

GOVT NEWS



WB-funded plan to improve city's municipal infrastructure launched

The Sindh government, with the help of the World Bank Group, on Friday launched a \$240 million megaproject — the Competitive and Liveable City of Karachi (CLICK) — to bring in radical reforms in infrastructure with particular emphasis on increasing efficiency of the city's local government delivery system.

The project is set to be completed in a period of six years.

Local Government Minister Nasir Shah, representatives of the World Bank and senior government officials attended the launching ceremony held at the Peoples Hall of the New Sindh Secretariat.

The Sindh government will share \$10m through its annual development programme and the major portion of \$230m would be financed by the WB (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) under Investment Projecting Financing (IPF) as loan to the provincial government.

The Sindh government had sought the WB's assistance to help improve the operational functionality of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, district municipal corporations and District Council Karachi.

A detailed property survey of the city is also to be carried out under the \$240m CLICK project

"Once successful, this project will be spread to whole of the province," said Minister Shah.

According to him, three key components of the project are: "improvement of capacity for infrastructure improvement of the local councils of Karachi under the local government department with project component amounting to \$181.86m; improvement of urban property tax system through the excise and taxation department with project component amounting to \$40.4m; and the Sindh Investment Portal through the investment department with project component amounting to \$17.2m.

He said the project aimed to support the LG department for institutional development or governance in the KMC and six DMCs and one district council to strengthen their financial resources for infrastructure development capacity.

Besides, it would also help to establish a public-private-partnership mode in the LG department as well as provide technical assistance for the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board.

Minister Shah said the project would help the government plan in a scientific manner for improving the ever-increasing shanty settlements in the sprawling metropolis. Besides, the worn-out sewerage system could also be improved accordingly.

He said CLICK had been designed only to improve the provincial capital. He sought the WB's assistance in starting similar projects for other cities of Sindh.

John Roome, a senior official of the World Bank, said Karachi was a huge urban place that demanded a vision for its betterment keeping in view its growing population.

He said as a key priority it was required to put a better system in place in the city to ensure better liveability, jobs and issues relating to migration.

He said it was necessary to improve infrastructure of one of the largest cities in the world and the same was an imposing challenge for governments.

LG Secretary Roshan Shaikh said the project would also help the related authorities to preserve Karachi's rich history.

Project director Zubair Channa said the grand scheme also offered for conducting a property survey and capacity building of the excise and taxation department.

Besides, it would also provide for the better usage of solid waste including generation of power and improvement of its shifting to the designated garbage transit stations.

Meeting with Murad

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah also met World Bank officials on Friday at CM House and discussed the provincial government's development priorities and how the bank could support them.

Mr Shah spelled out his priorities, saying he had focused on the development of urban and rural areas equally. The urban areas needed drinking water and water for industrial requirements while the rural swathes were in need of efficient agricultural water system for growth of agro sector.

He said the other important project was urban transport schemes under which 21km Yellow Line Corridor should be developed with WB assistance under the Karachi Mobility Project (KMP).

The Yellow Line Corridor, starting from Dawood Chowrangi to Numaish, has three components.

The chief minister spoke about the WB-assisted Karachi Water and Sewerage Services Improvement Project, which is aimed at improving access to safe water services in the city and to increase Karachi Water and Sewerage Board's financial and operational performance.

He said the loan was signed in December. It is a \$100bn project in which \$40m would be provided by IBRD, another \$40m by Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and \$20m by the Sindh government.

Mr Shah said under the project there would be utility reforms and rehabilitation of water and sewerage network.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 15, 25/01/2020)

Misdirected priorities: Undue expenditures overshadow Sindh's public projects

Despite the tall claims of the provincial government of facilitating the masses through various public projects, the people of Sindh have been largely unable to reap any benefits from the so-called schemes.

Per sources, authorities have spent millions of rupees on operational and administrative expenses instead of spending the money to achieve the actual project goals.

Most of the operational expenditure comprises the salaries and perks of officers and other staffers associated with the projects.

What's more, there is no official limit on the amount of money that can be spent on the operational affairs of a specific public project. Therefore, officials have been openly taking advantage of the situation and lining their own pockets.

A recent report by the Auditor General of Pakistan has revealed that officials working for People's Primary Healthcare Initiative (PPHI) spent over Rs436 million on salaries and other perks of staffers working for the Sindh government's nutrition programme. This amount was spent on 'non-nutritional' expenses from March 2016 to June 2018.

The provincial health department started the Nutrition Support Programme under the PPHI Sindh in March 2016 with the aim of providing nutritional support to children across nine districts of the province, including Tharparkar, Badin, Umerkot, Sanghar, Tando Muhammad Khan, Qambar-Shahdadkot, Larkana, Jacobabad and Kashmore. Per the audit report, over Rs269 million were spent on staffers' salaries alone, while Rs36 million were spent on rented vehicles and another Rs24 million on 'transportation'.

"The management should have expended this heavy amount on nutrition which could have saved the lives of thousands of children who die every year due to malnutrition, especially in Thar," the audit report remarked. The audit team also took up the issue with the authorities concerned in May 2018 but nothing was done about it.

The unduly huge expenditure carried out under the Nutrition Support Programme has adversely affected its impact in malnutrition-hit areas of the province. According to local journalist Khatao Jani, despite spending millions of rupees on reducing malnutrition in Tharparkar, the situation has worsened instead of improving.

"The ratio of malnutrition-related deaths among children in Tharparkar has alarmingly increased," he claimed. "The mortality rate among children in the district was 336 in 2014, but instead of decreasing, the number increased to 832 children in 2019."

It is pertinent to mention that Tharparkar has been the worst-affected district in the province when it comes to severe nutritional deficiency among children. Per reports, thousands of children in the district have succumbed to malnutrition. In a bid to tackle the situation amid vehement criticism, the Sindh government increased the number of doctors and health facilities in Tharparkar and also launched the Nutrition Support Programme, but the measures failed to make any difference.

Similarly, the status of 33 Basic Health Units (BHUs) in the district was upgraded to improve health facilities at the grassroots level but people reported that they witnessed no significant improvements because the government continued to hire more staffers and doctors instead of providing relief to the poor. Per the audit report, the government spent Rs180.96 million on salaries and allowances of doctors and other medical staff.

The main objective behind upgrading the BHUs was the provision of normal deliveries at each unit, however, the plan could not be achieved. Per the audit report, the performance of upgraded BHUs remained very poor and not a single normal delivery was performed in Hyderabad.

According to renowned economist Kaiser Bengali, who has also served as the advisor to the chief minister of Sindh for planning and development, the operational expenses of public projects can be reduced through proper planning.

"Public projects can be designed in a way that their overhead costs can be minimised," he told The Express Tribune. "I had successfully designed the Benazir Bhutto Income Support Programme along the same lines while I was working with the Sindh government. The overhead cost of the programme was hardly one per cent, all because of proper planning," he said.

He also said that if the government imposes a limit on the overhead expenses in public projects, things can be improved.

"The government should make rules in this regard and there should be a valid justification by officials concerned if any project's overhead expenditure exceeds the set limit."

(By Razzak Abro The Express Tribune, 04, 01/02/2020)

Incompetent planning, odd legislation created Karachi's chaos

It's no secret that Karachi's institutions don't function as they should. This may be the commercial hub of the country, the key to economic prosperity and security for the nation, the largest city in Pakistan, home to over a fifth of the Pakistani population. Yet it is a city where the mayor only has control over 12 per cent of the metropolis.



As Syed Khawar Mehdi underlined, while moderating a panel session on "Karachi's Urban Planning, Public Spaces and Garbage Management" at Adab Festival on Saturday, it's a shame. The world progresses, focusing on urban sovereignty and new national narratives, yet here we are, still discussing the quagmire of Karachi's issues.

The problem, for renowned architect and planner Arif Hasan, is rooted in our institutions, which have been systematically destroyed, some through centralisation and others through corruption and odd legislation.

And after all, he said, cities and governments don't work without institutions, and Karachi's governance and planning are riddled with incompetence. "When there are no institutions, we cannot just run the city through wishful thinking," he pointed out.

Hasan added that the anti-encroachment campaigns carried out by the authorities were simply 'barbarism,' robbing the poor of their livelihood. The architect termed them an attempt to get rid of Karachi's destitute, without considering where they would find shelter or work. "We can't restore the city through master plans. Manage what you have; change will come gradually," he advised.

"The chaos and destruction in the city is a result of our own will and erroneous regulations," asserted heritage consultant Marvi Mazhar. "Civil society is expected to get its act together, but that's not how it works. The government has to organise and support it."

She commented that Karachi's public spaces had been designed according to the whims of the government, with little research about what the people want and need. This, she said, created a disconnect between the city and its residents.

"Parks are public thoroughfares across the world, but here, in Karachi, we have fences and gates that control movement," she observed, adding that controlling movement was the first criterion for gentrification.

Social development and policy professor Dr Severine Minot concurred that there had been too many consultations, action plans and policies that were disengaged from the opinions of Karachi's inhabitants. She further highlighted the need for law enforcement agencies to keep abreast of new laws and legislation regarding sanitation and the management of urban spaces.

"We all want to see change, but we are not very quick at wanting to change ourselves and our own practices," she commented, adding that it took the West three decades to educate people about waste management.

Urban resilience expert Farhan Anwar emphasised the need for social transformation; for him, there could be no physical transformation of the city without it. "The city cannot be resilient unless all its citizens feel like it is giving back to them," he pointed out, adding that countless internal and external reasons had turned Karachi into a fragmented, broken and decentralised city.

Meanwhile, Sindh Information and Labour Minister Saeed Ghani, while agreeing that governance played a central role, expressed his belief that the citizens too had a crucial part to play in changing Karachi's condition.

"The people of Karachi claim its ownership, but when it comes to addressing its issues, neither the political parties nor most of its citizens are willing to play their part in transforming it into a better city," he maintained. Even if the government turns its full attention to managing garbage disposal here, he said, it would still not be enough if the people did not want to keep the metropolis clean.

According to Ghani, the city began deteriorating in the mid-1980s, when those who wanted to control Pakistan realised they must control Karachi first.

The necessary transformation, he added, was not a tale of a few months or years, but he was convinced that collectively, the city's stakeholders and political parties could achieve it, if they set aside their differences.

The minister too discussed the problem of the anti-encroachment campaigns, saying they had resulted in mass displacement, homelessness and unemployment in both rural and urban areas of Sindh.

"The courts [who ordered the campaigns] should realise that it's not the structures that are being demolished for being illegal. Millions of people live inside them, and it is not possible for us to resettle those who have been displaced within a year," he asserted.

