N had substantially increased power generation capacity but loadshedding continued across the country, including in Karachi, in the absence of investment in transmission network.

Responding to a question, he said that even if about 20pc contraction in industrial activity over the last two years was taken into account, the capacity addition would not have been consumed by now as there were islands of power which could not be evacuated due to transmission constraints.

The minister said the generation capacity addition was done despite the fact that the then federal government agencies opposed the LNG- (liquefied natural gas) and coal-based power plants in Punjab. On top of that, the previous government contracted expensive LNG from Qatar and ensured that it was supplied to power projects in Punjab under a “must run and take or pay” to make it viable, he added.

Mr Umar said the PTI government was now introducing power sector reforms under which competitive tariff would become possible under a bulk power market when a competitive trading bilateral contract model recently approved by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) would come into operation over the next 18 months and benefit the common consumers. He alleged that the previous arrangement had been benefiting politicians, bureaucrats and distribution companies and their officers because the price was being paid out of the consumers.

The minister said the government had taken major initiatives for reducing the cost of generation and decisions taken by the CCoE would lead to Rs300bn impact over the next three years. He said the reduction in the rate of return on equity of public sector projects approved by the CCoE on Sept 2 would result in a decline in the cost of generation by about Rs100bn during 2021-23.

Likewise, he added, memorandums of understanding signed with independent power producers would have an impact of Rs60bn during 2021-23. He said the adviser to the prime minister on finance was leading a committee to implement these MoUs.

Mr Umar said the CCoE’s decision to unlock ‘take or pay’ contracts of the LNG-based power plants in Punjab would have a cumulative saving of Rs136bn in 2022-23 through tariff reduction at the rate of 74 paise per unit in 2022 and 66 paise per unit in 2023. He did not agree that this burden had been shifted to gas companies, saying he had separately undertaken another initiative that would ensure consumption of LNG in other areas.

Moreover, he said, despite strong resistance from power sector bureaucracy, he had pushed through the closure of old and inefficient power plants in the public sector with a total capacity of about 3,600MW to replace Rs20 per unit energy cost with Rs9.5 per unit that would result in a reduction in circular debt build-up in 2021-23.

Also, the PTI government has introduced auction-based tariff for renewable energy which has brought down wind tariff from about Rs11 per unit in 2015-17 to Rs3.11 and solar tariff from Rs11.5 per unit to Rs3.66.

On top of these measures, he said, the government was now working on structural reforms to manage circular debt in future.

The minister said a committee had been constituted to manage mark-up payments on circular debt that would reduce circular debt by Rs479bn during 2021-23. Also, the resolution of K-Electric issues had become inevitable; otherwise its receivables and payables would add Rs421bn to circular debt, he added.

Mr Umar said the decision had been made at the cabinet level with the understanding of the AJK government under which Azad Kashmir would be charged Nepra-approved tariff and would be paid water use charges on the pattern of net hydel profit to the provinces. Since AJK is being supported on financial matters, the federal government will directly ensure its financing if there is still a difference after adjustment of water use charges against Nepra tariff.

He said solarisation of agricultural tube-wells, particularly in Balochistan, would have an impact of about Rs36bn on circular debt accumulation.

Responding to a question, he said the privatisation of LNG-based plants in Punjab had been put on hold after the Covid-19 pandemic and then the government decision to remove 66pc 'take or pay' clause from their contracts because the bidders wanted clarity about their profitability. Nonetheless, he added, the two LNG-based plants — 747MW Guddu power plant and 425MW Nandipur project — and two distribution companies were on the privatisation agenda.
(By Khaleeq Kiani Dawn, 01, 24/11/2020)

KE chief, three officials acquitted in electrocution death case

A sessions court has acquitted K-Electric's chief executive officer and three others in a case pertaining to the death of a citizen allegedly from electrocution in Defence Housing Authority.

KE CEO Syed Moonis Alvi, distribution head Sheikh Amir Zia, senior security officer of Defence Integrated Business Centre (IBC) Faheemuddin and assistant manager Awaiz Nawaz were booked for their alleged involvement in a manslaughter case about the death of 19-year-old Faizan, who was electrocuted at the power utility's sub-station in DHA's Phase-VII on Aug 11 this year.

Additional District and Sessions Judge (South) Aurangzeb Shah pronounced his order on an acquittal application filed by all the suspects through their counsel.

During the hearing, Faheemuddin and Nawaz appeared in court on bail while Alvi and Zia were called absent.

However, defence counsel moved an application pleading to the court to condone the applicants' appearance. The judge allowed the application.

The judge wrote in the order: "Complainant of the case is also present and filed affidavit to the extent that he has no objection if the accused persons are acquitted under Section 265-K CrPC which is placed on record.

"Heard arguments on application under Section 265-K CrPC from the learned Deputy District Public Prosecutor and the learned defence counsel. Order passed and announced in open court.

"All the accused persons are acquitted under section 265-K CrPC and case stands disposed off accordingly," the order said. Earlier, the investigating officer of the case had informed the court that both the parties had reached an out-of-court settlement. Therefore, the IO had filed a C-class (cancelled) investigation report.

The FIR regarding the death of 19-year-old Faizan, who was electrocuted reportedly while taking a photo, was registered at the Defence police station on the complaint of his uncle, Mohammad Fayyaz.

It stated that Faizan, who hailed from district Mansehra and worked in the transport sector, drove to Karachi on August 10 and spent the night at his uncle's residence in the Qayyumabad neighbourhood. He was said to have mistakenly entered the KE sub-station, where he received an electric shock that proved fatal.

Three get life term

A sessions court has handed down life imprisonment to three accused persons in a murder case.

Accused Saifullah, Mohammad Usman and Abdul Sami were found guilty of murdering Abdul Rehman during a robbery bid on May 7, 2017 on University Road.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Javed Iqbal of the model criminal trial court (East) pronounced the verdict.

The judge also ordered the convicts to pay Rs200,000 as compensation to the legal heirs of the victim.

The judge further sentenced each convict to seven-year imprisonment for committing an armed robbery and sharing common intention.

State prosecutor Mohammad Ashraf Bhatti argued that Rehman was going on a picnic with his friends when armed motorcyclists tried to snatch his mobile phone and fired at him when he put up resistance.

He further argued that the victim had received one bullet in the head and died during treatment at the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital.

He said that there was sufficient evidence to connect the accused persons with the commissioning of the offence and pleaded to punish them strictly in accordance with the law.
(By Naeem Sahoutara Dawn, 13, 15/12/2020)