(By Mehreen Ansari The Express Tribune, 04, 02/02/2020)

Jibran Nasir sends CM Murad contempt notice over letter to PM Imran

Threatening legal action, rights activist Jibran Nasir sent a contempt of court notice to Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah through his counsel, Faisal Siddiqi, on Saturday, pertaining to a letter sent by Shah to Prime Minister Imran Khan earlier this week.

Nasir had recently filed a plea in the Sindh High Court (SHC) challenging the transfer of Sindh Inspector General of Police Dr Kaleem Imam as well.

The notice, which is available with The Express Tribune, states that legally, no provincial police chief can be removed or appointed without consensus between the Centre and the Sindh government. Furthermore, the decision has to be taken by the provincial and federal cabinets, not the CM and premier, it adds.

This is in accordance with the 1993 Agreement between the Centre and Provinces as well as Article 12(2) of the Sindh (Repeal of the Police Act, 1861, and Revival of Police Order, 2002) (Amendment) Act, 2019.

According to the notice, the SHC was assured on Tuesday by the Sindh advocate general that no action would be taken in violation of Article 12(2), implying that the process had yet to be completed.

However, Shah, in his letter to PM Khan the next day, stated that the process had been completed "when we reached an agreement during our last meeting" on Monday.

Siddiqi maintained that this contradicted the advocate general's undertaking in court. He further wrote that Shah's statement about coming to an agreement with PM Khan was "contemptuous" and "a misrepresentation of the 1993 Agreement," since "the consensus is to be developed between the decisions of the provincial cabinet and the federal cabinet, not between the chief minister and the prime minister."

According to the notice, Shah's letter was in 'clear violation' of the SHC's orders, and further showed that the Sindh government was not acting in accordance to the law. Unless the "contemptuous actions" were stopped, wrote Siddiqi, they would initiate legal action, including contempt proceedings, against Shah.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 03/02/2020)

Murad approves 11 new schemes, reviews 449 ongoing projects in city

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Friday said some 449 schemes of the Annual Development Plan (ADP) costing Rs40.6 billion were going on in the teeming city and 11 new schemes worth Rs7bn were being launched to uplift Karachi's beauty. He said this while presiding over a meeting to review the progress of ongoing schemes and discuss the new schemes in the pipeline.

Local Government Minister Nasir Shah, Adviser to the CM Murtaza Wahab, chairman of P&D Mohammad Waseem, secretaries of finance and local government, Hassan Naqvi and Roshan Shaikh, director general, Karachi Development Authority, managing director of Karachi Water and Sewerage Board Asadullah Khan, and project director, Karachi Package, Khalid Masroor, and others attended the meeting.

Briefing the chief minister, the local government minister said 11 new schemes had been identified, as suggested by the CM.

They included construction of Shahrah-i-Noor Jahan from Abdullah College to Qalandaria Chowk, Shahjehan Avenue from Water Pump to Qalandaria Chowk, including restoration of storm-water drain, a flyover at Safoora Chowk, a bridge at Jauhar Chowrangi, construction of road from Grex Village to Y-Junction, including construction of storm-water drain, construction of Rais Ahmed Jaferi Road from Peoples Chowrangi to the bank, including storm-water drain, underpass at Stargate, two-lane bridge at Garden Road, underpass at Sibghatullah Shah Rashdi Road at National Stadium, construction of roads surrounding the Supreme Court Registry building, renovation of Empress Market, including greenery, fixation of broken glasses, restoration of old stones, repairs of its clock and lighting effects around the market.

The chief minister directed the chairman of P&D, secretary of LG and project director of Karachi Package to sit together and prepare schemes so that they could be approved in time and launched at the earliest. These schemes could cost around Rs7bn.

CM Shah said he had released Rs15.14bn against 449 ongoing schemes worth Rs40.6bn under the Karachi Package.

Expressing his displeasure, the chief minister said against the release of Rs15bn only Rs7.1bn had been utilised.

Minister Nasir Shah said patchwork of streets in six districts had been launched recently. The utilisation of funds would be more than the expected expenditures.

CM Shah also expressed his serious displeasure on delays in opening the left track of the street going from Chaudhry Khaliq-uz-Zaman Road towards DHA Phase-II.

The chief minister was told a building on the left side of Punjab Chowrangi Road had been vacated; yet, two shops remained. The chief minister said he had gone through the layout plan that showed the building was illegal construction, directing the city commissioner to get it bulldozed and restore the track or road towards Sunset Boulevard.

The CM pointed out that most key streets were being used as parking spaces for vehicles. The entire Chaudhry Khaliq-uz-Zaman Road, including that at Delhi Colony, Tariq Road, Clifton's streets, and many streets in Gulshan-i-Iqbal, Nazimabad and North Nazimabad were giving look of car parking. He asked the city commissioner to pass on his directives to the DIG Traffic to take action and submit a report.

Karachi Zoological Gardens

When the scheme of Karachi Zoological Gardens came under discussion, Mr Shah again expressed his dismay over the slow pace of work.

"This is quite unacceptable that this scheme is being carried out so sluggishly, though I have released all the funds required," he said.

Mr Shah said the elephant in the zoo was not trained to give rides to children, directing the LG minister to purchase an Asian elephant on which children could get rides.

The chief minister said the schemes that had been completed such as Hyder Ali Road underpass, Tipu Sultan underpass, Sunset Boulevard bridge, bridges at Korangi among others would be taken out from the ADP book by submitting their PC-IV.

Mr Shah asked the commissioner to talk to the authorities concerned and get work on Natha Khan u-turn started.

"I want to inaugurate it latest by April," he said.

He also indicated that the work on the storm-water drain from Stargate to Chakore Nala was left incomplete and ordered to resume the scheme.

Mr Shah said the road running towards KN Academy should be reconstructed.

It was also decided to beautify various roads such as Stadium Road. Reconstruction of Kakri Ground, completion of 8000 Road, and development of North Nazimabad Park was also decided in the meeting.

Mr Shah directed the chairman of P&D to prepare a scheme for construction of Mehran Highway for the next fiscal and it would be completed the same year.

He was told that widening of Orangi bridge had been completed. Mr Shah said he would visit to review the ongoing schemes in next 15 days, thus, work on them must have proper pace and dedication.

He asked the KWSB chief to visit the city and conduct a survey of the existing gutter system and order for repairing those which were damaged and their sewage was making streets dirty.

(By Hasan Mansoor Dawn, 16, 08/02/2020)

At SPSC meeting, Dr Kaleem Imam's transfer remains the elephant in the room

Against the backdrop of a drawn-out tussle over the transfer of the provincial top cop, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and Sindh Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr Kaleem Imam attended a meeting of the Sindh Public Safety Commission (SPSC) on Saturday. However, the elephant in the room – Imam's transfer – was not discussed.

During the meeting, held to oversee the operations of the provincial police force and chaired by Shah in his capacity as home minister, the decision was made to present the Annual Policing Plan to the Sindh cabinet. Shah also ordered the proper redressal of public complaints received against the police.

Other items on the agenda were the establishment of district public safety commissions and the matter of repatriating the Sindh police chief. However, the latter was withdrawn by civil society activist Karamat Ali, who had also proposed its inclusion.

"There was a tussle between the IGP and the Sindh government, so I had proposed that the meeting be briefed about Imam's repatriation. Now I have withdrawn it because the Sindh government has followed the rules and sent names [for his replacement] to the federal government," explained Ali while talking to the media.

"Why should I create controversy in the meeting when the rules are being followed and the provincial and federal governments are working on it?" he added.

Sources privy to the matter told The Express Tribune that members of the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had planned to raise arguments with Imam during the meeting. However, the chief minister had admonished them, telling them to focus on the agenda of the meeting instead of creating a fuss.

Speaking to the media after the meeting, Grand Democratic Alliance MPA Hasnain Mirza, who is part of the SPSC, said that the confusion over the transfer could affect the law and order situation in the city. "The Sindh government and the Centre should make a decision soon."

'Stay out of police affairs'

Meanwhile, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf MPA Muhammad Ali Aziz, another SPSC member, wrote a letter to the commission, maintaining that it should avoid putting undue pressure on police officials.

He stated in the letter that independent, transparent policing, free of political interference, should be the target.

"The SPSC has sought reports from the police over administrative affairs... [but] it is not the SPSC's job to interfere in the police's official and daily affairs," he wrote, adding that they should limit themselves to monitoring the strategic aspects of policing and leave the administration to the IGP.

Aziz suggested that the commission should seek quarterly reports to assess fixed targets and allow the police to create an efficient system of self-accountability by letting the police chief look into complaints.

Policing Plan

During the meeting, Imam presented a policing plan that incorporated suggestions previously made by commission members. Commenting that the Sindh cabinet was authorised to approve the proposed plan, Shah directed the SPSC secretary to forward it for discussion in the next cabinet meeting through the home secretary.

While a commission member asked Imam to provide details of his travel outside the city, Shah intervened, stating that they did not have the authority to question the police chief's visits.

The IGP also gave a briefing about 23 police officers against whom inquiries or disciplinary actions were recommended in 2019. In a written report, he said that statements about their alleged misconduct had been submitted to the chief secretary.

At this, Shah told the chief secretary to file a report detailing the action taken against the named officers.

Furthermore, a number of complaints filed by citizens and their resolutions were also discussed in the meeting.

Besides this, the chief minister approved a scheme to renovate the SPSC office in the barracks, allowing members to carry out their work there.

The commission constituted a five-member committee to review SPSC rules and regulations, powers and implementation as well. The committee is to submit a report on the matter within 30 days.

As the meeting drew to an end, it was pointed out that Karachi's position in the International Crime Index had improved from sixth to 97th. This was attributed to "the commitment of the government, police and the people of Karachi, who extended their full support and cooperation.

(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 09/02/2020)

Public safety commission okays annual policing plan for Sindh

The Sindh Public Safety and Police Complaints Commission on Saturday approved the annual policing plan submitted by Inspector General of Police Dr Syed Kaleem Imam and it would be tabled before the provincial cabinet for final approval.

The meeting was chaired by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and attended by all permanent members — MPAs Sharjeel Memon, Imdad Pitafi and Shamim Mumtaz of the Pakistan Peoples Party; Mohammad Ali Aziz of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf; Hasnain Mirza of the Grand Democratic Alliance; independent members Karamat Ali, Nazim Haji, Barrister Haya Imam, Rubina Brohi, Advocate Jhamat Mal and Qurban Malano.

Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah, Home Secretary Usman Chachar and Inspector General of Police Dr Syed Kaleem Imam were invited to the meeting when their relevant matters came under discussion.

The IGP once again presented a police plan in which he had incorporated the suggestions given by the commission members. The chief minister said the cabinet was authorised to approve the plan, thus, he directed secretary of the commission to submit it through the home secretary for discussion in the next meeting of the cabinet.

A commission member asked the IGP to present details of his visits and tours he had made out of the city. The chief minister intervened and said the commission was not authorised to question the visits of the IGP.

Probes against 23 serving, retired police officers

The IGP presented a list of 23 police officers against whom inquiries or disciplinary actions had been recommended last year.

The officers included then Additional IG-Hyderabad Ghulam Sarwar Jamali (now retired), AIG-Crime Branch Pervaiz Khan Umrani, former SSP-East Azfar Mahesar, RPO-Sukkur Zulfikar Shah (now retired), DPO-Sukkur Aitezaz Goraya, SSP-Mirpurkhas Javed Baloch, SP-Traffic Aijaz Hashmi, SP-Gulshan Tahir Noorani, SSP-Malir Kamran Rashid, SSP-Malir Rao Anwar Khan (now retired), Sarwar Abro, SP (Investigation-I South) Khalid Korai, SP-Traffic Nisar Channa, DIG Sindh Reserve Police Farooq Azam, SP-CTD

Yakoob Almani, SP-Umerkot Aijaz Shaikh, SP (Investigation CTD) Ghulam Murtaza, Altaf Leghari, SDPO-Saudabad Faheem Farooqui, DSP (Intelligence Landhi) Nayyar-ul-Haq, SDPO-SITE Hyderabad Dost Mohammad Mangrio and DSP-Surjani Zahid Hussain.

In his written report, the IGP said a report vis-à-vis misconduct and statement of allegations had been filed with the chief secretary (CS) through the home department.

The chief minister directed the CS to submit a report to him showing what action had been taken against those officers.

Citizens' complaints against police

A complaint against SP Noorani filed by journalist Shakeel Naich came under discussion. The IGP said an inquiry against the SP was assigned to DIG Javed Akbar Riaz. The commission said it would wait till the receipt of the inquiry report.

The chief minister said the Malir Bar Association had also filed a complaint against SP Noorani. The IGP said Mr Noorani was awaiting posting while it emerged that he was posted in Malir. The CM sought a report from the home secretary.

In another complaint, citizen Nadeem Ahmed said the Kharadar police had registered a 'false and fabricated' FIR against him, requesting the commission for its disposal in B-Class. The IGP said SDPO-Kharadar had requested him for referring the complaint to SP-Investigation-II South. The report of the SP was awaited.

Another complaint of Malik Altaf Hussain on behalf of retired Major Hamid Hussain was received saying he was at his land at Deh Jam Chakro, Manghopir, when armed men intruded and opened fire. He requested for protection and to be allowed to work at his land peacefully. The IGP's report said the case had been registered and charge-sheeted in the court of law as DIG-West was directed to adopt security measures as requested by the complainant.

The complaint of Asif Maher said Ex-SSP Niaz Khoso was exerting pressure on him to usurp his precious land at Sukkur. The IGP said an inquiry had been ordered.

CM Shah also approved a scheme to renovate office of the Commission at the Sindh Secretariat barracks where it could house itself to work smoothly.

The commission constituted a five-member committee to go through the rules and regulations of the commission, its powers and their implementation. The committee would submit its report within 30 days.

It was pointed out that Karachi was earlier ranked 97th in a crime index and now it had improved to sixth position.

"The credit goes to the commitment of the government, Sindh police and people of Karachi who extended full support and cooperation in the targeted operations launched from time to time," Mr Shah said.

First meeting of ease of doing business body

CM Shah presided over the first-ever meeting of the Ease of Doing Business Reforms Council at the CM House.

He directed the Board of Revenue (BoR) to reduce registration and transfer of property period from 149 days to six days by empowering investors/people to apply online.

"I am fed up with sub-registrar offices so either correct them or pack them up. I'll hand over the registration work to private sector," he said.

The meeting was attended by leading businesspersons, including World Bank representative Amjad Bashir, Hubco CEO Khalid Mansoor, Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) President Mian Amjad Nisar, Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) President Agha Shuhab Ahmed, OICCI President Shahzad Dada, Association of Builders and Developers president, Sindh Healthcare Commission CEO Dr Minhaj Kidwai, Amreli Steel chairman, Gul Ahmed chairman Mohammad Bashir and Pakistan Software House Association chairperson Jehan Ara.

The chief minister was assisted by Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah, planning and development chairman Mohammed Waseem and principal secretary to CM Sajid Abro.

Mr Shah especially called the heads of other agencies including K-Electric chief Syed Monis Abdullah, Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) chief Asadullah Khan, Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa), Sindh Food Authority, representative of Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA), Sindh Employees Social Security Institution (SESSI), Karachi commissioner and others.

He said the purpose of inviting leading businessmen and heads of their organisations was to get their input to get the business environment improved.

"I have to bring a lot of investment in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Larkana, Mirpurkhas and Thatta regions," he said, adding, "Therefore, I'll take drastic measures to facilitate investors."

The Senior Member Board of Revenue (SMBR) admitted that registration of property and its transfer took at least 149 days to six months, therefore, an online application would be launched where people would be able to apply for registration and the system would automatically generate transfer or registration.

The chief minister directed him to make it from six months to six days, adding that the launch of the online application facility would be made by the end of February.

Mr Shah asked the SMBR to outsource BoR's call centre which had failed to redress public complaints. "We need efficient system and manpower, otherwise I would ask them to pack up."

The investment secretary gave a detailed briefing on issues of the problems, red-tape, lethargy and inefficiency of the government system.

The chief minister took a decision that the SMBR would launch an online application and appoint two sub-registrars on special duty, who would expedite the registration, transfer and mutation cases which lingered on by the sub-registrar concerned for more than three days.

It was also decided that the e-stamping system would be launched at the earliest by amending the law in the assembly.

Mr Shah said over 200 multinational companies were working in Karachi and he wanted to provide them more facilities so that their business could thrive.

He added the SBCA had established a single-window facility to all categories of buildings, directing the KWSB and Sepa to establish an inter-agency arrangement.

It was pointed out that the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, Karachi Development Authority and Malir Development Authority were using an official portal and the chief secretary was directed to ask the Lyari Development Authority to sign up the portal latest by June 30.

Call to outsource buildings' inspection to Abad

A proposal was given by the industrialists to outsource inspection of under-construction buildings under the SBCA regulation. They suggested handing over the inspection work to Abad. The investment secretary said the Lahore Development Authority had introduced inspection of under-construction buildings through a private party. The chief minister promised to consider the proposal favourably.

It was also decided to establish dedicated and automated commercial courts/benches at the Karachi District Courts for fast-track settlement of business disputes valuing up to Rs2 million by amending the code of civil procedure 1908.

The chief minister issued directives to the law department to provide a roadmap within 30 days.

The investment secretary told the meeting that SESSI had established a Collection and Benefits Portal by accepting Over the Counter (OTC) payment.

The SESSI had completed initial data of 18,000 enterprises. Active logins were at 6,644. The chief minister directed the SESSI commissioner to ensure all logins were active within a month.

It was pointed out by investment department that the right of way permission for local governments for new connections had a lengthy procedure.

The chief minister directed the LG secretary to introduce quick turnaround time for such permissions. Mr Shah also directed the energy secretary to automate wiring certificates and it must be done within a month.

The chief minister also directed the chief secretary to personally monitor simplification of trade licences. Those licences must be issued within 15 days. It was decided to convert low-risk trade licences into notifications without fee.

It must be consolidated so that one licence could operate across Sindh, he said, ordering online application, renewal and payment of licence fee should be totally automated.

The meeting agreed the council would meet every month to get all outstanding issues resolved.
(By Hasan Mansoor Dawn, 15, 09/02/2020)

Sindh govt asked to introduce alternative dispute resolution for petty issues

Police authorities have proposed an amendment in the existing police law to introduce an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism to address minor offences and social problems, which sometimes lead to heinous crimes, it emerged on Saturday.

If the suggested amendment in the law was carried out, dispute resolution committees (DRCs) would be established in all police stations across Sindh comprising 21 members each from a cross section of the society to resolve "non-cognizable offences through negotiation of the conflicting parties with their mutual consent".

Inspector General of Police Dr Syed Kaleem Imam told Dawn that he had sent a summary to the home department asking the government to amend the police law.

He believed that majority of the cases reported to the police were non-cognizable and civil in nature, which sometimes led to crimes. If these issues triggered by small causes were addressed through the ADR, it would likely reduce a huge burden on police and courts as well, he said.

IGP has sent a summary to the home department for bringing an amendment to existing police law

He opined that this mechanism through prompt settlement of petty disputes might also generate a positive change in the thana culture.

The police chief pointed out that this ADR system had already been introduced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad Capital Territory recently.

According to the summary, "This [ADR] system involves the role of police as a facilitator, arranging mediation between contesting parties and helping them in reaching a peaceful resolution of a conflict."

Two basic advantages of the proposed ADR mechanism are saving people from getting embroiled in long legal process as their conflicts get resolved at the police station level through mediation without entering into formal legal process as well as saving energies/resources of police as the petty issues like civil matters, even minor cognizable cases would get resolved through intervention of notables, thus leaving police to focus more on genuine policing challenges like prevention of heinous crimes, terrorism and maintenance of law and order.

The summary said realising the utility of the ADR system, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had introduced an amendment (Article 168-A) of the KPK Police Order (Amendment) Act 2015 and successfully implemented this system.

Similarly, Punjab is also said to be in the process of incorporating the ADR in the Police Order 2002 and an amendment has been sent to the government for legislation there.

The Sindh police suggested to the provincial government that considerable efforts of police were currently utilised in addressing non-cognizable/minor complaints. However, in the presence of ADR, these can be diverted to other means of resolution, thus saving precious man-hours of the police force.

Besides, the inclusion of community through a formal/structured mechanism will generate a sense of participation for the public; thus spreading the spirit of community policing as well.

The IGP requested Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah to bring an amendment to make ADR a part of police law.

A draft of the proposed amendment in the existing police law has also been submitted to the provincial authorities.

It said the police stations were dealing with three categories of work including public facilitation services, civil/minor disputes of citizens and police crimes prevention, maintenance of law and order and investigation of heinous crimes.

If petty issues and offences of civil or minor nature were addressed through the ADR, police stations may focus more towards the challenges of prevention and detection of heinous crimes and terrorism, it added.

The summary also said that courts were also "overburdened and under-resourced" and when petty issues involving non-cognizable offences got forwarded to civil courts from police, the involved parties found themselves entangled in a long and expensive process.

"This delay in dispensation of justice causes a feeling of frustration, humiliation and despondency," it added.
(By Imtiaz Ali Dawn, 15, 23/02/2020)

Poor governance

WHEN bad news about the government hits ordinary but thinking people who voted for Imran Khan as their last hope, they get a sinking feeling. The bad news is not restricted to one sector.



Public debt increased by Rs11 trillion in 15 months, when during the previous governments of Asif Zardari and Nawaz Sharif, it went up by Rs10tr in their respective terms of five years each.

Wheat flour prices have gone up by 30 per cent — 20 kilos for Rs970 as compared to Rs750 a year back — even though that is the staple diet of the poor. Sugar prices have gone up by 15pc to 20pc. These two basic commodities are the only thing the poor have to keep body and soul together.

Given the adequate production of both commodities, a perception of shortage, real or false, resulting in unbearable price hikes is a clear and inexcusable case of poor management or dishonesty.

The government is losing good men, the latest being FBR chairman Shabbar Zaidi. There seems to be no realisation that competent men, who don't aspire to public office and want to work in the system simply to give back to the country, need to be protected and

appreciated. There are very few of this variety remaining who have served Imran Khan's government but have not left dejected for various reasons.

The reported criticism, by the prime minister's financial adviser, of Zaidi, who was already under pressure for having accepted unrealistic revenue targets laid down by the IMF, was the proverbial last straw. The team leader ie the prime minister should have protected him, boosted his self-esteem and motivated him to continue.

Pakistan's governance failure starts at the top.

The prime minister's philosophy has been not to care about individuals in the mistaken belief that there is no shortage of good men.

A stage has been reached where there are no good, competent or willing men and women left to join the government.

Take Asad Umar whose reputation for competence took a hit as a result of simply joining the prime minister's team. He was publicly humiliated and left to fend for himself. Would any successful executive in the private sector now volunteer to join the government and risk his reputation earned over a lifetime?

Bureaucracy is not delivering because it is scared of accountability and disempowerment due to political interference and incompetent and corrupt officials, most of whom have manoeuvred their postings. The NAB law amendment, though a step in the right direction, proved to be a case of too little, too late for the bureaucracy.

The governance failure seems to start at the top. Two ministers in KP, a province where the PTI has ruled for six years now, were fired without their point of view being heard. The very next day, after an apparently cordial meeting with the ministers, a signal was sent to the chief minister to try and take them back. Note, there were no orders for them to be reinstated, thus compounding the confusion. How can an organisation be governed well, run confidently and take timely decisions when the de facto CEO is powerless and the de jure CEO is confused?

All this is not to say that the prime minister has not been good in any sector. His handling of foreign affairs has been outstanding. He has made us proud by pleading the Kashmir cause eloquently, be it at the UN General Assembly or other international forums.

Leaders of most countries, starting from the US, seem to be fond of him and respect him. He was recently welcomed by Mahathir Mohamad, although only a few weeks back the prime minister had embarrassed the Malaysian leader by declining to attend a summit organised by him.

Earlier, the prime minister successfully got money for the country, when Pakistan was trying to avert a default and gain time to decide its economic trajectory.

Our dilemma is that as the face of Pakistan, the prime minister brings value to the country, but as an administrator he brings confusion and poor governance. To be fair, everyone has their strong and weak points. A successful leader is one who acknowledges his strengths and weaknesses.

President Ronald Reagan was a case in point. He was a good-looking man who could deliver a scripted text convincingly. He left the running of the country to the experts. He was a successful US president.

These days, we hear of frustration amongst the public and the establishment on account of the poor running of the country. We hear of various formulae being debated in order to come out of this morass.

Any new formula will bring its own unintended consequences. It will give the appearance of having disrupted the democratic continuity so proudly flouted by us. It may even bring back the forces the government and establishment have been condemning and prosecuting.

We need to look for an innovative formula where Imran Khan is the face of Pakistan while the government is managed by an experienced person with the ability to take the elected people along.

(By Tasneem Noorani Dawn, 09, 26/02/2020)

Drive against stray dogs

The population of stray dogs in the cities of Sindh is increasing by the day. In few localities of Karachi, there are more stray dogs than people. But the authorities seem to be unaware of the dangers that stray dogs pose to human life. So far they have taken only half-hearted actions to curb the growing population of dogs. This is despite the fact that last year more than 186,579 people were attacked by stray dogs in Sindh province. According to hospitals in Karachi, more than 70 people, mostly children, are bitten by stray dogs in the city every day.

In November last year, the Sindh local government department had launched a campaign to control the dog population by neutering the animals but things have not gone much beyond photo-ops. It was announced that around 500,000 stray dogs would be sterilised in the province. Now there are reports that the campaign has not made headway due to financial constraints and lack of expertise and human resources to handle the sterilisation procedure. Experts are, however, of the opinion that there is no need for a surgical procedure to neuter dogs and the whole process can be carried out only through an injection.

As for funds, Haleem Adil Shaikh, the parliamentary party leader of the PTI in the Sindh Assembly, says the local government department had allocated Rs1 billion for the dog sterilisation programme. He claimed the PTI had raised the issue of stray dogs in the assembly several times but the government was taking only ad hoc measures to control the dog population. He expressed fears that the funds might be bungled. On the other hand, a KMC official claims the poison being given to dogs is substandard, and it not only increases their agony it made them more violent before death. So the promise made in November is yet to translate into action. Governments give us much by way of promises.

(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 16, 27/02/2020)

Notices issued over govt failure to set up helpline for dog-bite incidents

The Sindh High Court on Tuesday issued show-cause notices to the local government secretary and the chairman of a task force constituted to help the local administration with detention and control of stray dogs for not setting up a helpline for dog-bite incidents.

The two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar also sought a roadmap with a proper timeline for implementation of the 'Rabies control programme Sindh' after it was informed that the chief minister had approved the summary for the execution of the scheme with a cost of Rs963.316 million.

The bench directed the health secretary to look into the inquiry report of a six-year-old child's death after being brutally mauled by half-a-dozen dogs in Larkana in December and also sought a report from the additional secretary for health after the bench was informed that around 400 cases of dog-bite had been reported in Umerkot.

When the petition about the rise in dog-bite incidents in the province and shortage of anti-rabies vaccines at government-run hospitals came up before the bench, Local Government Secretary Roshan Ali Sheikh submitted that the chief minister had approved a summary and the administrative approval had also been accorded for the execution of the scheme.

He contended that funds would be released within three days and all formalities would also be completed soon.

Court irked by SHCC negligence that led to amputation of a boy's arm

The bench observed that orders had been issued on earlier hearings to set up a helpline about stray dogs for the public, but the same had not been complied with.

The LG secretary claimed that an advertisement had been published in the newspapers. However, the bench observed that directives were issued to establish a helpline especially for dangerous stray dogs, but various other issues were included in the advertisement, which killed the main purpose of the public message.

The LG secretary also admitted that despite court orders, the public awareness messages had not been issued to the electronic media to broadcast the same.

The bench issued show-cause notices to the LG secretary and chairman of the task force Chiraghuddin Hingoro and directed them to explain as to why the helpline had not been created despite repeated directions.

Ayesha Chundrigar, a member of the task force, informed the bench that various practicable proposals were suggested, but the task force had not accepted them and, therefore, she had decided to resign.

When the bench asked her about the proposals, she sought time to file them before the court.

The petitioner, Tariq Mansoor, contended that 47 dog-bite cases were reported on Feb 8 whereas around 400 such incidents had taken place in Umerkot, adding that there was an acute shortage of vaccines.

The bench directed the LG secretary and the task force chairman to inquire into the matter and submit a report by next hearing. It also directed the additional secretary for health to collect information from Umerkot about dog-bite incidents and also submit an inventory of anti-rabies vaccines in the 29 hospitals of Sindh.

Amputation of boy's arm

The same bench on Tuesday expressed resentment over the Sindh Health Care Commission (SHCC) for not inspecting a private hospital as its alleged negligence led to the amputation of an arm of a 13-year-old boy.

The bench said that as per the SHCC, a fine of Rs500,000 had been imposed on the Razia Medical Centre in Landhi and on Oct 31; it had also granted two months to the health facility to improve its clinical, administrative and environmental observations.

However, the bench noted that substantial time had already lapsed, but the SHCC never reverted to the hospital for inspection to find out deficiencies.

An official of the SHCC undertook to inspect the hospital on March 4 and file a report on March 26. The bench directed him that if any deficiency was found action be taken in accordance with the law.

Earlier, a medical board, which examined the victim, had suggested that the boy might be referred to the Institute of Physical and Medical Rehabilitation, Dow University of Health Sciences, for the provision of the limb.

On Tuesday, the bench was informed that Hamza and his parents had already visited the same and an artificial limb would be made and provided to the boy within three months.

(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 16, 04/03/2020)

Sindh CM orders withdrawal of FIRs against prayer leaders

The police have been directed to withdraw all cases registered against the prayer leaders of mosques and others who were booked for violating the Sindh government's ban on congregational prayers last Friday.

In a meeting at the Chief Minister House on Monday, Sindh CM Syed Murad Ali Shah stated that the decision about banning congregational prayers had been taken in consultation with the ulema and leading doctors. But, he rued, some people had violated the orders, leading to action being taken against them under the law.

He added, however, that some ulema had raised the matter of the registration of cases against the violators. "I am directing the Sindh Inspector General of Police to withdraw the FIRs registered against the prayer leaders and others all over Sindh," he stated, while requesting the clerics to abide by their earlier agreement and limit their congregational prayers to five people.

He also directed that those who had obtained bail from different court be given back their sureties.

Shah said that the decision to limit congregations had been taken after a thorough discussion with all the stakeholders involved. "The objective is to save our people from this disease, and with the cooperation and support of the ulema, this has become possible," he explained.

He pointed out that the mosques still remained open, while the call to prayers is given there five times a day and congregational prayers of up to five people were also held. He urged them to continue offering prayers in small congregations and to ask citizens to offer prayers at home. "This is what is required until the threat is over, and then everything will go back to normal," he stressed.

The CM maintained that, if a lockdown had not been imposed and extra security measures had not been taken, the virus would have caused a massive loss of lives in the province. While he conceded that the virus had not yet been eradicated, he asserted that it had been slowed down and contained.

Currently, the authorities in Sindh conducted 5,945 tests, with Karachi has 249 COVID-19 cases, Hyderabad 12 and Dadu and Jacobabad one each.

Meanwhile, 265 pilgrims have so far tested positive at Sukkur quarantine facility and seven in Larkana. Five people have lost their lives due to the global pandemic in the province.

The nationwide tally of COVID-19 patients has crossed 1,700 with 638 in Punjab, 152 in Balochistan, 195 in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, 136 in Gilgit-Baltistan, 51 in Islamabad and six in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The virus has so far claimed 21 lives in Pakistan, while 55 COVID-19 patients have fully recovered.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 31/03/2020)

Lockdown in Sindh to be lifted in phases, says Murad

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah said on Thursday that the lockdown would not be lifted at once, but it would be eased off in phases.

In his video message released from the Chief Minister House, he said that when the lockdown would be lifted or eased, life would not be the same. "The government will issue new SOPs for every sector under which they will have to operate," he added.

Mr Shah said that the people would have to lead a different lifestyle based on personal care and care of their family members and others.

He said all business centres, factories and shopping malls would have to adopt protective measures for them and their workers. "We are not living on islands, but we live on a land where people come from other cities, provinces and countries and vice versa. Therefore, social distancing from each other is the only tool to keep ourselves safe and secure," he said.

'My apprehensions came true when a family of seven members living in a katchi abadi got infected'

The CM said that despite his serious efforts and strict containment policy, the coronavirus finally penetrated katchi abadis because the residents failed to maintain social distancing as was advised by experts.

He said he was always afraid of the day when the virus would start spreading in the slum areas because the slum dwellers were living in small houses with large families.

"I am sorry, my apprehensions came true and a family of seven members living in a katchi abadi of district Central got infected," he said.

Mr Shah said that the head of the family went outside and got himself infected somewhere and brought the virus back home. "Now all his seven family members, including one-year-old son and six-year-old daughter, have been diagnosed as coronavirus positive," he deplored.

He urged the dwellers of shantytowns to get rations or cash when it was distributed in their areas but avoid crowding, otherwise "you will not only be infected but would carry the virus back to your home and get your family members infected".

Covid-19 status

The chief minister said that during the previous 24 four hours (till Thursday morning) 92 new cases of coronavirus were detected and one more person died, adding that the death toll till April 9 had climbed to 21, which constituted 1.8 per cent of the total cases.

Disclosing his three-pronged strategy — isolation, testing and critical care — he said that 1,380 pilgrims returning from Iran in four batches were kept in isolation. Of them, 280 were found infected.

He said they were provided proper care in isolation in Sukkur and 242 patients recovered and returned to their respective homes. "Now only 38 pilgrims are left at Sukkur and after their recovery they will also be sent to their homes," he added.

Mr Shah said the provincial government had conducted 11,623 tests till Thursday morning against which 1,128 had been diagnosed as positive, including 92 new cases.

He said that at present 436 patients were in home isolation, 59 in isolation centres and 263 in different district hospitals.

Explain two deaths

Mr Shah in his message also clarified a news item that appeared in different newspapers that three people had died from hunger. He said the news item was incorrect and was not based on facts. He said that victim Sobhal Shar set himself ablaze at Jhatpat, Balochistan, on account of his domestic issues with his wife and in-laws.

"He was brought over to the Hira Hospital Sukkur and later shifted to Pir Abdul Qadir Shah Institute of Medical Science, Gambat, where he succumbed to his burn injuries," he said.

Giving further details, the chief minister said Shahzaib Sahto was a son of a well-off schoolteacher, Ustad Shahan Sahto, who has properties in urban and rural areas of Gambat and a stable economic status. "His son set himself on fire on account of family issues," he said.

The CM said that Riaz Metlo, 55, a resident of Shesham Colony, Luqman, Khairpur, had been sick for the past 15 days and could not survive. It was a natural death.

"It is re-emphasised that we are in the middle of an unprecedented crisis situation and at this juncture publishing baseless stories ... should be avoided because they achieve nothing but spread further chaos and panic," he said.
(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 10/04/2020)

Cabinet okays ordinance to provide relief to lockdown-hit people, businesses

The Sindh cabinet on Monday approved the Sindh Covid-19 Emergency Relief Ordinance, 2020 to provide relief to the people and mitigate the challenges emanating from the province-wide lockdown.

The cabinet meeting was attended by all provincial ministers, advisers, the chief secretary and other officials concerned.

Briefing the cabinet, Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah said that the provincial government had proposed the ordinance to put in place all necessary measures to help respond to the people affected by Covid-19 by providing relief to them.

He said that the ordinance would be sent to the Sindh governor for approval.

A government spokesperson said that the Sindh Covid-19 Emergency Relief Ordinance, 2020 would provide equal relief to domestic residential and commercial tenants, employees and daily-wages workers; extending deadlines associated with responding to school fees, rent and utility charges, conduct of trial or indictment and extension of period for performance of duties by the court or an office.

20pc reduction in schools' fee

According to the relief envisaged in the ordinance, no educational institution shall charge more than 80 per cent of the total monthly fees. No employee or worker shall be laid off, terminated or removed and the employee shall be paid salary by the employers. The salary amount and the deduction, if necessary, is given in schedule-I of the ordinance.

All utility providers falling within the territorial jurisdiction of the government shall provide concession (schedule-II of the ordinance) in the utility services to all domestic, residential and commercial consumers.

Govt gives tax exemptions to traders, reduces school fee; Murad says ordinance is being sent to governor

A landlord shall defer or suspend the recovery of the rent of the premises for payable amount as indicated in schedule-III; provided that the same shall not apply in case where the owner is widow, differently abled person and senior citizen.

The government may provide exemption in the provincial taxes, duties, fees, cess, levies and charges.

In case of non-compliance with the ordinance different penalties have been defined.

Commissioners get magisterial powers

The cabinet approved a proposal to authorise the home secretary and all divisional commissioners to perform the powers under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

On the request of the home department, the cabinet approved a proposal to authorise jail superintendent to grant 72-hour temporary parole to an undertrial prisoner(s) to attend death of his/her blood relative.

The cabinet also authorised the home department to grant temporary parole to prisoner(s), undertrial prisoners/convicts for 72 hours to attend marriage of blood relative or visit seriously ill blood relatives.

The cabinet approved one-time waiver of the Sindh Sales Tax on the commission payable to the branchless banking retailers disbursing the cash financial assistance provided under the Ehsaas Kafalat programme of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

The Sindh cabinet also approved exemption of tax and duties on import and transfer of machines and equipment for the Gwadar Hospital project.

The cabinet accorded ex-post facto approval of all the notifications, circulars and standard operating procedures issued by the home secretary, law secretary and other secretaries of administrative departments under the Sindh Epidemic Disease Act 2014.

Financial woes

Briefing the cabinet about the fiscal position of the province, the chief minister said that the Federal Board of Revenue had set a target of Rs5.5 trillion collection but now they were expecting Rs3.9tr collection in which the share of the Sindh government was cut down from Rs835 billion to Rs602bn, showing a shortfall of Rs233bn.

He said that keeping in view the present financial position he had decided to cut off non-development expenditures by Rs170bn.

Talking about the annual development programme, the chief minister said that it had also been cut down from Rs228bn to only Rs93bn this year.

85 die in Sindh due to Covid-19

About coronavirus, the chief minister said that it was spreading fast from Karachi to Kashmore.

He said that 341 more cases emerged when 2,733 tests were conducted, which was 12.6pc of the tests conducted.

The health department had conducted so far 43,949 tests against which 4,956 cases were diagnosed, which constitute 11.2pc of the tests.

He said that four more patients lost their lives and the number of deaths stemming from the coronavirus had reached 85, which was 1.7pc of the total patients.

He added that 24 patients were in critical condition and 16 others were already on ventilators.

The CM said that at present 3,946 patients were under treatment, including 2,705, or 68pc, in home isolation, 825, or 21pc, at isolation centres and 416, or 11pc, in different hospitals.

He said that 269 of the 341 new cases belonged to Karachi. They include district Central 20, East 90, Korangi 40, Malir 30, South 50 and West 39 cases.

He added that despite serious efforts the people living in slums of the city were not observing social distancing.

He said Khairpur had 23 cases, Larkana 12, Hyderabad 12, Ghotki eight, Sukkur four, Dadu three, Matiari two, Jacobabad, Umerkot and Dadu one case each.

Wheat procurement conditions waived off

The cabinet was told that the procurement of 1.4 million tonnes of wheat at a rate of Rs1,400 per 40kg had been started. The department had achieved 33.55pc target by procuring 469,673 tonnes.

It was pointed out that the conditions of presenting land documents such as pass book, Form-7 and verification of documents by local councils and mukhtiarars were causing problems in smooth procurement process.

At this, the cabinet on the request of Food Minister Hari Ram waived the conditions imposed on procurement of wheat from growers. The chief minister directed the food department to achieve the target and even if they had the capability of exceeding the target he would appreciate it.

He said that he had reports that the locust swarm attacks on the standing crops would multiply in the next cropping years. "Just after coronavirus the locust swarm attacks would be another disaster," he said.

Measures against locusts

Agriculture Minister Ismail Rahu and Secretary Raheem Soomro briefed the cabinet about the locust control and threat issues.

The cabinet was informed that the provincial government had released Rs335.095 million to the agriculture department to spray the crops against which the department utilised Rs181.638m on the purchase of 22 spray vehicles, 300 sprayers, 1,000 hand sprayers, 50,000 Emulsifiable Concentrate (EC) to combat the locust issue.

It was further informed that still Rs153.457m was available with the department. The agriculture department had constituted 57 teams at district and taluka level and sprayed the crops. As far as spray of the desert areas was concerned it was the job of the federal government's plant protection department.

The chief minister was told that 12 aircraft were required to spray the desert areas of Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab. The federal government under its National Action Plan had decided to purchase six aircraft but that purchase had not been made so far.

The cabinet urged the federal government to purchase/hire six choppers to start spray in the deserts of Sindh and Balochistan, otherwise it would play havoc with upcoming crops. The locusts had settled in the desert of Sindh and with the start of monsoon they would breed, the cabinet was told.

(By Tahir Siddiqi Dawn, 13, 28/04/2020)

Sindh cabinet approves relief ordinance

The Sindh cabinet passed the Covid-19 Emergency Relief Ordinance, 2020, on Monday, in an attempt to mitigate the challenges arising from the province-wide lockdown and provide relief to those affected by the ensuing economic crisis.

The ordinance is to prevent evictions of residential and commercial tenants even if they cannot pay rent, while also reducing school tuition fees by 20 per cent. Furthermore, deadlines associated with school tuition fees, rent and utility bills have been extended, while concessions have been announced in utility charges as well.

Additionally, no employees or workers are to be laid off, terminated or removed at the current time, and employers must continue to pay their salaries, though some deductions are permitted. The government may also provide exemptions in provincial taxes, duties, fees, cess, levies and charges.

Sindh government spokesperson Murtaza Wahab tweeted that the ordinance "is meant to address the extraordinary situation we are living in."

Financial shortfall

Shah also revealed during the meeting that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) had initially set a target of collecting Rs5.5 trillion but was now expecting Rs3.9 trillion, cutting Sindh's share from Rs835 billion to Rs602 billion. This, he pointed out, was a shortfall of Rs233 billion for the province.

Stressing the gravity of this change, he said a new strategy would have to be adopted to meet expenditures, including the growing health expenditure bills.

The CM stated that under federal transfers based on FBR collections, the Sindh government had been meant to receive Rs716 billion by June 30, but now the amount to be transferred was expected to be Rs534 billion.

Keeping in view the current financial situation, he said he had decided to cut non-development expenditures from Rs870 billion to Rs700 billion. Furthermore, he announced, the Annual Development Plan budget had also been reduced from Rs228 billion to Rs93 billion this year.

Wheat procurement

Moreover, the cabinet was apprised that a target procurement of 1.4 million tonnes of wheat, at the rate of Rs1,400 per 40 kilogrammes, had been initiated, with the food department procuring around a third of the target - 469,673 tonnes - so far.

When it was pointed out that the conditions of presenting land documents was causing hindrances in the process, the cabinet, on the request of Sindh Food Minister Hari Ram Kishori Lal, waived the conditions.

Directing the food department to achieve the target, the CM added that he would appreciate it if they could even exceed it.

Locust swarms

The CM further told the cabinet that he had been informed that locust swarm attacks on standing crops in the province would multiply in upcoming seasons. "After the coronavirus pandemic, locust swarms will be another disaster," he maintained.

The provincial agriculture minister and secretary briefed the meeting on measures being taken to control the locust threat, adding that the department had constituted 57 teams to spray the crops. However, as far as spraying desert areas was concerned, they added, it was the responsibility of the federal government.

They told the CM that 12 aircrafts were required to carry out aerial spraying in the desert areas of Sindh, Punjab and Balochistan, further saying that the Centre had decided to purchase six aircraft but this had not yet been done.

The cabinet urged the federal government to purchase or hire six aircrafts to begin the spraying process, asserting that the locusts would otherwise wreak havoc on the next crops.

During the meeting, the cabinet also approved a proposal to authorise the additional chief secretary, home secretary and all commissioners to use powers under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, while also approving a one-off provincial sales tax waiver on the commission payable to branchless banking retailers disbursing funds to the needy under the Ehsaas Emergency Cash Programme.

Furthermore, the cabinet accorded ex-post fact approval to the notifications, circulars and standard operating procedures issued by certain officials under the Sindh Epidemic Disease Act.

Sindh nears 5,000 Covid-19 cases

Briefing the Sindh cabinet about the current situation in the province with regard to the pandemic, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah stated that the virus was spreading throughout the province, adding that 341 more cases had emerged in the previous 24 hours, pushing the provincial tally close to 5,000.

"Positive cases are emerging from Karachi to Kashmore, from Karachi to Thar, which is not a good sign," he said, during a cabinet meeting on Monday.

The CM said that 2,733 tests had been carried out on the day, out of which 12.6 per cent had been positive. So far, a total of 43,949 tests have been conducted in Sindh, with 4,956 cases being diagnosed.

Meanwhile, four more patients lost their lives, bringing the Covid-19 death toll in Sindh to 85, he said, adding that 24 other patients were in critical condition and 16 on the ventilator.

Out of the cases reported on Monday, 269 belonged to Karachi, the CM revealed, claiming that the residents of katchi abadis (slums) in the city were not observing social distancing. Meanwhile, 23 cases surfaced in Khairpur, 12 each in Larkana and Hyderabad, eight in Ghotki, four in Sukkur, three in Dadi, two in Matiari and one each in Jacobabad and Umerkot.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 28/04/2020)

Karachi commissioner issues SOPs for cyclists

With the increasing number of cyclists on the streets of the city, Karachi commissioner Iftikhar Shallwani has issued on Tuesday a set of standard operating procedures (SOPs) pertaining to cycling in the metropolis.

A notification issued in this regard calls for cyclists to ensure that they meet the necessary safety standards and have the relevant safety equipment. Cyclists have been asked to ensure that they have proper fitting helmets and some form of reflective material on their clothing as well as reflective strips at the back and front of bicycles when cycling at night.

Furthermore, before setting out to cycle, they must ensure that their breaks work and their cycles do not have a flat tire. At least one hand must be kept on the handlebar and any items or goods need to be carried while cycling must be kept in a carrier or a backpack. When cycling in a group, social distancing must be maintained, as per the notification.

Cyclists have also been asked to obey all traffic rules, signs and signals, including cycling in the same direction as the traffic flow, riding in the extreme left lane, signalling when turning and being mindful of the traffic surrounding them when attempting to turn, especially the vehicles behind them.

The directives also call for being careful to avoid road hazards such as potholes, broken glass, gravels, puddles, leaves and animals, as these can cause crashes. Wearing headphones while cycling has also been discouraged, in order to avoid any dangerous situations.

All riders have been asked to follow these SOPs and a failure to do so will lead to legal prosecution under relevant traffic laws.
(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 06/05/2020)

Sindh entering second phase of lockdown with 'some extra restrictions', says Murad

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Friday said that the Sindh government had implemented almost all decisions the federal government had taken regarding its nationwide lockdown imposed to slow down the spread of coronavirus in the county.

Speaking at a press conference at the Sindh Assembly Building and in a statement issued from the CM House later in the evening, he brushed aside the impression of imposing lockdown in the province just to show a difference of opinion with the federal government and categorically said that Sindh was not ending the lockdown on Monday.

"We are entering the second phase of the lockdown with some extra restrictions, particularly at hotspots." he said.

In a statement issued from the CM House, the chief minister said that some media channels were giving the impression that the lockdown was ending on Monday, which was totally wrong.

At the press conference, he said: "The Sindh government has implemented 99.9 per cent decisions the federal government has taken in consultation with the provinces."

Claims his govt implemented 99.9pc decisions of centre; forms body to remove traders' concerns; meets MQM-P delegation

Accompanied by ministers Azra Pechuho, Saeed Ghani, Nasir Shah, Imtiaz Sheikh, Adviser Murtaza Wahab and MNA Qadir Patel, he said that the federal government indeed gave flexibility to the provinces to take decisions regarding further tightening the lockdown keeping in view their ground realities.

He asked why his detractors were blaming his government for imposing lockdown and "misguiding" different communities and traders.

No business at night

The chief minister said a day before the meeting of the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) draft recommendations for post-May 9 measures were shared with all the provinces so that a meaningful discussion could be held.

Narrating the recommendations, the CM said that it include opening of phase-II of construction industries and community markets/retail outlets, shops in rural areas, neighbourhood shops situated in residential localities/stand-alone shops, excluding malls, large marketplaces, mega departmental stores.

Shops/markets, other than pharmacies' opening time to be limited till 5pm, Saturday and Sunday to be declared as a 'safe day' with all sectors/retail closed other than essential sectors or those with a continuous process.

Selective OPDs would also be allowed to operate. However, timing of shops opening was recommended after Fajr till 5pm as per discretion of the provinces and there would be a total closure at night.

Mr Shah said that all the provinces were 90pc in agreement with the recommendations.

He deplored that despite doing his best he was being criticised without any solid reason and rationale.

He said that the Sindh government had already opened 676 industrial units.

Govt offices, many sectors to remain shut

The chief minister said that the sectors that would continue to remain closed include all industries/business not cleared for opening till May 9, shopping malls, plazas, educational institutions, offices not cleared for opening till May 9, restaurants, hotels, marquees, marriage halls, cinemas, etc.

He said all places of large gatherings, public processions, gatherings, congregations of all nature and organised sports events and concerts would also be not allowed after Saturday.

He said that the government offices would remain closed as usual.

Mr Shah said that on April 14 the government decided to open some shops and then witnessed a spike in cases.

"The priority is to avoid death stemming from coronavirus rather than allowing other activities," he said.

Majalis

To a question about Yaum-i-Ali processions, the CM said that under the SOPs as announced by the federal government in consultation with the provinces, all kinds of majalis, processions and congregations were banned.

Body to meet traders

The CM conceded that city traders were in a serious crisis.

"I would request the federal govt to give them loans on easy instalments so that they could revive their businesses," he said, adding that his government was in close contact with traders' community and the decision about closure was a collective decision taken at the national level.

He said he had constituted a committee comprising ministers Saeed Ghani, Imtiaz Sheikh, Murtaza Wahab and Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar and it would meet with small traders and listen to them and compile their recommendations for revival of their business.

To a question, he said that the provincial and federal governments would have jointly supported the daily wage earners instead of allowing them to start their work and put their and their family members' lives at risk.

598 new case in Sindh

The chief minister said that for the first time 5,532 samples were tested against which 598 cases had been detected.

"This constitutes 10.8 per cent of the cases diagnosed against 5,532 tests," he said and added: "This is the highest ratio since ... first case was detected."

Mr Shah said that the testing capacity had been increased to 5,600 per day.

He added that so far 81,610 tests had been conducted against which 9,691 were diagnosed as positive.

He said that five more patients died due the infection, taking the death toll to 176, which was 1.8pc of the total patients.

Giving details of the 7,575 patients under treatment, the chief minister said that 6,421 were in home isolation, 627 at isolation centres and 527 at different hospitals.

"I am sorry to say that 164 were in critical condition, of them 18, or 17.2pc, are on ventilators," he said.

Talking about the death of Dr Furqan, the chief minister expressed his deep sorrow and grief and said that such incidents should not happen.

Meets MQM-P delegation

In the evening, the CM met a delegation of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan.

According to an MQM-P statement, the CM assured the delegation that he would solve the traders' problems as soon as possible. The MQM delegation comprised senior leaders Kanwar Naveed Jameel, Khwaja Izharul Hasan and Karachi Mayor Akhtar while the CM was assisted by Saeed Ghani, Nasir Shah, Murtaza Wahab and Sohail Siyal.

The MQM-P asked the CM to hold a meeting with traders to address their grievances and to take a final decision with regard to resumption of business activities.

It also demanded that strict action be taken against police for humiliating the people of Karachi and traders. It was also demanded that the government "activate" the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board to solve people's complaints.

"The CM accepted the MQM demands and decided to meet with traders and representatives today [Saturday]," said the MQM-P statement.

Mr Shah also assured the MQM delegation that the issue of payment of salaries to employees of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and Karachi Development Authority would also be solved soon.
(by Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 09/05/2020)

'Industries not following SOPs may be sealed'

Industries that were allowed to function after the lockdown relaxation may be sealed if they do not follow the standard operating procedures (SOPs) defined by the government, warned Sindh Industries and Commerce Minister Jam Ikramullah Dharejo on Thursday.

"The Sindh government is facing several problems, but the two major problems are protecting the people from the coronavirus and providing them with employment so that their stoves do not run cold," said the provincial minister.

He asked the industrialists to extend their support to the Sindh government in order to keep the industrial wheel running and comply with the SOPs devised to curb the coronavirus outbreak.

The provincial minister added that since the lockdown had been relaxed, people had been acting carelessly, taking no precautions against Covid-19, which could increase the local transmission of the virus.

Calling the current situation 'dangerous,' he appealed to the people to take safety measures against the virus, adding that the government would otherwise have to revisit its policy of easing the lockdown.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 15/05/2020)

Over 90 infrastructure projects to be completed in next fiscal year

The Sindh government is expected to complete more than 90 schemes mainly related to infrastructure development during the upcoming financial year across the province.

A statement issued on Wednesday said that six mega schemes would also be part of the financial year 2020-21 with an aim to complete all projects within the stipulated time.

The plan emerged during a review meeting of the annual development programme (ADP) of the local government department. The meeting was presided over by LG Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, who also holds the portfolio of information, and attended by LG Secretary Roshan Ali Sheikh and other senior officers.

"The local government secretary briefed the meeting in detail about the annual development projects of his department," it said. "During the meeting, the minister asked the officials to make sure that the process of opening and awarding tenders for the development projects remains transparent. There should not be any undue delay in the process."

Minister Nasir Shah calls for maintaining transparency in tendering process

The minister added that there should be no legal complication or inconvenience in the tendering process as Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah wanted transparency in all such processes.

"The minister was informed that in the year 2020-21, total 97 development schemes would be completed out of which 25 schemes are related to water and sewerage and 63 are related to roads," said the statement.

"Apart from these development schemes, six mega schemes would also be part of the financial year. Nasir Shah directed the officers to ensure timely completion of all these development projects in a transparent manner. He told the LG officials that undue delay and non-transparency in the completion of these development projects would not be tolerated."

Sindh to abide by NCC directives

Meanwhile, Mr Shah said that the Sindh government would abide by the decisions of the National Coordination Committee (NCC) and all educational institutions in the province, marriage halls, gyms, sports clubs, and all other business activities which had not been allowed by the federal government would be kept closed.

"The coronavirus has started spreading rapidly in the country and the situation is becoming critical day by day," he said, adding: "Until the vaccine for coronavirus is invented, everyone would have to live with this pandemic. People are not ready to follow SOPs and the health advisory, which is causing the problem."

The provincial minister said that if timely and strict lockdown across the country had been imposed, the situation in the country would have been different.

He said that timely steps of the Sindh government were appreciated all over the world including by the World Health Organisation. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 14, 04/06/2020)

Sindh govt claims ownership of Steel Mills' land

The strained-relations between Pakistan People's Party government in Sindh and federal government of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf are likely to get worse over the planned privatisation of the Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) as the provincial administration on Sunday claimed that it owned the land worth billions of rupees of the industrial giant and Islamabad couldn't make it part of any deal.

A key member of the provincial cabinet and close aide to chief minister also vowed to protect rights of over 9,000 PSM workers, who were being laid off under a proposed plan.

"We are against the retrenchment of 9,500 workers of Steel Mill and the PPP will protect these employees at every forum," Sindh Education Minister Saeed Ghani told a press conference along with labour leaders Shamshad Qureshi and Habib Junaidi.

"The government is eyeing the land of steel mills worth billions of rupees. But everyone should be clear about it. This land belongs to the Sindh government and we will not allow them to take this land. The Sindh government had in the past raised its voice against the privatisation and we will not remain silent this time as well. We are with workers not with capitalists."

Saeed Ghani says the federal govt cannot make the Steel Mills' land part of any privatisation deal

The Sindh government, he claimed, could successfully operate the PSM and asked the federal government to talk with the provincial administration on this proposal.

No CCI consent to PSM privatisation

He said that whatever "secret plan" the government had made about PSM, it had not got it approved from the Council of Common Interests (CCI) because a Supreme Court's decision had clearly said that the federal government must seek CCI consent for privatisation of any state entity.

"The PPP is blamed for recruiting its workers in the Pakistan Steel but the fact is that not a single man was hired in the mills since 2008," said Minister Ghani, who also holds the portfolio of labour. "In other institutions, when the PPP was in the federal government, contractual employees were made permanent. The PPP was not in the government from 1996 to 2008, during that time Musharraf and other governments had recruited contractual workers in many institutions including the PSM."

To a question, he said that whenever a decision was taken about the PSM, the prime interests of the decision-makers always attached with the valuable land of the industrial giant. "Again the focus is on the land, which is worth billions of rupees. Some 19,000 acres of land of Pakistan Steel is without a shadow of a doubt is owned by Sindh."

In response to another question, he said that it seemed that Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar had become the prime minister since Imran Kha did not know the decisions of his own cabinet.

"Asad Umar once said he will stand with the employees of the PSM if the PTI comes into power and a wrong decision is taken for the mills," said Mr Ghani. "I am waiting what position will Asad Umar take in the meeting of the federal cabinet."

Minister hopes MQM-P, GDA will oppose layoffs

He appreciated the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan for opposing the PSM workers' layoffs, but asked the PTI's coalition partner at the centre to do more.

"We believe that a mere condemnation is not enough. We hope that MQM ministers will resist this decision and maybe if the conscience of the GDA is awakened, they should also oppose the move," he said.

To a question about recent allegations from a US blogger against senior leadership of the PPP, he said that the media was presenting an American woman in its headline whose aim was to tarnish the image of Pakistani politicians in the eyes of the people and divert attention from the challenges being faced by the people in this country.

"I appeal to the Pakistani media to address the current situation in which people are being infected with coronavirus, where deaths from the virus are increasing rapidly and healthcare system had become a challenge.

"In a situation where the country is suffering from the worst economic crisis, where the sugar scandal and shortage of petroleum products have been pushed back, the nation is entangled in a matter which seems to be a foreign agenda," he added.

To a query, he said that after the rapid increase in the number of Covid-19 patients in Sindh, the pressure of patients in government as well as private hospitals had increased.

All government hospitals run by the Sindh government were providing free treatment and the administration would continue to provide more facilities to the patients in the hospitals so that more and more patients could get free treatment, he added.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 08/06/2020)

Sindh slashes development funds by 18.8%

Presenting its annual budget for the 2020-21 financial year on Wednesday, the Sindh government revealed that it had earmarked Rs232.94 billion for its Annual Development Programme (ADP) - a drastic decrease of 18.8 per cent.

This, according to the government, is due to the post-pandemic economic slowdown and a drop in revenue generation amid the financial crunch.

District ADPs aside, the provincial ADP has been pitched at Rs155 billion, while the foreign-funded and federally funded projects are estimated at Rs54.64 billion - around 23.5 per cent of the development budget - and Rs8.30 billion respectively. Furthermore, Rs117 billion apart from the development portfolio will be spent on infrastructure development through public-private partnerships.

The budget documents, available with The Express Tribune, show that the ADP distribution for education is Rs21.08 billion, which includes Rs13.15 billion for school education, Rs3.72 billion for college education, Rs128 million for the empowerment for persons with disabilities, Rs713 million for the Sindh Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority and Rs3.36 billion for universities and boards.

Meanwhile, a sum of Rs23.5 billion has been earmarked for health sector in addition to Rs5 billion for Covid-19 response. This includes the establishment of 200-bedded infectious diseases hospitals in Hyderabad, Sukkur, Larkana, Mirpurkhas and Shaheed Benazirabad, as well as the expansion and upgradation of several other hospitals.

For agriculture and irrigation, the provincial government has pitched the allocated ADP funds at Rs17.02 billion, with Rs14.14 billion of foreign project assistance. This covers Rs615 million for a flood emergency reconstruction project for canals. Separately, the development budget for livestock and fisheries, amounting to Rs1.09 billion, includes Rs218.56 million for the rehabilitation and renovation of Karachi Fish Harbour.

Furthermore, the home department has been allocated Rs666 million, which includes Rs371.72 million for the Sindh police and Rs294.27 million for the province's jails.

Funds worth Rs12.17 billion have also been set aside for the local government department, which includes funding for waste disposal facilities. In addition to this, Rs1.94 billion have been earmarked for a mega project for Karachi, which includes the construction of roads. The development budget for public health engineering, which covers projects such as the rehabilitation of non-functional water supply and drainage schemes as well as the elimination of discharge of urban sewerage in irrigation canals and lakes, adds up to Rs11.59 billion.

Moreover, the development portfolio for social welfare in the next fiscal year amounts to Rs233 million in addition to Rs3.91 billion under the provincial ADP for social protection. Another Rs3.3 billion of foreign project assistance have been allocated to a project to reduce stunting in growth.

For women's development, Rs120 million have been set aside, along with Rs117 million for foreign project assistance, while the development funds for labour and human resources are projected at Rs111 million. The ADP allocation for minorities has been set at Rs826 million, while the rehabilitation funds, covering a mobile healthcare unit project and the Sindh Resilience Project, were kept at Rs1.8 billion along with Rs1.13 billion of foreign project assistance.

A sum of Rs 1 billion has been allocated for energy department, including Rs498.75 million for the electrification of primary health facilities and Rs137.5 million for electrification of villages in and around Karachi. Of this amount, Rs75 million have also been set aside for the Sindh Solar Energy Project, which will receive Rs3.3 billion in foreign project assistance too.

The ADP for the transport sector has been pitched at Rs6.46 billion and Rs5.68 billion in foreign project assistance. Of these funds, Rs3 billion are to be used for the construction of underpasses and flyovers on railway crossings along the Karachi Circular Railway route, while more funds are set aside for bus rapid transit projects.

According to the budget documents, the provincial government has further earmarked Rs14.54 billion for works and services, including Rs3.90 billion for the maintenance and repair of roads, highways and bridges, and Rs 4.06 billion for the maintenance and repair of buildings and structures.

(By Sameer Mandhro The Express Tribune, 04, 18/06/2020)

Only 33% of local govt funds allocated for development in Sindh

The majority of the spending from the Rs78 billion allocated for the Sindh local government department in the provincial annual budget 2020-21 is to constitute grant expenditure, with just 33 percent of the funds being reserved for development projects.

This year, the funds for the department have been scaled up by five per cent from Rs74.5 billion reserved for it in the last budget, with the lion's share - 55 per cent - appropriated for grant spending, against Rs12.17 billion, constituting 33 per cent of the amount, set aside for the provincial annual development programme (ADP). Under the provincial ADP, Rs7.69 billion has been kept for foreign-funded projects.

Besides, Rs15 billion is appropriated for the district ADP, under which Rs1.65 billion is to be spent on foreign funded projects.

Water and sanitation

From the funds reserved for the department, the Sindh government has allocated Rs7.32 billion for the public health engineering department, acknowledging its role in ensuring the supply of clean drinking water. Of this amount, Rs4.63 billion has been set aside for the upkeep and operation of reverse osmosis and ultrafiltration plants in Sindh, including Rs868.10 million for the plants in Lyari and Keamari.

Separately, Rs11.59 billion has been reserved on account of the sector's development, with Rs3.03 billion to be spent on the rehabilitation of non-functional water supply and drainage schemes and Rs2.18 billion on putting an end to discharging sewerage into lakes and irrigation canals.

Waste disposal and management

Funds worth Rs5.55 billion have been appropriated for the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board and Rs300 million, under development funds, has been set aside for garbage disposal and management in Karachi.

The amount reserved for waste disposal in the provincial capital is to be spent on establishing six garbage transfer stations, transferring waste to garbage dumps, and refuse-derived fuel facilities that produce fuel from domestic and business waste.

Development projects

Besides development initiatives pertaining to the public health engineering sector and establishing garbage transfer stations in Karachi, Rs330.11 million are to be spent on Competitive and Livable City of Karachi project- a five-year scheme launched in collaboration with the World Bank that aims at carrying out a detailed property survey of the metropolis.

Moreover, Rs1.94 billion has been set aside for a mega project for Karachi. Of this amount, Rs547.31 million will be used for the construction and remodelling of 12000 Road in Landhi, Korangi and Rs198.80 million will be used for laying a sewerage line between Star Gate and Chakora nullah.

The provincial government further plans to spend Rs1.62 billion on housing and town planning and Rs266.74 million on initiatives taken in relevance to katchi abadis [slum areas].

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 18/06/2020)

Sindh budget

ITS resource constraints notwithstanding, Sindh's budget of Rs1,241bn for the fiscal year 2020-21 indicates the seriousness of Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah's administration in fighting Covid-19 and its negative economic impact on the poor and small businesses. It is commendable that Sindh has made sensible choices at a time when the country is faced with not only the virus contagion but also the threat of an unprecedented locust plague. The new budget, for example, sets aside a substantial sum of Rs20bn to put cash into the pockets of those affected by Covid-19. Similarly, health expenditure for the next year has been enhanced by 15.5pc. Even the 7pc increase in Sindh's current expenditure comes from higher Covid-19-related spending. Education is the only other sector — apart from health — where the cash-strapped government has raised allocations instead of reducing it. Additionally, the budget proposes interventions to stimulate small businesses in urban areas through soft loans, alleviate poverty, subsidise wheat flour and support farmers hit by locust swarms.

However, the sustainability of the provincial Covid-19 initiatives largely depends on the federal government's ability to collect its targeted taxes and transfer the province's projected share to it. Like other provinces, Sindh also depends heavily on federal transfers for almost 70pc of its revenue receipts. The FBR's failure to meet its target has caused a hefty shortfall of Rs227bn in Sindh's projected share, hurting its efforts to implement its development schemes. The reduced federal tax pool has compelled the province to not only slash its development spending next year by over 18pc but to also cut different current expenditures to make room for Covid-19 investments, and subsidise fertilisers, rice seeds and pesticides for smallholder farmers. In his budget speech, the chief minister also spoke about the ongoing attacks on provincial autonomy extended by the 18th Amendment and the efforts being made to somehow force the provinces to give up part of their share from the divisible tax pool to benefit the centre. He rightly called for a unified stand against the once-in-a-century kind of challenges instead of sowing divisions. With Covid-19 and locust plagues threatening to kill people, pull apart the economy and cause widespread hunger, provinces must be made financially more independent than ever before. But they also need to work towards devolving powers to the local level for a better response to pandemics and locust plagues.

(By Editorial Dawn, 07, 19/06/2020)

Murad reviews rain emergency measures across Sindh

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Wednesday directed the local government department to work out a detailed plan for desilting, cleaning and repair of natural storm-water drains so that funds could be released in time.

"I want all deputy commissioners, local bodies and water boards to be taken on board while envisaging a rain emergency plan so that full and final action could be taken," he added.

This he said while presiding over a rain emergency meeting here at the CM House. The meeting was attended by Local Government Minister Nasir Shah, Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah, Karachi Commissioner Iftikhar Shallwani and other officials. The divisional commissioners and LG representatives, mayors/chairmen across the province joined the meeting through video link.

Promises funds for KMC

Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar told the chief minister that he was facing a financial shortfall to carry out desilting of drains.

At this, the chief minister advised the mayor to enhance KMC financial resources, but said that the Sindh government would cover the shortfall and finance the desilting work.

Asks KMC to enhance financial resources; says over 1,400 test positive for coronavirus in province

The chief minister directed the LG secretary to send him financial requirements through the finance secretary.

Mr Shah said that an \$11 million World Bank project was in the pipeline and most probably it would start within the next four months under which almost all the major drains of Karachi would be lined.

"We would construct fencing around the nullahs so that no encroachment could take place," he said and added almost all the newly constructed major roads of the city had storm-water drains along them, therefore he was sure that rainwater would be cleared out. The meeting was told that some civil works of different drains in Karachi, Hyderabad and Sukkur were required.

The LG secretary told the CM that taking all the deputy commissioners on board he had sent a summary of Rs229m to the chief minister.

The CM directed the mayor and commissioner of Karachi to work out a plan to avoid last year's Saadi Town-like situation. He directed the mayor to expedite ongoing work on Mehran Nullah so that it may not overflow again and wreak havoc in Saadi Town.

Mr Shah also directed the Karachi commissioner to coordinate with K-Electric authorities for proper and uninterrupted power supply to the pumping stations of the KWSB.

The meeting decided that all the deputy commissioners would generate their requirement of suction machines, generators, pipes, etc, and send the same to Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) so that it could arrange the same.

It was also decided that hoardings, unnecessary cables and such other display boards would be removed before commencement of the monsoon.

Rs70m needed for desilting in Hyderabad

The Hyderabad commissioner told the chief minister that Rs70m was required for rain emergency of the city. Under the planned works, seven drains would be desilted, cleaned and repaired.

The CM said that although he would release the funds in the first week of July, the commissioner should start the work.

He said that work on all the seven drains must be started at once. He said that the Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (Hesco) had to be prepared to ensure uninterrupted power supply to the pumping machines of Wasa so that rainwater could be disposed of.

Situations of other divisions reviewed

The chief minister directed the commissioners of Shaheed Benazirabad, Mirpurkhas, Sukkur and Larkana to focus on cleaning of municipal and town committees' nullahs and sewerage system.

The chief minister was told that low-lying areas had been identified where rainwater mostly accumulated. Desilting of natural drains had been started.

The CM directed the administration to speed up the work as the monsoon was approaching fast.

When the Sukkur commissioner pointed out the issue of cattle colonies being set up for sacrificial animals, the CM said that there would be no cattle colony anywhere in Sindh.

He directed the chief secretary to issue necessary instructions and direct the district administration to devise an alternative plan for the sacrificial animals' market.

1,414 new Covid-19 cases in Sindh

In a separate development, the CM said on Wednesday that another 1,414 Covid-19 cases were detected by testing 7,400 samples, while 37 more patients died overnight lifting the death toll to 1,161, or 1.5pc.

According to a statement issued here from the CM House, the detection rate was 19.2pc. "So far 402,687 samples have been tested which diagnosed 74,070 cases all over Sindh," he added.

He said that overnight 1,028 more patients recovered and the number of patients recovered so far has reached 39,429, which constituted 53.5pc recovery rate.

At present, he said, 33,480 patients are under treatment, of them 31,974 in home isolation, 49 at isolation centres and 1,457 at different hospitals.

He said that out of 1,414 new cases, Karachi had 644 new cases —185 in East, 184 in South, 97 in Korangi, 70 in Malir, 68 in Central and 40 cases in West.

The CM said that Hyderabad had 74 new cases, Mirpurkhas 33, Sukkur 30, Ghotki 27, Shaheed Benazirabad 25, Larkana 18, Thatta and Shikarpur nine each, Badin and Sanghar eight each, Khairpur seven, Naushahro Feroze, Dadu and Jamshoro six each, Umerkot four, Sujawal and Jacobabad three each, Tando Allahyar and Tando Mohammad Khan have one case each.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 25/06/2020)

Sindh Assembly passes Rs1.24t budget

Amid loud protests from the opposition, the Sindh Assembly passed the Rs1.24 trillion provincial budget for the upcoming fiscal year, along with supplementary grants of Rs16.64 billion for the outgoing year.

As Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah presented the supplementary budget for 2019-20, opposition leader Firdous Shamim Naqvi stood up in protest, asking why it was being approved.

Shah responded that the extra funds had been spent by the Governor House, the CM House, police, secretariat and other departments. "The opposition can move cut motions to reduce expenditure from the supplementary grants," he added.

Unlike most years, when dozens such motions are submitted to cut funds from the annual and supplementary budgets, only four cut motions were moved by opposition lawmakers on Saturday, to reduce non-development expenditure in the supplementary grants.

These were summarily rejected through the majority votes from the treasury benches. No cut motions were moved against the new annual budget.

Mocking the opposition, the CM commented, "I am thankful to the opposition for reposing their confidence in the 2020-21 budget, as they did not submit a single cut motion. Instead of participating in the budgetary process, they preferred to remind us of their dharna days, with hooliganism disturbing the house."

As the annual and supplementary budgets were presented for voting, the opposition voiced their protests. Though the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan MPAs were not in session, choosing the register their protest through a sit-in outside the assembly, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and Grand Democratic Alliance lawmakers held up placards and shouted slogans, demanding funds for Karachi.

Earlier, as some MPAs raised concerns about the purchase of luxury vehicles in next year's budget despite the Covid-19 emergency, the CM said his government had banned such purchases during the pandemic, adding that any operational vehicle needed would require cabinet approval for its purchase.

Comparing Sindh's expenditures on vehicles over the last four years with those of the other provinces and the Centre, Shah said his government had spent Rs7.2 billion on this while Punjab had spent Rs16.15 billion, Balochistan Rs7.8 billion, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Rs5.2 billion and the federal government Rs23 billion. "Despite this, we are criticised."

He claimed the PTI government had filed the wrong figures in the Supreme Court, adding he would submit detailed expenditure lists for the purchase of vehicles for his own government and the others.

Developing Karachi

Turning to the opposition's contention over Karachi's development, the CM said the city had been allocated Rs26.8 billion in Annual Development Programme schemes, while there were also a number of foreign-funded projects for the metropolis. These include bus rapid transit lines, Karachi Urban Mobility project, water and sewerage upgrades, Karachi Neighborhood Improvement Project, Compatible Livable City of Karachi and others.

Apart from these, he said, there were a number of projects that were to be started in the upcoming fiscal year, such as the Rs27.5 billion Malir Expressway scheme, the Rs6.5 billion link road reconstruction project, the Rs12 billion Karachi urban road project, the Rs7 billion Hub canal rehabilitation and a Rs25 billion wastewater recycling project, among others.

(By Hafeez Tunio The Express Tribune, 04, 28/06/2020)